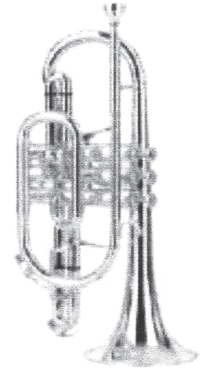


JAZZ SOUNDINGS

THE PUGET SOUND TRADITIONAL JAZZ SOCIETY



December 2022

Volume 47, Number 10

IT'S A PRE-HOLIDAY TRADITION; HEAR RAY SKJELBRED'S SEXTET ON DECEMBER 18!

By George Swinford



Ray Skjelbred, piano; Josh Roberts, guitar; Jacob Zimmerman, reeds; Mike Daugherty, drums; and Steve Wright, trumpet. Bassist Matt Weiner is not pictured.

Matt Weiner regularly leads a trio at Seattle's Pink Door. While he hasn't yet led a band for us, he will be doing so in March. The term "All Stars" has been used to excess, but for such a group as this it wouldn't be far off the mark.

With two fine reed players on hand, Ray intends to feature a group of Jimmy Noone songs. We will also hear some things new to us, including Irving Berlin's

(Continued on page 3)

WHERE:

Ballard Elks Lodge
6411 Seaview Ave. NW
Seattle, WA

WHEN:

December 18, 1–4 p.m.

ADMISSION: Pay only at door
PSTJS members, \$12
Nonmembers, \$15

Free admission for those under 21 who accompany a person paying admission.

FURTHER INFO: Carol Rippey,
425-776-5072, or www.pstjs.org.

Plenty of free parking; great view & dance floor; snacks, coffee, and other beverages available.

Each year since 2010, with one exception, pianist Ray Skjelbred and a select group of his musical friends have entertained us at our December session. The one exception was in 2019, when Ray played in the following month. In each session, the nucleus of the band has been Ray's Yeti Chasers. On December 18, along with Ray's piano, we'll be hearing these familiar players:

- ⇒ Steve Wright, reeds and trumpet
- ⇒ Jacob Zimmerman, reeds
- ⇒ Josh Roberts, guitar
- ⇒ Matt Weiner, bass
- ⇒ Mike Daugherty, drums

Steve Wright is an alumnus of Ray Smith's fine Paramount Jazz Band. Since leaving Boston for Seattle, he's been one of Ray's Yeti Chasers. Sidemen Jacob, Josh, and Mike have recently appeared at our concerts leading their own combos.

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UPCOMING PSTJS EVENTS

January 15: Alex Guilbert's Musical Chairs
February 19: The Ain't No Heaven Seven
March 19: Matt Weiner's Noonatics
April 16: TBA
May 21: The Old Grey Eagle Jazz Band

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JACOB ZIMMERMAN 3

Thursdays, 9–12 p.m.
Il Bistro, 93 Pike St. Suite A., Seattle
(206) 682-3049; website: ilbistro.net

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**The advertising deadline is the 10th of the month
for the next month's issue.**

Ads must be submitted in a JPG or PDF format.

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PREZ SEZ

By Terry Rogers

There are some folks who enjoy traditional jazz who for some reason or another don't think that jazz music and dancing should be in the room at the same time. I have never quite understood that position.



For one thing, it is kinda hard to keep your feet still when a band is really cooking (or even other parts of your body, for that matter). And let's face it, not all human bodies are naturally gifted at moving with grace and rhythm to the beat of a band. They would rather watch than participate, and that's OK. But everyone on the dance floor deserves credit for at least getting out there and giving it a try.

From a musician's standpoint, I can tell you that we love to have people dancing and swinging to the music. Selfishly, it is validation that what we are doing is hitting home, and that the dancers and the players are having a shared experience based on the music, the beat, the specific tune, and the emotion of the moment. We as humans express ourselves in many different ways: facial expressions, words and voice modulations, and body position and movements—like dancing. We each have our own versions of these capabilities, and they are as unique to us as our voices and our fingerprints. This uniqueness also applies to musicians. We each have our own style that reflects who we are and what our training, experience, and talent may be. I don't think it is a matter of being better than another musician (although, there is some of that); it is simply that we are all gloriously different.

At a break at a gig years ago, I asked the band members who they would like to play like, if that were possible. Our drummer at the time, Maurice Quine, looked at me and said, "Why would you want to play like someone else? In that case it wouldn't be you. Embrace who you are, and be proud of it!"

We have had the opportunity to play at retirement and nursing homes over the years and have been touched by patients with significant cognitive and movement issues still finding the will to smile or move at least part of an extremity to the beat of the

music. That is their dancing, and it attests to the power and effect of this music; it is very rewarding.

