

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

# This orchestra starts with swing, then goes beyond

By Gloria A. Hoffner  
INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF

DREXEL HILL — With a strong downbeat, John Hoey kicked off a night of classic swing-era tunes by opening with a rousing drum solo on "Sing, Sing, Sing."

Hoey, who has been hitting the sticks since he was 3, started the John Hoey Orchestra 10 years ago. After playing in high school and college bands, Hoey began a teaching career, but the pull of music was too strong to stay away.

"I didn't want a teaching degree in music because, for most people, that means they end up teaching music, and I wanted to make music. I earned a degree in religious studies with a minor in theater," Hoey said.

"I taught at St. Elizabeth High School in Wilmington for two years, and I loved the kids. I just felt I wasn't done playing music yet, and I could not do both."

The 11-member John Hoey Orchestra performs about 80 dates a year at locations up and down the East Coast, treating audiences of 20-somethings, boomers and seniors to a mix of big band and some classic

casional, teaching full time before becoming a full-time drummer and bandleader.

The John Hoey Orchestra's male singer, Rick Anthony, also has zigged and zagged in and out of music.

Anthony, 42, of Chester Springs, grew up in Drexel Hill as a member of a musical family. He sang as a student at Cardinal O'Hara High School and later at St. Joseph's University.

Anthony was singing part-time with an Atlantic City band, but as he completed his degree in labor relations and marketing, he was faced with a life-changing decision.

"Graduation was coming up, and I said to myself, 'Do I want to wear a shirt and tie or be a musician and wait tables?'" he said.

He decided on the suit and tie. As marketing director for AON Consulting in Conshohocken, Anthony was living a good life with a wife and four children.

Then in 1996, he was attending an event featuring the John Hoey Orchestra, and at the urging of friends, Anthony sang a few songs. Asked to join the Orchestra, Anthony kept his full-time job and accepted the singing gig.

"I love to sing. I've been a Sinatra fan since age 5. In college, people thought I was strange because I drove around with Sinatra playing on the car radio," Anthony said.

During a recent concert at the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center, about 300 people turned out to hear the orchestra — despite a threatening snowstorm. They were treated to Anthony's warm, deep voice filling the room with "Saturday Night Is the Loneliest Night of the Week" and "Embraceable You."

Audience members eased back and relaxed in their seats as the orchestra performed "Where or When" and "Stardust." After in-



The John Hoey Orchestra performs with vocalist Rick Anthony (at center, in white suit). They played at the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center on Valentine's Day. John Hoey started the orchestra 10 years ago because he wanted to make music, not just teach it.

termission, the orchestra members changed from tuxedos to zoot suits, suspenders and wide ties and turned up the beat with jitterbug tunes including "In the Mood" and "String of Pearls."

Jonas and Rachel Anderson of New Haven, Conn., came to Delaware County to visit friends. They learned of the orchestra on the Internet and attended the Upper Darby concert.

"We like to dance. We like big band music," Jonas Anderson said.

Rachel added, "This band is really great. Tonight is a lot of fun."

The orchestra's perfect crescendo on the ballad "Young at Heart" swept across the audience like a warm blanket on the cold winter night, reminding seniors of their youth and transporting younger audience members to another time.

Anthony's soothing voice on the romantic classic "All or Nothing at All" rounded out a perfect night of entertainment, said Harry Dietzler, executive and artistic director of the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center.

"I've known John since he

was 13 years old and auditioned for Summer Stage," Dietzler said. "I remember asking him, 'Are you any good?' He said, 'Yes, I am.' He was right."

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## John Hoey Orchestra

■ The John Hoey Orchestra will perform at 8 p.m. March 8 at the McGonigle Memorial Scholarship Beef 'n Beer at Monsignor Bonner High School, 403 N. Lansdowne Ave., Drexel Hill. The school's Web site is www.bonnerhigh.com. Tickets, at the door and in advance, cost \$30. For information about the event, call 610-459-5225.

■ For information about the John Hoey Orchestra, call 610-622-6213 or check www.hoeyorch.com.



John Hoey plays the drums at his orchestra's recent concert in Upper Darby. The orchestra plays both big-band tunes and rock music.



Guest Speaker, Brian Steltz, R.Ph.  
Wed. February 26, 2003 → 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

## Medication and Alzheimer's Disease

→ There seems to be new advancements in the development of new medication treatments for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias occurring all of the time. It can be hard for caregivers to keep up with all of these new developments in order to provide the best care possible for your loved one. And, caregivers need to be aware that if your loved one takes these medicines, that they will not cause an adverse reaction. Brian Steltz is the owner and pharmacist at King of Prussia Pharmacy and Medical Supply. During this seminar, Brian Steltz will discuss:

- What is Alzheimer's disease?
- The latest information in new medications for Alzheimer's
- How these new medicines interact on individuals with Alzheimer's and their possible side effects
- What is the best course of treatment for individuals with Alzheimer's disease?

## Free Alzheimer's Caregiving Seminar

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