

Residents Keep Big Band Sound Swinging

The Moonlighters Big Band, founded in Cape Cod, has found a new home in The Villages with new members.

By MICHAEL FORTUNA
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When The Moonlighters Big Band performs, you can either stay in your seat to soak in the swinging sounds, or you can get out on the dance floor and let your feet do the talking.

Or you could do both.

The 19-piece resident big band, led by Len Savery, performs from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Jan. 29 at the Wildwood Community Center.

General admission tickets are \$12.50 in advance at buytickets.at/moonlightersbigband, or \$15 at the door. The group has performed at the venue on several occasions, including a Veterans Day-type show in November.

The band will feature vocalists Zanna Duckett, and Joe and Diana Arlt, along with harmonica player Phil Caltabellotta.

Apart from the usual big band standards from the 1940s and 1950s, the group plays a wide variety of music, including the waltz, foxtrot, cha cha, rumba and an occasional polka.

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LEN SAVERY
Singer

danceable," said Savery, of the Village of Caroline. "Every once in a while we'll play a piece that's listenable."

The Moonlighters came to life up in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, with Savery running it for about 25 years.

After moving to The Villages full time around 2015, Savery, who also plays the trumpet, jumped in to play in



Submitted photo

The Moonlighters Big Band, under the direction of trumpeter Len Savery, center, will give a concert filled with danceable music Jan. 29 at the Wildwood Community Center. Savery started the band up in Cape Cod around 1989, then restarted the band after moving to The Villages.

a couple of other jazz groups, but the Moonlighters wouldn't stay dormant for long.

"After I left Cape Cod, I missed not having the band," Savery said. "It was really nice getting the group together and working on the songs. It's different musicians, but it's the same music library. I'm expanding the library all the time."

Savery has about 250 arrangements in the library, with about 30-40 songs in the rotation.

"He has a lot of unique music that you wouldn't find in a lot of big band folders," said John Frantz, who plays piano in the group.

Frantz joined the Moonlighters about two years ago. While he lived in the Chicago area, he played semi-professionally in various jazz band configurations.

"(Big band is) a different type of playing," said Frantz, of the Village of Hemingway. "There's more ensemble playing, less soloing. It's just a big sound. It's a nice group to play in. They're all excellent players. They all have many decades of experience. That makes it a high level of playing."

When Frantz was 8, he started learning the piano at the insistence of his parents.

"What 8-year-old wants to play piano instead of baseball?" Frantz said.

It wasn't until his college years that he played more piano, veering into jazz studies.

"It's just a natural progression," Frantz said.

Now in The Villages, Frantz plays in groups that spans various jazz styles from the '60s through the '80s.

Savery, who worked as a custom home builder for

around 40 years, began learning the trumpet back in the sixth grade, but he ended up putting it aside in high school to play football.

Twenty-five years later, his son wanted to join the school band, so Savery suggested he try the trumpet. Meanwhile, Savery picked up his own trumpet again.

"It's amazing how fast it came back," Savery said.

This led to him joining the Chatham Band during the late 1970s. In addition, he founded his own group, the Sandwich Town Band. Around 1989, some of those musicians wanted to form their own big band, and the Moonlighters was born.

"(My main job) was high-pressure," Savery said. "Music helped me to attain a mindset, help relieve stress."

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