

Musical Director:

Larry O'Brien (Trombone) Las Vegas, NV

Clarinet and Saxophones

Kevin Sheehan - Alto Clarinet Chicago, IL

Matt Johns - Alto Lake City, FL

Serafin Sanchez - Tenor 1 Arvada, CO

Philip Whack - Tenor Columbia, SC

Chad Gridley - Baritone Youngstown, OH

Trumpets:

Ashley Hall - Lead Coral Springs, FL

Mike Harrison - Split-lead Casa Grande, AZ

Alcedrick Todd - Third / Jazz Youngsville, LA

Jeff Smith - Fourth Portersville, PA

Trombones:

George Reinert III - Anchorage, AK

Doug Kost - Zelienople, PA

Josh Favors - East Lansing, MI

James Borowski - Apollo, PA

Piano:

Andrew Nevala - Mountain Home, ID

Drums:

Gregory Parnell - Vandergrift, PA

Bass

Shawn Marko - Warren, OH

Vocalists

Julia Rich - Nashville, TN

Nick Hilscher - Marietta, GA

Larry O'Brien - Musical Director

Larry O'Brien became the leader of the Glenn Miller Orchestra on November 25, 1988. It is the second time that Larry has held this position; the first time being from June 1981 through September 1983 when he was called away by other commitments.

Larry was playing trombone in the Dunes Hotel "Casino de Paris" orchestra when Glenn Miller Productions, Inc., first asked him to front the band. "It was a great surprise to even be considered for such a job and was definitely a step up for me," Larry admits. "I was flattered and apprehensive, too. I was following some very fine leaders, and I hoped I could uphold the fine Miller tradition."

Larry O'Brien does have a direct link back to the Glenn Miller sense of performance. He first performed with the Miller band in the early Sixties, when Ray McKinley was the leader. Ray, of course, served in Europe with Glenn Miller's Army Air Force band and then acted as its unofficial leader after Miller's disappearance.

Larry has been involved with the big bands during most of his career. He performed with the orchestras of Sammy Kaye, Buddy Morrow, Ralph Marterie, Ray Eberle, Billy May, Les Elgart, Boyd Raeburn, Art Mooney, and Lee Castle. In 1962, Larry was the featured soloist / lead trombonist with the Sam Donahue Tommy Dorsey Orchestra and performed all those great Tommy Dorsey solos.

He also spent several years as leader of a group backing Frank Sinatra, Jr., in live appearances, recordings and television shows. They toured worldwide for almost three years and appeared numerous times on *The Merv Griffin Show*, *The Tonight Show*, and *The Mike Douglas Show*. The association with Frank, Jr., continued in various formats for sixteen years.

In 1979, Larry settled in Las Vegas where he played with the Al Ramsey Orchestra at Caesar's Palace, backing up such stars as Tom Jones and Frank Sinatra. He also worked with Sergio Franchi, Wayne Newton, Roy Clark, and many other noted performers.

In June 1981, Larry accepted his first assignment as leader with the Glenn Miller Orchestra. He toured with the Orchestra through September 1983 and then returned to Las Vegas again to fulfill commitments to the Al Ramsey Orchestra at the Golden Nugget Hotel and the Russ Gary Big Band Express.

Larry is quite proud of the two albums he recorded with the Big Band Express, *Have Horns Will Travel* and *A Time To Remember*, which also featured trombonist, Carl Fontana.

When not working in Las Vegas, Larry toured with Pia Zadora around all of the United States and Korea. He also performed on her record *Pia Today* which features the Sammy Nestico Orchestra. Larry also reunited with his friend, Frank Sinatra, Jr., and with trumpeter Buddy Childers they toured Italy and performed in Las Vegas regularly.

The trombone has been Larry's instrument right from the start. He was born in Jamaica, New York on July 15, 1933. His father, Vincent, preferred classical music, but Larry and his mother, Leonore, liked the sounds of the big bands.

"Tommy Dorsey was my primary motivation force. He was the *enfant terrible*, the bad one who, when it came to trombone, put everybody away. I started on trombone when I was about 13, and as soon as I got interested, Dorsey became prominent. I remember picking up *Marie* and *Hawaiian War Chant* and stuff like that. From then on, he was like a religion to me."

