



# The Carnival Band Media Kit

## ABOUT

The Carnival Band is a community-based brass band that seeks to use music and dance as tools to empower its members and audiences alike to work toward peaceful and positive social change. Under the direction of father-son duo Tim Sars and Ross Barrett, the Carnival Band has operated for over a decade out of the Britannia Community Center in the Commercial Drive neighborhood of Vancouver, British Columbia. The band plays music ranging from samba, calypso, funk, and klezmer to New Orleans style jazz—animated music that injects crowds with an instant blast of energy.

The band invites anyone to join the band regardless of musical experience and seeks to offer a creative outlet to people from all walks of life. Since 2007 the band has been managed by the Open Air Orchestra Society, a registered non-profit.

As part of a growing movement of activist street bands throughout North America and Europe, the Carnival Band exists first and foremost to serve its community. The band plays primarily for community-focused events such as parades, festivals, fundraisers, protests, rallies, and not-for profit organizations, but also feels equally at home throwing down beats on nightclub stages or busking in the streets of Vancouver.

In short: we do it for the love and the money too, but most of all for people like you. (Bonus points if you know the Carnival Band tune that line comes from!)

## HISTORY

From its very earliest days, the Carnival Band has had its roots in activism. In 1997 Vancouver performance artist and community activist Dan Vie founded a band to partake in the now infamous demonstration at the APEC Economic Leaders' Meetings at the University of British Columbia. Those attending the demonstration noted the peaceful and uplifting spirit that the band brought to an otherwise violent situation. From this day, the Carnival Band was born.

Vie later hired Marcos X and Ross Barrett as musical directors as well as community music specialist Gregg Moore whose personal compositions still make up some of the band's repertoire today. After nine years of service and leadership that built the band into a well-known east Vancouver institution, Vie asked that the group develop a new management model so that he could step back and focus on his new role as a father. Marcos X took on the management of the band for about a year, after which he left the group to pursue more professional musical interests. This prompted the creation of the Open Air Orchestra Society as the band's managing non-profit, and turned a new page in the band's history.

Membership of the band has fluctuated over the years with over 200 members in total. Though the band generally maintains a core group of 16 to 24, many people come and go, and are always welcomed back at any time. As an ensemble, the Carnival Band has toured through Europe, China, throughout United States and British Columbia, and performed at the 2010 Olympic Games in its home town of Vancouver.

## OPEN AIR ORCHESTRA SOCIETY

The Open Air Orchestra Society was formed and incorporated as a non-profit society in the winter of 2007 to bring greater transparency and member engagement to the operation of the Carnival Band, and to promote amateur, community-based performance art and advocacy throughout the city. Its mission is to fill the city with live, original music from around the world as a means to personal and political empowerment, creativity, and wellness.

The OAOS was founded on the belief that many of our social and environmental dilemmas today stem from a lack of empathy and effective, non-violent expression and that the creation of music in group settings is a critical part of how we learn these vital human skills. Membership to the OAOS is open to the public.



## MEET THE MUSICAL DIRECTORS (available for interview)



### Tim Sars

Under the influence of his father, Tim Sars has played the baritone saxophone since the age of 12. He began playing professionally in his early 20s, eventually going on to study music at Vancouver Community College. A staple in the Vancouver music and arts scene, Sars currently plays in the popular afro-beat band Miami Device and is leader of Sweet Pea Swing Band and jazz bebop group the Tim Sars Trio. With a deep passion for children and

children's entertainment, he founded Dixie Star Storytelling with his wife, Lisa Sars. Tim's musical influences include David Branter, Gerry Mulligan, Bach, and his father and co-director Ross Barrett. He lives happily in Vancouver with his wife and two children, Ella and Amadeus.

