

Rapid City Journal

WEEKend

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Friday
April 4, 2008



Photos by Seth A. McConnell/Journal staff

Ken Burnham plays the baritone as he practices with the New Horizons Band at Canyon Lake Senior Center.

If you go

What: "Two Faces of the Orchestra," featuring the fourth and final performance of the season for the Black Hills Symphony Orchestra. The show will highlight the unique colors of two essential elements of the symphony orchestra. Act One will feature strings and Act Two will showcase winds and percussion. The New Horizons Band will perform in the lobby before the concert and again at intermission.

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 12; watch for the New Horizons Band before the concert.

Where: Rushmore Plaza Civic Center theater

Tickets: \$10.25-\$28.25, available by calling 1-800-GOT-MINE or 394-4115.

Expanding horizons

Band lets seniors live long-held dreams

By **Cindy Card**

Journal correspondent

Inside each of us lives a musician waiting to be heard. Even Albert Einstein said had he not been a physicist, he probably would have been a musician.

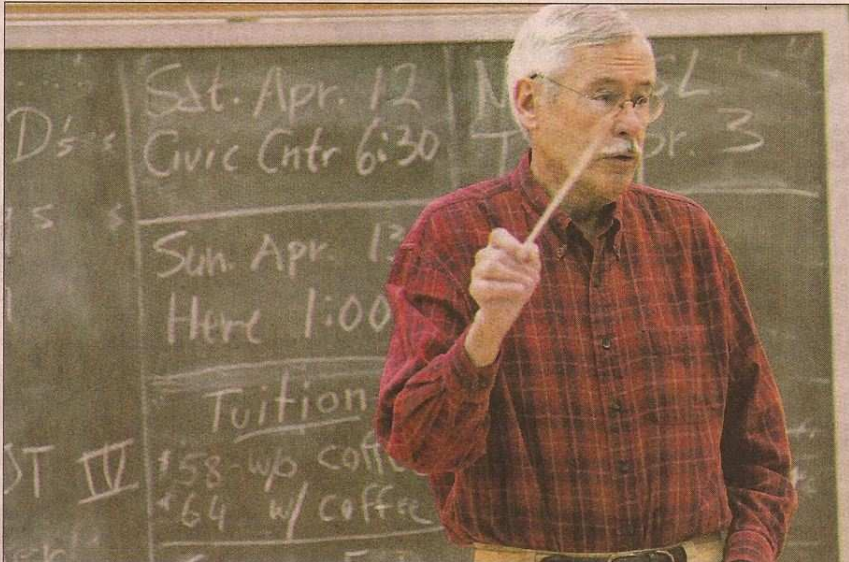
Local seniors are getting the chance to live out that dream with the New Horizons Band. Some are revisiting past experiences with high school band, but others are picking up an instrument for the first time.

Gregg Nielson of Rapid City, a charter member of the New Horizons Band and retired Air Force officer, said he had never played an instrument before answering a newspaper ad for the fledgling band.

"I'd always told my wife and
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M'Lisse Pippert covers her mouth as she whispers to her neighbor between songs as they practice with the New Horizons Band.



Conductor Milo Winter rehearses with the New Horizons Band at the Canyon Lake Senior Center.

Horizons: Friendship in addition to music

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a bunch of friends that one regret I had from high school was that I never played in the band," he said. "I was always in sports and other things. I saw the ad in the paper and said, 'Wow this is great.'"

Nielson plays the alto saxophone, an instrument his father played in high school. He started his lessons on his father's saxophone and has since owned a couple of others. He said he bought a trombone at a time when he thought the band would be without one, but several trombonists joined before he had to learn to play. "So I just stayed with the saxophone."

Milo Winter of Rapid City, former band director at Stevens High School, started the local group in 1996 after retiring. He observed an adult beginners' band in Canada while serving as a music educator consultant.

"They had a beginners' band for adults up there, and they were enjoying it a great deal," he said.



Seth A. McConnell/Journal staff

M'Lisse Pippert, left, chats with Barbara Knott during a coffee break from the New Horizons Band practice at the Canyon Lake Senior Center.

ne said.