The musical training really began at John Adams High School in Jamaica, New York, with trombone lessons by the band director. He also studied privately with trombonist Ed Kolyer who played in Broadway shows. A year later, Larry, who was then only 15, was first trombonist with the New York City All-City High School Symphony Orchestra and, at age 16, won the New York Philharmonic Orchestra Trombone Scholarship. Then there was a three-year stint in the service from 1952 to 1955. He attended the Naval School of Music in Washington, D.C. and was assigned to the 328th Army Band. When O'Brien got out of uniform, he went to New York University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education with his major in music. It was while attending college that Larry joined the Sammy Kaye Orchestra, which was then performing at the Roosevelt Grill in New York City. He also toured and recorded with the orchestra and was the featured soloist on the *Sammy Kaye Television Show*. That job lasted right through the four years of school and whetted his appetite for the big band career. "I'm only somewhat amazed about the Miller mystique." Larry stated. "It's many-faceted. There's more than one reason for the continuing popularity of the band. For one thing, Glenn gave up a lucrative band business when he was at his zenith to join the service-when he didn't have to. He was immensely popular when he entered the service. The band had sold more records in a year than, I think, Elvis or the Beatles ever did in a year. Then he went on to form a monster band, play all over Europe for the GIs, help sell a lot of war bonds, improve morale, and generally contribute greatly to the war effort. Finally, he disappeared mysteriously in a plane that took off from England for France on December 15, 1944. No trace of the plane has ever been found. So I think it's a combination of all these factors in addition to the great Miller sound itself that keeps his music and his name alive."

O'Brien has his own ideas about how to keep the Miller style and sound fresh. "I'm a traditionalist, but we're not nit-picky Miller. We've instituted some changes we think Glenn probably would have instituted himself were he still here such as retaining the voicing of *Danny Boy* as a brass chorale, but replacing the trumpets with flugelhorn and having the trombones play in hat."

There's more. One critic wrote: "A sense of swing feeling ... seems to have returned with Larry O'Brien's assumption of the leadership of the Glenn Miller Orchestra. [Larry] has steered his orchestra in the direction the Miller music followers demand-the band's basic foundation-the Glenn Miller Music."

Larry O'Brien underscores his dedication to maintaining the Miller aura: "Some of the more modern part of our repertoire we play in the big band style. Some we don't. What we're trying to do is run this band the way we feel Glenn would have if he were still here."

That the Miller sound still lives on is no surprise to O'Brien. "It seems that good things just don't ever die. Rather, they age gracefully and mellow with the years. If anything, I honestly think the authentic Glenn Miller music today is more popular with more people than ever before."

Julia Rich - Vocalist

Julia Rich is a preacher's daughter from Nashville, Tennessee, who loves to sing. When Julia was three years old her mother, teacher June Blankenship, told Margaret Wright of the Middle Tennessee State University music department, "I'll be sending you a singer." Rich grew up in church choirs and singing at revivals held by her father, Rev. H. Fred Blankenship. Her fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Helen Philpot of Shelbyville, TN, taught her to sing "Faraway Places." A few

years later, Rich received a Bachelor of Music degree from MTSU where she was classified as a lyric coloratura; she learned a great deal from Margaret and Neil Wright.

Julia picked up harmony singing from the Methodist hymnal and the Beatles. A fondness for Judy Garland led her to Tony Bennett and how it felt to snap on 2 and 4. (If you're snapping on 1 and 3, you're at the wrong gig.) While house sitting for a college professor, she discovered a Cleo Laine record and ran to the piano to see what those notes were. After a stint as a singing waitress at the Chattanooga Choo-Choo complex, Julia performed in a theatre production of "Side By Side By Sondheim" and was offered a nightclub job, which brought her together with pianist Paul Lohorn and bassist Joey Smith. Smith became a jazz mentor and familiarized Rich with the music of Sarah Vaughan, Peggy Lee, Ethel Ennis, Billie Holiday, June Christy and the only diamond in the sea: Ella Fitzgerald. Voice lessons were helpful, but the best instruction turned out to be Ella in the headphones.

Join the Miller Band; see the world.

In 1985, Julia became the featured female vocalist (girl singer) with the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Joey Smith, who was playing bass in the band at the time, recommended her. Stanley Turrentine organist Butch Cornell played for Julia's audition tape, which they made in Chattanooga in the classroom where she taught junior high school music. Rich's first show with the GMO was at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville.

Touring with the Glenn Miller Orchestra has taken Julia to every state in the union and throughout Canada. The band has played in several countries in Central and South America and also in Spain, Guam, and Iceland. Fourteen 6-week tours of the Japanese Islands have made Rich a fan of the food, the people, the culture, and the concert halls of Japan. Other memorable venues include the Hollywood Bowl, Lincoln Center, the World's Fair in Seville, many beautiful old theatres and opera houses in the USA, and plenty of high school auditoriums full of friendly people who like good music. Watching couples that have danced together for 50 years and listening to them talk about what the music has meant in their lives continue to inspire Julia.

Julia Rich has sung Chattanooga Choo-Choo and Kalamazoo in Chattanooga and Kalamazoo and from Reykjavik to Honolulu to San Salvador to Saskatoon. She has visited the faraway places with the strange sounding names. Rich even sings "Faraway Places" with the Glenn Miller Orchestra and was able to dedicate the song one night to a special friend in the concert audience: her fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Philpot.