*"In a time so busy with work and responsibility, people come to the Carnival Band to find a sense of community that is external to that craziness. The Carnival Band is able to bring different types of people together, and it allows them to learn from each other while growing musically and spiritually."-Tim Sars*

*"My dad and I are both really lucky to have each other as partners because we speak the same language. There are a lot of different dialects to music, even in any one tradition, but we always understand each other."-Tim Sars*

[www.myspace.com/timsars](http://www.myspace.com/timsars)

[www.turnerme.com/sweetpeaswingband.shtml](http://www.turnerme.com/sweetpeaswingband.shtml)

[www.dixiestars.com](http://www.dixiestars.com)



## MEET THE MUSICAL DIRECTORS cont... (available for interview)



### Ross Barrett

Ross Barrett has played music as long as he, or any camera can remember. At the young age of fifteen he began performing professionally, later going on to achieve a bachelor of music from the University of British Columbia. Throughout his career he hit the top of the charts playing with pop groups such as Mock Duck and Sunshyne, and opened for greats such as BB King, Fleetwood Mack, Taj Mahal, Steve Miller, and Randy

Bachman. He now lives and works in Vancouver as a freelance composer, music theorist, an artist, and musician. Ross can be found each week leading the Sunday Soul Service at the Cottage Bistro on Main Street, or playing and leading the Dixie Strollers, the Ross Barrett Trio, and the Ross Barrett Quartet.

*"I've always felt blessed to be able to play at all, and even more blessed to have so many people come and play with me. To me friendship has always been my greatest treasure and music has brought me many, many friends. I've never seen myself as a teacher or even a coach but I believe music has a way of explaining itself; the less said the better.*

*Playing good music, well that's the fun! The better one plays the deeper the understanding and so everyone participates in the heightening of their humanity. The audience and the dancers win from this as well. I guess I'm just a real believer. I've been playing since I was a kid. I played my first professional gig in 1959 and I've been making my way with my music ever since. It's funny but I still just love to play."*

-Ross Barrett



## MEET SOME OF THE CARNIES (available for interview)



### **Marc Lindy**

Instrument: Tuba  
Alter Ego: Podiatrist  
Joined the circus: 2008

*"People in the Carnival Band really take you by the hand and say, 'here you can do this.' People look after each other. That's the magic of the Carnival Band. There's total musical freedom there, and there's nothing holding you back." -Marc Lindy*



### **Tara Balcombe**

Instrument: Tuba  
Alter Ego: ESL teacher for VCC  
Joined the circus: 2010

*"I was born and raised in Vancouver, and I grew up on Commercial Drive. For me the band has really become a place where I feel like I belong. I feel like I'm part of something. It's just ironic after all these years that I end up back where I grew up to find my place." -Tara Balcombe*



### **Andrew Brechin**

Instrument: Hand Percussion  
Alter Ego: Government worker  
Joined the circus: 2007

*"I think my favorite part is the audience response. We're obviously giving them something that they want. You get people dancing and clapping and screaming. We're giving them fun."*

-Andrew Brechin





## QUICK FACTS

- The Carnival Band was officially founded in 1999
- Plays a repertoire of over 150 songs written primarily by musical directors Tim Sars and Ross Barrett including samba, calypso, funk, klezmer, and New Orleans style jazz
- Members range from 12 to 80+ in age
- Instrumentation includes mainly brass, woodwind, percussion, and auxiliary percussion (think samba line meets new Orleans brass band), but is open to anything
- Works regularly with dancers, clowns, stilt walkers, fire dancers, and other local performers
- Musical ability ranges from absolute beginner to professional
- Official membership over 200; fluctuating core group of around 16 to 24

## TESTIMONIALS

*“The Carnival Band sure knows how to make a splash. They are talented, lively, fun and community-minded. When you want to get your party or event started, you can count on the Carnival Band!”*

-Libby Davies, NDP Member of Parliament, Vancouver East

*“The Carnival Band embodies the best of what we have come to love in HONK! bands—a multi-generational non-hierarchical group of musicians, who join together to support social justice causes, to reclaim public spaces for the public, and to inspire and uplift the spirits of people wherever they play.*

*Their stamina for music-making is legendary. Their spirited sound gets everyone on their feet and dancing. In 2006, when the HONK! Festival was just a crazy idea in a few people’s heads, Carnival Band said, ‘we’re coming,’ and at that moment we knew that our idea was going to fly. And it did.”*

-Trudi Cohen, HONK! Committee, Somerville, MA



## THE REST

**Downloadable images** for press use are available [here](#).

Can't see us in person but want to rave about how wild, energetic and amazing we are without making stuff up? See videos of us playing at the **Word on the Street Festival, 2010 Winter Olympic Games, Alice in Wonderland Festival**, or this **short documentary**.

## LINKS

The Carnival Band website

The Carnival Band blog

Open Air Orchestra Society

HONK! Festival of Community Street Bands in Boston, Seattle, and Austin

## CONTACT

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