

Southeastern Indiana Musicians Hall of Fame

David Kling – Music Educator and Performer

“A Personal Reflection of a Lifetime of Music”

Thinking back on my musical journey, I believe it began with early piano lessons and my music teachers throughout public schools. My parents, although very frugal due to necessity, thought it important to start me on piano lessons at age 6 with which I continued through 8th grade. I had several different teachers, one of whom was particularly effective in motivating and challenging me to excel. My grade school music teacher was Dorothy Pennock who made music fun as she traveled from classroom to classroom with her accordion and a musical repertoire that always had everybody singing at the top of their lungs. Miss Pennock also was in charge of our band program, where at 4th grade she informed my parents that I should play trombone. I loved band and its interactive nature both musically and socially.

When it was time for Bright and Guilford schools to consolidate into North Dearborn High School, Charles Green was named as director. At this time, I was only in 6th grade but Charlie was ready to have a big band and he combined all of us into a marching band that would have its first performance at the Lawrenceburg soap box derby parade. We practiced by marching through Guilford and the old covered bridge that made us sound what we thought was big and impressive - one of Charlie's trademarks! I was in the North Dearborn band throughout high school and with our invitations to march at the Indianapolis 500 parades we put Little North Dearborn High School on the map. Charlie made us all feel like we were 10 feet tall and bullet proof.

North Dearborn High School was also the birth place of a popular dance band that played throughout the area, Tom and the Dukes. It started out as an acoustic group with school horn players, string bass and Tom on the drum set. When Tom graduated and went off to the army and rock and roll became in vogue, the band became The Dukes, a 5 piece group with guitars, organ and drums. Charlie Green played the organ to help the group make this transition, but as the band became increasingly popular and in demand Charlie wanted to use his time in other ways. He came to me and said he needed me to fill in as organ player for the Dukes for the summer because he was going to Europe during the school break - wow was that cool! The thing was, Charlie never intended to return to the band and never mentioned it again! I was in and I was hooked. The Dukes played for dances throughout the area - Sunman Legion being our home base, and I continued playing organ with the Dukes throughout high school and college - it was great! In later years I continued playing in a weekend band called Free & Easy that played throughout the tristate area. I have always loved playing in a group, interacting with other musicians and being able to get keep a room full of people out on the dance floor because they are turned on to your music.

Speaking of college - I had planned on going into engineering, but instead caught the teaching bug early. I was a summer lifeguard at Bar K Lake in New Alsace where I also taught swimming lessons. It was here that I discovered my true passion - teaching kids. Soon it was time to figure out my future and pick a college major. Wait a minute, I loved music, I loved my high school band experience and I loved teaching

- it had to be that. After graduating from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, my first teaching position was at Jac-Cen-Del Schools in Osgood, IN. It was here that I had the opportunity to learn it all: I taught beginning and intermediate band at the two elementary schools, junior and senior high school band, high school choir and show choir. I was crazy overloaded, but again, as a new teacher I was able to experience just about everything. After three years there I received a call from my old high school director, Charlie Green saying that North Dearborn and Sunman High Schools were consolidating into East Central High School and he needed an assistant and junior high band director - I was immediately onboard! I taught with Charlie for five years and then along came the consolidation at South Dearborn High School. This was my opportunity to take all of my experiences and build a new program of my own. Although difficult at first, South Dearborn became my home for the next twenty five years, where I was blessed to have the pleasure of experiencing thousands of students who passed through our music room doors to become our high school music family. It was always my philosophy to make our high school music programs interesting, educational, non-competitive and inclusive so that all interested students could have an opportunity to participate and gain pride in their accomplishments. I remain in touch with many of these students today through social media and am able to hear several of them play in bands in their adult lives. In my last five years at South Dearborn I was motivated to become principal where I was able to implement several systematic changes making the school more inclusive and friendly for all students.

It is now my pleasure in my retirement years to continue teaching music lessons at my home studio. It is here that I have the opportunity to offer individualized instruction, write my own music and exercises and enjoy introducing each student to the wonderful world of music. I found that my young students particularly loved playing Christmas music but were lacking in options of interesting music for other holidays. It has been a true gift for me to write and publish a series of holiday songs that are derived primarily from the way I perceived them as a young boy: "Mr. Kling's Holiday Music for Students to Play, Sing and Enjoy" is educational, playable, and just plain fun - just the way I think it should be. I must say that I have always truly enjoyed my experiences playing music, but my sincere passion is teaching it to others.