Plays well with others

Girl singer Julia Rich has worked with and learned from many fine musicians on the road including GMO leaders Larry O'Brien and Dick Gerhart, singers Jeannie Dennis, Joe Francis, Bryan Anthony, and Nick Hilscher, players Mike Duva, Marc Vinci, Andy Hagan, Bill Washer, and Richy Barz. The counsel and encouragement of Dr. Paul Tanner of the original Glenn Miller Orchestra and his wife Jan have been invaluable. Glenn Miller's sister, the late Irene Wolfe, was a cherished friend and a source of inspiration. June Alyson, who played Helen Miller in "The Glenn Miller Story," is a new friend and a source of delight.

During Rich's tenure with the GMO, the band has performed with such notables as The Mills Brothers, Helen O'Connell, Rosemary Clooney, Mel Torme, Lynn Roberts, Kay Starr, Connie Haines, Teresa Brewer, Jerry Vale, The Four Aces, Kathie Lee Gifford, Joan Shepherd, and former GMO leader Buddy de Franco. The Glenn Miller Orchestra has shared the stage with The Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, The Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, the Guy Lombardo Orchestra, and the Count Basie Orchestra. A treat for Julia was sharing a dressing room with Basie singer Carmen Bradford at the Hollywood Bowl, where Ella Fitzgerald had appeared only a few days prior.

On the business end, Rich served as road manager for the Glenn Miller Orchestra from 1995-2000 and as assistant road manager to saxophonist Mike Duva from 1987-1992. It was as GMO road manager that she acquired the nickname "that woman."

Solo act

Julia Rich has sung solo many nights in Nashville at Mere Bulles or The Merchants or Clayton-Blackmon and many nights in Chattanooga at the Fairyland Club or Union Square. She has entertained the Literacy Volunteers of America (see if they still play her CD when you're on hold), at Maximillian's in San Francisco, aboard the Crystal Harmony and the Westerdzaam, impromptu at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City (with Helen O'Connell), the Village Vanguard in Sendai, the St. James Club in Osaka, and at night spots in Chicago, Sao Paulo, and Tokyo.

Rich likes singing with a small group and sometimes just a piano or just a guitar or just an upright bass. She has been fortunate to make music with the late John Propst, Eddie Edwards, Jeffrey Steinberg, Johnny Veith, Pat Bergeson, Lennie Foy, Dennis Solee, Lori Mechem, Roger Spencer, Charles Dungey, Rex Peer, Butch Cornell, and Takehisa Tanaka. One lovely November, Rickey Woodard played his saxophone with her and a trio in downtown Nashville every weekend for a month. How do you spell "cloud nine"?

The musicians on Julia's albums are established jazz players with top credentials. She has played with them live on a number of occasions: always fun, always creative, and always educational. See "Getting it on wax" for more about these fine artists.

. . . 'Cause I wrote this song about you

Julia Rich wrote her first song in a piano practice room as a college senior. (No one remembers the year.) It was about somebody dating someone else's boyfriend and several songs followed expressing young love and angst. As a public school music teacher, Rich (a.k.a. Mrs. Highsmith) wrote melodies and lyrics for her performing glee club for Valentines Day, Halloween, Christmas ("Santa Claus is a Big Bad Daddy"), and end of school ("Boogie into Summer"). "With All My Heart" on "The Way You Make Me Feel" album is the story of her parents' meeting and was written to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Telling a story with a song, turning feelings into something singable: nice work if Julia can get it.

A high spot in Rich's songwriting experience is Benita Hill. Friends since 1992, they became collaborators over dinner one night in Nashville when Rich answered a Hill question with, "Basically, it just boils down to two afternoons in December." Benita countered, "Are all that I

want to remember." And they were off!! (Hear the result on "I'll Take Romance.") On another evening, Benita sipped her wine and asked, "How was the cruise?" to which Julia replied, "Well, it was raining in Rio." (Find it on "The Way You Make Me Feel.") Benita has helped Julia expand her creative compass by often insisting that Rich come up with a better line than the one that was obviously already perfect.

Nick Hilscher - Vocalist

Nick Hilscher is a twenty-five year old vocalist who started with the Glenn Miller Orchestra on the first of August 1998. His home is in Marietta, Georgia, where he has performed often with a local big band. Nick graduated from Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama in May 2000. Many of you know Nick as a vocalist but he majored in piano performance while in college. Much of Nick's vocal training has come from singing in choirs throughout his life, ranging from church choirs to all-state choruses and college choirs. His favorite style of music is big band jazz, and his vocal style in this area has developed from listening to the voice of Frank Sinatra and also Glenn Miller's first vocalist, Ray Eberle. His love for the Miller sound began at the age of twelve and is still going strong. Nick has just completed his first album, "Nick Hilscher Sings" with the Glenn Miller Orchestra.