

George Maurer

Piano and keyboards — George Maurer Trio, George Maurer Group and Variety Group

George is best known as one of Minnesota's premier jazz pianists, but his musical collaborations have taken him around the globe as a performer, arranger and composer.

He has shared the stage with Eric Clapton, arranged music for the Chiffons and written two original scores for Saint Paul City Ballet. George put his skills to work in spring 2011 as he worked on the world-class Minnesota Orchestra's "80s Rewind!" show co-arranging four songs, leading the band, directing the vocalists and playing keyboards for shows at Minneapolis's Orchestra Hall and with the Florida Symphony.

His repertoire includes indie movie soundtracks, 15 CDs, arrangements for everyone from gospel choirs to rock icons and an always-full itinerary of George Maurer Trio, Group and Variety Band performances. He has developed a well-traveled pop side gigging around the country with bands like the Crickets and pop star Bobby Vee. He music directed, arranged and performed at a Buddy Holly tribute at the House of Blues on L.A.'s Sunset Strip, where he worked with rock legends like Clapton. No stranger to the theatrical stage, George has performed and music directed a long list of shows, including "Rent" and the Chanhassen Dinner Theaters' "Altar Boyz" and "Swing!"

Armed with an uncanny ability to interpret, arrange for, and produce and perform numerous musical styles, from traditional jazz to bebop, classic to modern rock, to country and beyond, George is called upon often to be a hired gun for numerous recording and theatrical ventures.

Jeff Engholm

Bass and vocals — George Maurer Trio, George Maurer Group and Variety Group

Jeff wears many hats as a bassist, singer, songwriter, actor, engineer, conductor, producer, venue owner and resident granola cruncher.

Primarily a bass player, he works mostly for the George Maurer Trio, Group and Variety Group. Jeff also plays in Blimp, a Led Zeppelin tribute band, and is a singer/songwriter in the Collective Unconscious.

Jeff teaches audio production classes at St. Cloud State University and is also a recording engineer at Rockhouse Studios in St. Joseph, MN, where he has engineered and produced CDs for his own groups and many others. As an independent producer, Jeff has put together productions of "Carmina Burana", "African Sanctus", and the Beatles album "Abbey Road." Jeff arranged and conducted a 24-piece ensemble production of the Beach Boys' "Pet Sounds" which sold out to concert halls from St. Cloud to Zumbrota, MN.

Jeff and his wife, Stacie, own and operate the popular Local Blend coffee shop/music venue in St. Joseph, MN.

Muggsy Lauer

Guitar and vocals — George Maurer Trio, George Maurer Group and Variety Group

Muggsy has been playing guitar since age 12 when he started learning John Denver songs out of a songbook.

His love of jazz developed in high school, and he spent 17 years doing a weekly jazz radio show on KVSC-FM. Muggsy started singing jazz in the George Maurer Group and marks it as one of his most favorite contributions to the band.

Muggsy is also a member of Collective Unconscious and a mainstay of the popular Monday Night Jazz show at St. Cloud's Veranda Lounge. In addition to his musical work, he keeps the trio on its toes as owner and roast master of coffee supplier Muggsy's Beans.

Ann Michels

Vocals — George Maurer Group

Ann is singer/actor who has made Minneapolis her home for the past 10 years. Throughout her career she's charmed audiences and critics alike with performances in some of her favorite roles. She was described by the Star Tribune as "perfect" in her portrayal of Lucille Frank in Latte Da/Jewish Theater's production of "Parade," "summon[ing] aching hurt and dignity."

In Nautilus Music Theater's highly successful "Man of La Mancha," City Pages wrote, "Michels nails Aldonza's earthy cynicism," and the Pioneer Press, "[as] Dulcinea. Michels has the vocal cords to give a pretty singing to the role. But she can also inject a guttural vulgarity into her voice and presence." She was touted as "best in a pack of 'holy-cats-she's-good' singers" by City Pages for her turn as Dot in Theater Latte Da's "Sunday in the Park with George." In 2007 Ann starred in Chanhassen Dinner Theater's world premier production of Irving Berlin's "Easter Parade," creating the role of "Hannah Brown" (originated by Judy Garland in the movie.)

With a broad range of talents as both a comedic and dramatic singer/actress, Ann has worked with a wide variety of Twin Cities theaters, including The Guthrie Theater - Chanhassen Dinner Theatres, Nautilus Music Theater, Theater Latte Da, History Theater, Illusion/Actors Theater, The Jungle Theater 2008 and Outward Spiral 2001 and Theater de la Jeune Lune.

Ann starred in the short film, "The Black Hole in the Kitchen" by Adam Zang (in production), and has done will soon be working in a supporting role on a short film, "A Brief Conversation" by Ann Prim. She has recently been busy working on her one-woman show, "Stations of the Heart", written for her by George Maurer and lyricist Jim Payne. She also lends her voiceover talents to film and commercials and loaned her image to the cover art for the 2011 George Maurer Group release "Twisted."

Richard Witteman

Trumpet and vocals — George Maurer Group and Variety Group

Richard's and George's relationship stretches back to the mid-1980s when they were students at Saint John's University. They met their first day of their freshman year at college, and Richard has played on several of George's solo piano CDs.

This early relationship set the stage for Richard joining the George Maurer Group, where his versatility allows the group to perform its amazing variety of music. He has an incredible ability to sound like everyone from Tony Bennett and Frank Sinatra to R&B artists as he sings with the George Maurer Group. His trumpet, meanwhile, provides the brass the group needs to do its swinging big band numbers.

An all-around classic guy. Richard also sings with the Half Steps a cappella group and works for Bankers Systems, St. Cloud, MN.

Scott Chabot

Drums — George Maurer Group and Variety Group

Scott is a much sought-after jazz drummer in the Twin Cities Metro. He is George's right-hand man Scott is my right hand man when it comes to listening for nuance, whether it's capturing what George is after in an original composition or hearing what a live song needs. He is able to interpret numerous song styles, from rock to R&B to jazz — effortlessly.