

Jodie Mikula

Jodie Mikula: Texas-Czech orchestra leader, born Joseph Michael Mikula, on November 9, 1918, in Telico, Ellis County, Texas. He died in Ennis, Texas, on December 19, 1989, and is buried in the Mausoleum at St. Joseph's cemetery in Ennis. He was the son of Joseph F. and Mary B. (Babek) Mikula and was raised on the family farm in Telico with three sisters. The younger Mikula learned to play the accordion from his Uncle Frank and was an auto mechanic by trade. Typical of many Texas-Czech families who have preserved and cultivated a love of Czech music, the Mikulas attended Czech dances and played Czech music in their home.



In 1967, Mikula organized the Jodie Mikula Orchestra. The original band members included Jodie on accordion and his three sons, Ken, who sang and played cornet, tenor saxophone, baritone, and trombone, Nick, who also sang and played cornet, alto saxophone, lead guitar, and alto horn, and Andy, who was is the percussionist and band manager. Also part of the group were drummer Rose B. Horak, Jodie's wife, and Jodie's Uncle Frank, who played accordion. For twenty years, the band played weekend dances, polka festivals and similar venues. In 1989, they performed on their first cruise, just six months before Jodie Mikula died.

The band has produced thirteen recordings to date, including eight with Jodie: *The Mikula Orchestra plays Ennis Style Music* (1970), *Jodie Mikula and His Orchestra Presents 'My Darlin' Polka'* (1971), *Jodie Mikula and His Orchestra Presents Music From the Good Old Days* (1973), *Jodie Mikula and His Orchestra Presents Czech Sounds From Texas* (1974), *Jodie and His Orchestra Presents 'Bandmasters Polka' and 'Flying Martin Waltz'* (1975), *Jodie Mikula's Orchestra Just Like Old Times Again* (1980), *Jodie Mikula's Orchestra Presents a Toast to Czech Music* (1985), *Twentieth Anniversary Album: Dance Tonight Featuring Jodie Mikula and His Orchestra* (1987) Following Jodie Mikula's death, the band released a tribute record entitled *Tribute to Jodie by the Jodie Mikula Orchestra* (1990), which featured songs he already had selected for an album. The band has since made four more recordings: *Hot Favorites* (1990), *Jodie Mikula Orchestra Presents the Klobase Polka* (1993), *Musically Yours, The Jodie Mikula Orchestra* (1997), and *Shades of the Jodie Mikula Orchestra* (2002).

In 1990 Mikula received a posthumous award from the Texas Polka Music Association (TMPA) for his work as a pioneering band leader who devoted his life to polka music. Since his passing, his sons have kept the Jodie Mikula Orchestra going, and it continues to perform at numerous events, such as Oktoberfest, the Six Flags Heritage Festival, and The New Braunfels Wurst Fest. In 1991, the TMPA honored the group as Band of the Year, Best Vocal Duo and Trio (Ken and Nick), Album of the Year (*Hot Favorites*), and Writer and Arranger of the Year (Frank Kubena). In 1993 the band's song "The Klobase Polka" was named song of the year.

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