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LAPD Band

by Michael Ellington

The all-volunteer Los Angeles Police Concert Band is made up of hundreds of years of musical experience, immeasurable passion and energy for sharing the joy of music, and an abiding desire to be of service to the Department and the community. Within the Band are several musical components that function under an umbrella of guidance from Executive Director Jim Starr, Director of Operations Christina Challey and the musical direction of Maestro Richard Allen. Today, you'll discover a new component.

All Band members follow a solo practice schedule they've evolved over the years. Beyond that, they want to play together. They enjoy playing music live; sensing subtle changes in the energy of the players in their sections, the tempo, emotion and direction of the printed music and adjusting, on the fly, to keep

the performance on track and follow Maestro's baton.

To answer that desire to perform together during this time of COVID, a small group of Concert Band members have been gathering to form what has since become the Los Angeles Police Brass Quintet. Some months ago, trumpeter David Stassel and tuba player Steve Yerkes began talking about the possibility of forming a small group. Every Wednesday for the past five weeks, the five of them have gathered at Yerkes' home to rehearse a broad range of music especially written for a group of that size. Greeting each other with fist bumps and elbow taps, they meet responsibly, outdoors, and socially distanced from each other.

Yerkes fondly remembers playing with the Northwest Brass Quintet when he lived in the Chicago area during the '70s. In 1979, he moved to Los Angeles to take



The L.A. Police Brass Quintet. Clockwise from 7 o'clock: Didi Reyes, David Stassel, Greg Lee, Steve Yerkes and Mark Kobayashi.

a position with the Bavaria-based brass instrument manufacturer Mirafone. He says he missed playing in a quintet so much that he delved into the collection of five-part music he had been amassing over the years. That aforementioned conversation led to the formation of the group.

Their leader is the accomplished Columbian-born trumpet player Didi Reyes. When he joined the Concert Band, his professionalism and mastery were on display at every performance. He too had missed playing with the Band. "A month before David called me about this group, I had been thinking that L.A. audiences would never expect the sounds a brass quintet can make. My immediate answer was 'Yes!'"

Mark Kobayashi plays French horn. It's been some time since he's performed in front of an audience. "I was really thrilled because this breaks a half-year fast from any kind of live music situation that I've been involved in. The last concert I did was in March." Mark has

found that playing with the quintet has renewed his enthusiasm and "given him his right arm back."

Greg Lee responded to an email from Steve and welcomed the chance to play his trombone with the small group. He said he missed rehearsals, performing and restaurants, though not necessarily in that order. "I don't recall that I have ever actually played in a brass quintet before." Greg is eager to continue playing safely, even under these conditions, with people he enjoys sharing music.

Organizer/trumpeter David Stassel is glad this group formed. "I have not played with a quintet since either 1969 or 1970. I'd forgotten how difficult and challenging it was, but it has been a tremendous amount of fun."

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.lapolicefoundation.org, and in the "Comments" box, put "For the Band." ❖



Co-founders, left to right: Steve Yerkes and David Stassel.



Group leader Didi Reyes.



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