

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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Photograph - Vocalist **Terri Aldrich** fronts the Gentle Winds Orchestra in a live performance during the **2010 Festival of the Parks.**



Performance

The Gentle Winds Orchestra presents a concert during the James Memorial Art Center Art Fest Saturday at 3 p.m. in Williston's Recreation Park. The performance is free and open to the public.

Gentle Winds: Small group, big band sound

By **CEECY NUCKER**
Correspondent

Sometimes a sound just comes together.

"I wasn't sure I wasn't barking up the wrong tree," said Steve Veikley of his band, the Gentle Winds Orchestra. "The demand for the music didn't seem to be there until we started to perform. Now people come up to me all the time thanking me for putting it together."

The music isn't heard much live, it's true -- big band sound from the '20s to the '50s, played with a group of eight musicians of all ages.

"We have a standard rhythm section; piano, bass and drums," he said. "Then we add four horns, a trumpet, alto sax, tenor sax and baritone/bass. Of course, one of the things that sells a band is a girl singer in a long black dress, and we have one of those, too."

Their "girl singer" is Terri Lynn Aldrich, executive director of the Minot Area Council of the Arts, whose talents were on display with the band at last weekend's USO Gala.

The band started performing in Minot just in May, and has already had a number of bookings, including the Sibyl

Center in Stanley, Arts in the Parks, Wild About Wines at the Roosevelt Park Zoo, and the Fourth of July Festival in the Parks. "We're already booked for next year for the Fourth," Veikley said with a hint of astonishment.

Background



Gentle Winds Orchestra has been Veikley's band since he formed it in 1996 in New Jersey. He explained that arranging for this configuration was similar to that for voices, with the percussion instruments carrying the beat, and the horns the melody and harmonies. Veikley has a degree in arranging and composition from Berklee College of Music in Boston, and performed with the band for about seven years on the East Coast. When he moved to Minot in 2004, he wanted to continue it, but then

decided to put it aside for a while. This summer he took a chance and put it back together and accepted a gig for the St. Joseph's Community Health Foundation.

"I had all the arrangements already," he said. "It was good to go, as long as the musical chairs were filled."

He said one of their ongoing problems, something that afflicts all bands, is personnel. Gentle Winds Orchestra has a number of college students, he said, who are often unavailable for a particular date, so sometimes they do employ substitutes. Fortunately, he said, he has found plenty of willing artists in the area to sit in.

Although he has tried his hand at composing, he sticks with the old standards for performance. "People want to listen to the songs they know," he said.

The band's sound is mellow jazz classics from the popular American songbook. "It's like a big-band sound with a small-band intimacy," he said.

Veikley also runs the popular Java Jive Jazz combo, a smaller band for even more intimate venues. In addition to his musical proclivities, Veikley is currently program director for the Minot Area Council of the Arts.