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SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

The Stardust Memories Big Band will have a series of free outdoor concerts at Riverside Park.

STARDUST MEMORIES GETS JAZZ FANS 'IN THE MOOD'

CHARLES RUNNELLS
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is" at Riverside Park for a series of free outdoor concerts (although a \$5 donation is suggested).

The Stardust Memories Big Band is bringing the swinging sounds of Glenn Miller, Frank Sinatra and more to Bonita Springs.

The new series starts Tuesday with big-band jazz from the '30s, '40s and '50s. Future installments focus on the swing era (Feb. 16), Glenn Miller (March 8), Frank Sinatra (March 22)

The two-year-old professional band plans to play songs like "In the Mood," "Begin the Beguine" and "April in Par-

See Stardust, Page 33W



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

The Stardust Memories Big Band's first concert takes place 7-9 p.m. Tuesday.

Stardust

Continued from Page 32W

and contemporary big bands (April 12).

"We will start out our concerts doing the music that we are known for, primarily World War II-era music of the greatest generation," says bandleader and multi-instrumentalist Craig Christman. "But we will end our season with a concert of contemporary big-band music. This concert will feature music by Doc Severinsen and the Tonight Show Band, Maynard Ferguson and Buddy Rich, among others."

Christman formed Stardust Memories in 2014 to play dance-oriented swing music from the big-band era. The 17-member band features professional musicians from The Naples Phil-

harmonic orchestra, the Southwest Florida Symphony, local churches and colleges and the pit orchestras for Broadway Palm dinner theater and The Naples Players.

Christman, himself, has played with other local groups (including the Southwest Florida Symphony and The Naples Philharmonic), and he does freelance work playing clarinet, flute, oboe, English horn and saxophone for touring musicals at Artis—Naples and Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall.

Until now, the nonprofit Stardust Memories has played mostly private gigs, Christman says. But the Bonita shows will kick off more public concerts elsewhere. He hopes to expand to Collier and Charlotte counties next year.

Christman says the band is working hard to get ready for the new

outdoor concert series.

"Our band has been pretty tight-sounding because we only use professional musicians," he says. "But we will be spending some time with more rehearsals to really get things tight."

"We also will have a sound man taking care of our sound system for the outdoor concerts, so our

sound will be amazing!"

The band now has two singers it uses for various concerts, he adds, and its repertoire has grown to more than 100 songs stretching from the '30s to the modern era.

Stardust Memories has been selling out many of its private gigs, and Christman hopes for a similar turnout in Bonita

Springs. "I think we will, once enough people find out we're there," he says. "It makes me feel good to know that big band music is alive and well in Southwest Florida!"

The first concert takes place from 7-9 p.m. Tuesday at Riverside Park, 10451 Old 41 Road, Bonita Springs. People are encouraged to bring lawn

chairs or blankets.

The concert series benefits two local children's organizations focusing on music: The Music Foundation of Southwest Florida and the Music for Minors Foundation.

Learn more about The Stardust Memories Big Band at stardustmemoriesbigband.com.

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