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LAPD Concert Band

BY MICHAEL ELLINGTON

This month's featured Band member is a neurosurgeon with 25 years' experience in brain and spine surgeries. The doctor is in. Meet Myles Saunders, M.D.

Many members of this Band had parents or siblings who were musically inclined. "No one in my family played an

instrument," Myles points out. That didn't deter him from involving himself in his school's elementary school band at the tender age of 8. Something about the sound of great clarinet playing attracted his attention. He started young, as did his idol, but for different reasons. New Orleans woodwind legend Pete Fountain began his study of the clarinet as a child of 12 because his doctor suggested it to his parents as a way to strengthen his young, respiratory infection-plagued lungs. What had been a liability evolved into an asset.

Looking for other musical challenges, Myles turned from the reed to the piano. He took private lessons during his teens and eventually stopped studying that instrument only to start playing it again. Last year's forced isolation brought on by COVID-19 found him sitting down at the keyboard and getting reacquainted after a 50-year absence.

Several years ago, the Dr. Saunders musical



Myles with the flute section.

journey took another turn, this time back in a familiar direction. Here's how he describes it: "I had seen a performance of a jazz flutist who let me hold his instrument and try blowing into it. I actually made a loud noise and was thrilled, and anxious to buy a student model and start taking lessons." He was 60 at the time. He had circled back to the woodwind family and set some goals. "I auditioned for the Band as a flutist just over a year after starting lessons." He credits members of the flute section, Jennifer Hall and Judy Reiter, for taking him under their wings. They helped him bring his playing up to speed so that he could play with the Band.

The Los Angeles Police Concert Band contains several different components that specialize in different kinds of music. The full band emphasizes marches and symphonic music, while the Swing Band component does just that, swing. Myles especially enjoys performing with this smaller combo. In his words, "Regardless of what I might be playing or listening to, jazz has been my passion." Myles has always held jazz and jazz musicians in high regard. The genius of Pete Fountain first piqued his interest in the musical

form. As he points out, you never know where you'll run into another one of your idols. Myles remembers meeting iconic bandleader, clarinetist Benny Goodman, years later while on the island of St. Maarten in the Caribbean.

Not only is Myles a member of the flute section, he also devotes considerable time and energy as part of the executive committee to support and promote the Band's "To Perform and To Serve" mission. He also designed the Concert Band's new website. It provides considerable insight into the origins of the Band in 1914 and the variety of ways it has evolved since then. It contains Band member profiles like this one and recordings of previous Band performances, from Washington, D.C.'s John F. Kennedy Center to the Disneyland Resort. Myles felt that since this is the official band of the city of Los Angeles, why not call the website "L.A.'s Own."

For more information about the Band, see our website at www.lasown.com and contact Jim Starr, executive director, at sngcop@aol.com. For greatly appreciated donations, please go to www.lapolicyfoundation.org and in the "Comments" box, put "For the Band." ♦



Myles Saunders, M.D.



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Myles at a LAPD graduation.