

# Summer Daily Nebraskan

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# NJO brings big band sound to the Sheldon lawn tonight

By Melanic Mensch

Staff writer

Forget the tuxedos and leave the tickets at home.

Fans of the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra can see the 17-piece band for free Tuesday in the comfort of their T-shirts and sneakers. The NJO will play today at the Jazz in June concert series.

## THE JAZZ IN JUNE LINEUP

**THIS WEEK:**

**Nebraska Jazz Orchestra**

**JUNE 20:**

**Matt Wallace Group**

**JUNE 27:**

**Angela Hagenbach Sextet**

Founded in 1975-1976, the NJO usually performs big band jazz in formal settings like the ballroom at the Holiday Inn or at the Pla Mor Ballroom. Yet the band has been a presence at Jazz in June since 1992. Kathy Piper, executive director of the Nebraska Art Association, said the band helps sustain the local flavor of the concert series.

Dean Haist, executive director of the NJO, said jazz music in Lincoln has gained more exposure through Jazz in June.

"Traditionally, jazz has always had a kind of struggle for

an audience," he said. "With Jazz in June, it's free and open to the public. People can come with their family with a picnic supper and sit in the shade on the lawn."

One of the premier big bands in the Midwest, the NJO performs traditional big band favorites, as well as compositions written by members of the orchestra.

"We want to perpetuate the big band tradition," NJO Director Ed Love said, "but it's great fun to play new music, written by friends and colleagues."

Randall Snyder, a professor of theory and composition at UNL's School of Music, has written pieces for the orchestra. Snyder said it felt good to have a musical group locally perform his compositions.

"Sometimes you have to wait a year before you can hear an orchestra play a composition," he said. "With an orchestra so close by, the composition goes quickly from the imagination to sound."

Most NJO members are from Lincoln. Others are from Beatrice, Omaha and other towns in eastern Nebraska. Many members are teachers or play in other musical groups, but they return to the NJO to continue the tradition of big band jazz.

Said Love: "It would be criminal if this kind of music was allowed to die or sit on a shelf and not be heard. This is a kind of music you need to hear in person."

Although the faces in the

*"...It's an exciting and moving experience to have 17 people playing the same song at the same time. You should want to jump out of your chair if we do our jobs right."*

**Ed Love**  
director, Nebraska Jazz Orchestra

orchestra may have changed over the years, Love said, the close-knit group continues to enjoy performing.

"Compared to a smaller group, it's a lot louder," he said laughing. "But it's an exciting and moving experience to have 17 people playing the same song at the same time. You should want to jump out of your chair if we do our jobs right."



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