

The St. Johns River City Band—Brass Turning Silver

By *Diantha Grant, Executive Director*

ST JOHNS



River City Band



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BAND

The year was 1984, and Jacksonville was just beginning to emerge from its image as a small southern town on the way to Miami and Orlando. That year, real estate mogul Ira Koger and former JSO conductor/music director Willis Page created the community's St. Johns River City Band.

The brass band originated during the Industrial Revolution. Amateur brass bands were the mainstay of middle-class life in English-speaking countries. The traditional brass band has 25 musicians – 10 coronets, 1 flugelhorn, 3 horns, 2 baritones, 3

DeFranco, The Manhattan Transfer, Arturo Sandoval, and Ernie Watts. In April, the River City Band will again be featured with one of the headliners at the 2008 Jacksonville Jazz Festival.

Over the years, the River City Band has developed various ensembles that perform swing and hits of the '40s and '50s, a Dixieland group, a brass quintet, and other combinations that appeal to a wide audience. The Band has performed at annual events like the Mayor's Older Buddies, the Gator Bowl parties, and the Jazz Festival. In addition to

public events, the River City Band has entertained at many private events and parties. There has been a River City Youth Band, as well as small ensembles that give workshops and programs in the Duval County Public Schools. Past music directors include Willis Page, Sam Fricano, Bruce Silva, Don Zentz, Bill Prince, Paul Chiaravalle, and Mike Davis.



1987-88

Kneeling: Rick Kirkland, Roger Peck, Tom Haller. Row 2: Chuck Duran, Marty Zielenski, Pam Voisin, Bill Pippin, Jeanne Holder, Sam Fricano, Lew Moore, Marc Dickman. Row 3: Ace Martin, Craig Nelson, Lenard Bowie, Bill Watson, Unidentified, Longineau Parsons, Paul Holloway.

trombones, 2 euphoniums, 4 tubas and 2 percussionists. This enables the ensemble to perform a wide and varied repertoire of music. Today, there are only a handful of professional brass bands in the U.S.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the St. Johns River City Band performed free concerts at Metropolitan Park and other venues in Jacksonville, including the Florida Theater and Friendship Park. In 1987, the River City Band performed live at Carnegie Hall with Chet Atkins – a stellar moment for the young organization. Other great performers the River City Band has accompanied include Della Reese, Diane Schuur, Dizzy Gillespie, Doc Severinsen, Branford Marsalis, Al Hirt, Dave Brubeck, Lionel Hampton, Toni Tenille, Floyd Cramer, Jack Sheldon, Buddy

RCB Brass Quintet: Lew Moore, tuba; Karl Koppenberger, trombone; Pam Voisin, trumpet; Craig Nelson, horn; Lenard Bowie, trumpet

1987-88



Satin Swing, performing at the 2007 Taste the Music and Dance: Bill Prince, Craig Barnette, Nat Michaelson, JB Scott, Brent McKesson, John Yorio, Lisa Kelly Scott, Marc Dickman, and Kim Yorio

Community partners help the River City Band meet our mission of "keeping jazz and other American music alive through performance and education." Thanks to the City of Jacksonville, Duval County Public Schools, the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville, the University of North Florida, and Florida's Division of Cultural Affairs, which has selected the St. Johns River City Band for the 2008-2010 Touring Roster. Once again, we will take our show on the road.

Currently under the musical direction of Dr. Marc Dickman, the St. Johns River City Band has become a musical and cultural treasure of the First Coast community. The River City Band will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2009. Your support will keep us going for another 25 years!

For more information, call 904.390.1999 or visit rivercityband.com. To purchase the Band's *Swinging Up the River* CD, visit cdbaby.com/cd/stjohnsrivercity.

WJCT is pleased to partner with the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville to showcase local arts organizations and help bring the arts to life on the First Coast. For more arts and cultural information, visit culturalcouncil.org.