

Pennypack

PK Music Festival/ (215) 745-5689

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Back to the Bandshell

By Elizabeth Stieber
Times Staff Writer

The bandshell in Pennypack Park once again welcomed the sounds of musical instruments and vocal harmonies as the Pennypack Park Festival kicked off its third consecutive summer season.

Nazareth Academy, Northeast and George Washington high

schools performed last Wednesday for families, friends

and residents who, relaxing on blankets and lawn chairs, enjoyed the concert on the warm spring evening. Appropriately, Nazareth Academy's jazz choir opened the concert with *Let There Be Music*. That song choice was music to Ed Kelly's ears. Kelly, former head of the Northeast Chamber of Commerce and chairman of several mayor's advisory

*"The Magic of
Music must
return to City
Classrooms"*

**-Dr. Ruth
Horowitz
-Festival Board
Member**

Sponsor Base Expanding

From Sign-A-Rama to ClearChannel, from The Country Club Diner to The Philadelphia Foundation, from the City's activities fund to COMMERCE Bank, from the Mayfair CDC to Comcast and PECO, plus hundreds of donors at the events...support for the New Pennypack Park Festival is growing steadily, on all levels.

"My office is proud to support this kind of public-private initiative," said State Sen. Mike Stack, who helped the Festival obtain a \$5,000 economic grant.

"We consider our support of the Festival as an investment in community activism," said R. Andrew Sweeney of The Philadelphia Foundation.

"People working together to support family entertainment and to bring the magic of music to city classrooms...that is something COMMERCE Bank wants to be part of," said Joanne Biscalia, the bank's public relations director.

Irish Night Packs the House!!!!



The Bandshell as it appeared in the Spring of 2000.

The infectious lure of Irish music combined with some of the best weather this season drew a record crowd to the Pennypack Summer Festival last week. Featured on the bandshell stage were two popular bands, Common Ground and The Hooligans. The resulting turn-out of over 4,000 fans was a new record for the revived Festival,

which drew crowds of eight to ten thousand during its Big Band heyday in the 1980s.

Sponsor of the evening was the Mayfair CDC, which headed by Reese Hartey, Irish Night also produced another record as \$1000 in donations was collected to help bring music back to Philadelphia's school district classrooms.

Restoration process...a model

Below: The Pennypack Festival Bandshell RESTORED!!



It all began over a cup of coffee at the Country Club Diner back in the Winter of 2000. Everyone agreed it was worth doing; bring back the tradition of live Summer music to the Northeast.

"We hosted America's Big Bands all through the 1980s," said President and Founder Ed Kelly. "Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey. The site was beautiful and we always had crowds of nine to 12 thousand.

Kelly, a legendary City Hall lobbyist, began to recruit support for the restoration. He met with City Manager Joe Martz. Plans for a complete restoration were put into motion. Jane Golden's Mural Arts Program agreed to contribute a new mural.

With a new roof, lighting, several coats of paint, Artist Ras Malik brought his imagination to the process. Days of painting were mixed with handling questions from curious visitors who told him of earlier Festival times, when they had met future husbands and wives at this wonderful festival.

"I was inspired by their words," said Malik. "This natural site is a perfect setting for music and dance."

From a modest season of four small events it soon expanded to 10 events. Last year, aided by regional billboards and support from local radio stations, events like Beatlemania Now and Irish Night filled the

Back to the Bandshell (continued)

His push for cultural and musical recognition in the area led to construction of the band shell in 1977 with approval from then-Mayor Frank Rizzo.

For years, the Pennypack Park Festival featured weekly musical events throughout the summer. Past performers included the Glenn Miller Orchestra, the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra and various string bands.

The successful events regularly drew crowds of more than 10,000 to the park.

Unfortunately, the festival originators, including Kelly, could no longer handle the administrative and logistical tasks of running the festivals and, in 1992, the band shell was all but abandoned.

Throughout the '90s, the band shell became a nesting haven for pigeons and a canvas for graffiti. Three years ago, however, local civic and business leaders decided to bring the festival back to the park and created board of directors to revive and restore the once-popular summer performances. Kelly is a member of that board.

Volunteers cleaned the band shell and a muralist (Ras Malik) from Philadelphia's world famous mural arts department painted a pastoral scene of the park on the back wall of the stage.

The Fairmount Park Commission assisted with lighting and trash removal.

A key element of this revived festival is to promote the value of music among youth. Kelly already has spoken with school district leaders, including CEO Paul Vallas, and the district has agreed to be a partner with the festival board in its future efforts. The board plans to use money raised through donations at festival performances for scholarships and to support the expansion of school music programs.

"The festival can be a great



*-Mural Artist
Ras Malik*



*--Some Musical Magic
From The Pennypack
Festival*

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The Festival

Mission

Just imagine music re-introduced into thousands of young lives. Pete Ciarrocchi can. The high energy local restaurateur helped bring Beatlemania Now to the Festival last year.

“This is all about giving back,” said Ciarrocchi, “and is there any better way than reaching young lives through music?”

Legendary Folk Music guru Gene Shay also lends his support to the growing Festival and its’ mission and hosts the singer-songwriter event.

“Music enriches lives. The Festival represents an opportunity to contribute a spark, a little slice

of magic to thousands of lives...and this venue in Pennypack Park is simply ideal.”

John LeCompt, a popular local pop-rock musician, remembers getting his first exposure to the unique chemistry of entertaining large crowds....back in the 1980s on stage at the Old Festival.

“I love this place; music became my life right here, on this stage. I am invested in bringing the festival back, bigger and better than ever.

Folk-rock icon Kenn Kweder echoes these sentiments.

“The Festival has earned everyone’s support.”

Partners are Welcome

COMMERCE Bank, ClearChannel, PECO, COMCAST....Chickie & Pete’s...are you ready to join the Festival’s expanding support network? Visit our site on the Web (PennypackPark.com) or call

us for a detailed presentation of our future plans. Consider becoming part of this Community Partnership. Sponsor a major event in 2004, help bring music back into the lives of local students.

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