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Jazz band offers melodic Mondays

By **BARB CHURCHILL**
Assignment Reporter

Monday night can be boring if you're in search of entertainment in Lincoln. But not if you're a fan of big band jazz.

The Monday Night Big Band offers the opportunity to cure you of your entertainment blues. The big band series is held at the Ramada Plaza Hotel, Ninth and O streets, every Monday night.

The Monday Night Big Band was formed in February 1997 by Dave Sharp, Bob Krueger, Dean Haist, Scott Vickroy and Brad Obbink. They believed there needed to be more of a jazz presence in Lincoln, as well as an outlet for the many jazz-trained musicians in the area. The Monday Night Big Band is a rehearsal or "reading" band as well as an excellent opportunity to see live jazz performed in a good atmosphere.

The Lincoln-area group was patterned after the popular Monday Night Band held at the venerable Village Vanguard in New York. As is true in New York, Monday nights are usually the least-complicated nights to be holding a weekly jazz band, because few concerts, shows or plays are held on Monday nights. Another popular jazz orchestra patterned along the same lines is the Dallas Jazz Orchestra, which also meets on Monday nights.

One unusual thing about the Monday Night Big Band is its fluidity. There literally are different musicians each week, as well as different music directors. Part of the reason for this is

because there are so many people in Lincoln who want to perform live jazz. There are more than 100 performers who play on the Monday Night Big Band list, as well as 10 different directors. The performers play saxophone, trombone, trumpet, piano, bass, guitar and drums.

And not every Monday Night Big Band regular is a typical performing musician. The lineup features professional and amateur musicians from all walks of life. Some are currently college musicians, while others have graduated from various area music schools and are performing or teaching music. Still others are working in advertising, engineering and secretarial fields. Yet all of these diverse musicians are united by a common calling: the desire to play jazz in public.

The Monday Night Big Band actively seeks jazz musicians to "sit in," or perform without notice, along with its more accomplished musicians. These guests range from visiting professional musicians (such as the pit orchestra members from "Les Miserables" who sat in while they were in town) to jazz aficionados who are still in high school. During one recent performance, four different musicians from local high schools sat

in on three different instruments.

Although these younger, less-accomplished jazz musicians lacked polish, it was obvious why the Big Band wanted them to perform. These young players enjoyed themselves and added verve and excitement to the performance.

Dean Haist, one of the Monday Night Big Band's rotating cast of music directors, said playing new pieces every week is part of the challenge.

"(Performing new pieces) sets up challenges for the jazz improviser that are rarely seen in Lincoln. Often, we are sight-reading pieces, or playing pieces we've only seen once, which makes what we do more challenging and exciting," Haist said.

The Monday Night Big Band performers play for virtually nothing — they receive free beer or soft drinks and a very small percentage from the door admission. The money raised from admission, Haist said, is used to buy lights for the music stands, buy music and pay gas mileage for those who commute from outside Lincoln.

Monday Night Big Band is held every Monday at the Ramada Plaza Hotel. Admission is \$4, and the music starts at 7:30 p.m.

“(Performing new pieces) sets up challenges for the jazz improviser. ...”

DEAN HAIST
 music director

.....
[http:// www.unl.edu/DailyNeb](http://www.unl.edu/DailyNeb)

Music, tips to be shared by instructor

PIANIST from page 9

on new repertoire” and “The Case of the Potential Piano Dropout: What to do when the magic stops.”

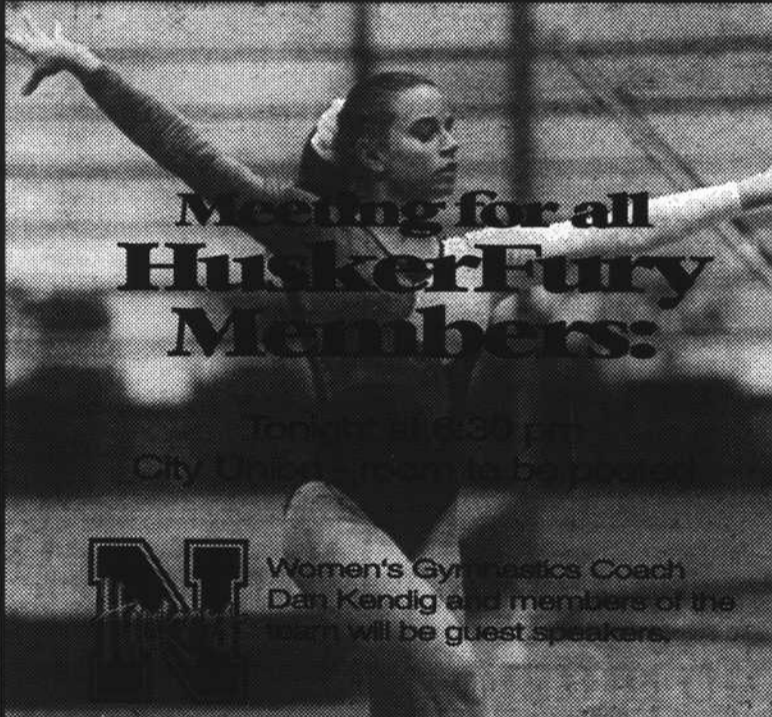
His appearances will continue Friday night with a recital at 8 p.m., and he will sit in on a piano master class featuring UNL graduate and undergraduate pianists Saturday morning at 9 a.m.

Blickenstaff believes that learning music can change the way one views the world — and so can he by teaching it.

“I think music organizes the brain in a unique way, and a lot of research shows music activity is very stimulating to the learning process,” he said.

“Even more importantly it helps sensitize a person to a realm of life through sound and opens up an avenue of expression that is unavailable through other means.”

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