He also attended a national convention where he heard a presentation by Dr. Roy Ernst, founder of the nationwide New Horizons program. "The emphasis was simply on making music for fun rather than getting ready for a performance," Winter said.

The group's mission, he said, is to provide an opportunity to perform music for the enjoyment of being creative. Winter said research has shown the benefits of belonging to such a group.

"Researchers believe it helps maintain cognitive skills and physical well-being as well as the social aspect of having fun making music with people of like interest," he said.

When he started the band, only 11 people came to the first rehearsal. That number has grown through the years to the current count of 58 musicians who encompass all skill levels of players.

"We've been in existence for 11 or 12 years now, so our members have become more accomplished. We do have some former teachers and semi-professional players who have joined us since we began. Some of the people who have joined were high school or college musicians and have played with groups as adults as well," he said.

And while public performance is not the ultimate goal of the band members, New Horizons Band has performed at the Dahl Arts Center, The Journey Museum, schools, Mount Rushmore National Monument, National Guard ceremonies, South Dakota bandmasters conventions and the South Dakota Retired Teachers Convention.

Next Saturday, April 12, the band will perform in the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center theater lobby before the Black Hills Symphony Orchestra's "Two Faces of the Orchestra" concert and again during intermission.

Jack Knowles, conductor and music director for the symphony, said the pairing of the two musical entities that

at the Canyon Lake Senior Center.

'It has helped a lot of our older citizens to express themselves with music instead of just listening to it, to actually be playing and sometimes learning an instrument that maybe they have never played before.'

— Jack Knowles,
Black Hills Symphony Orchestra
conductor and music director

evening is fitting.

"I think it's wonderful, especially since the second half of our concert will be the wind ensemble symphony, which corresponds and works well with the New Horizons Band," Knowles said.

"I think it's really a great organization," Knowles said. "They are well-prepared, and it's always a great joy to hear them play. It's something I think that Rapid City has benefited from since Milo Winter started this. It has helped a lot of our older citizens to express themselves with music instead of just listening to it, to actually be playing and sometimes learning an instrument that maybe they have never played before."

Nielson said the band is composed of two different segments, a concert band that plays what a typical high school band would play and a jazz band that plays predominantly big band dance music. Nielson belongs to both.

In addition to brand new musicians, the band also includes intermediate musicians and professional players.

"As people saw we had so much fun, we started to get more experienced musicians. We had people who played in the symphony, retired music teachers, a mixture of people brand new to music, intermediate players and some professional players also," he said.

The band was formed with three objectives in mind and Nielson said he believes the group accomplishes all three.

"For senior citizens, for one thing, it gives you a challenging, intellectual activity so it keeps your mind working. It gives the people a sense of being a contributing member of a good group, and it

kind of adds meaning and purpose to life for a lot of people," he said. "And for a lot of our members, I think it's one of their primary social functions. Many friendships are formed in this band. It's a really nice activity."

Nielson said for him it is the camaraderie he enjoys most. "Part of the fun is playing music, too," he said. "The band is like a big family. We just have a good time playing music together. Milo does a wonderful job of making it fun. He deserves a lot of credit. He is always very shy about taking any credit for himself, but he's the one who does a wonderful service for a lot of people. He's always very modest about that."

In the beginning and for quite a few years, Winter was the only teacher the band had, Nielson said. Now, retired music teacher Bob Nielson of Rapid City has been helping the new people. Stewart Christensen, of Rapid City, also a retired teacher, trains the saxophone quintet. Christensen, Christensen's father and Christensen's grandfather, who once played in John Philip Sousa's band, all taught Winter when he was in school.

Winter, who retired in 1995, said teaching high school students and teaching older adults have different sets of challenges.

"Each is different. An older person has some physical problems of seeing or hearing as well, but because of their life experience, they grasp mu-

sical concepts a little quicker," he said.

Winter said new members are welcome, and from time to time the band offers a beginners' class for new members. "It's best if we talk about it before they start," he said.

This summer, the New Horizons Band will perform in a combined concert with the Rapid City Municipal Band in Memorial Park during one of the regular Wednesday night concerts.

The group also is tentatively scheduled to play before one of the Mount Rushmore lighting ceremonies.

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