So, if you are uncertain about whether you should dance or not, in the words of the late Maurice Quine (who was a really good dancer), "Embrace who you are, and be proud of it!"

RAY SKJELBRED (Continued from page 1)

Coquette Waltz. Jacob Zimmerman will be featured on Ray's new Jigsaw Rag.

As previously noted in this series of articles, Ray plays superb Chicago-style piano. His playing style recalls such giants as Earl Hines, Joe Sullivan, and Jess Stacy, each of whom made their jazz reputations in Chicago in the 1920s. He chooses a variety of tunes; some familiar, some obscure, and some just not heard often. He will present his thoughtfully assembled play list in tempos that bring out the best features of the music, and the band will treat each tune with respect.

Ray and his augmented Yeti Chasers have pleased our listening and dancing members a dozen times already. Give yourself a pre-holiday treat by joining us to hear them again on December 18, at the Ballard Elks.

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THE “ORIGINAL DIXIELAND JASS BAND” (ODJB)

By Doug Parker

This article is continued from the November issue.

The ODJB made a hit with the general public, probably because, except for some ragtime-flavored recordings, it was completely different from what they heard on records before—not only what was played by military bands, but *very* different from the “sweet” society orchestras with violins and cellos, such as those of Joseph C. Smith on Victor records and Art Hickman on Columbia, though Hickman spiced up his band by adding a banjo to his rhythm section. Fans of the ODJB included the great operatic tenor Enrico Caruso who, according to his biography written by his wife, found their music “funny and interesting.”

On his way home from service in World War I, a soldier from Iowa named Charles Beiderbecke purchased several records, including some by the ODJB, and brought them home. His younger brother, Leon Bix (incidentally, his middle name was Bix, *not* Bismarck), listened to those records and played along with them, and so a great jazz career began.

After WWI came the pandemic of 1918 and ‘19, known as the “Spanish flu,” which claimed more victims than did the war. Sadly, from the viewpoint of the ODJB, one of their sidemen was one of these: pianist Henry Ragas, whose fine, sensitive playing is not heard to advantage on any of their Victor recordings, except for “Bluin’ the Blues,” on which he is listed as one of the composers. His work is more audible on the Columbia records of early 1917, and to a greater degree, on the Aeolian-Vocalion vertical discs.

His replacement was ragtime composer-pianist J. Russell Robinson, whose [That] Eccentric [Rag] became something of a Dixieland standard in the ‘20s and later. His biggest song hit was probably “Margie,” thanks to a recording by Eddie Cantor, who dedicated it to his daughter, whose name was Margie.

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery: if so, the Messrs. LaRocca, Edwards, Shields, Robinson, and Sbarbaro should have been flattered by the groups that followed. Most notable among them were the bands led by W. C. Handy and Jim Europe, whose 369th Infantry Band, an all-black brass band that brought a taste of home overseas to our soldiers, black and white, northern and southern,

could be considered the forerunner to Glenn Miller’s famous Army Air Corp Band of World War II. The real imitation is in the form of the five-piece bands using the same instrumentation as the ODJB that came along. One was the Original New Orleans Jazz Band, led by a then-young pianist named Jimmy Durante! The drummer in this band was Johnny Stein, who, in the book *Hear Me Talkin’ to You*, consisting of interviews with musicians, ranging from the black pioneers of the early days, up to the modernists of the 1950s, claimed that he, not Nick LaRocca, started the ODJB, but LaRocca stole the band from him and headed for Chicago. This author says this claim must be taken with several grains of salt!

After the end of WWI, the ODJB toured England, with the band now consisting of LaRocca, Shields, Robinson, and Sbarbaro, with Edwards replaced by Emile Christian, whose brother Frank played trumpet with Durante’s band.

There is a personal note to be inserted here: In the late 1960s, there was an annual weekend event—similar to later jazz festivals—held at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, and known as Dixieland at Disneyland. One year, a group called the New Orleans All-Stars was assembled, with such great players as cornetist “Doc” Evans, clarinetist Raymond Burke, tuba player Don Franz of the St. Louis Ragtimers, and banjoist Dr. Edmund Souchon. The trombonist was Emile Christian. During a break, this writer had the privilege of meeting him, and listening to him tell of his experience playing with the ODJB in England. Without a doubt, Emile Christian was the most interesting person the author ever met in a lifetime of involvement in Our Kind of Music. Too bad a portable tape recorder wasn’t available to record his reminiscences.

During the ODJB’s tour of England, J. Russell Robinson decided to return to the U.S., for reasons unknown. He was replaced by a British pianist named Billy Jones, not to be confused with the popular American singer of the same name known for his duets with Ernest Hare.

If “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery,” the ODJB would have been flattered by the number of five-piece “Dixieland” bands that played and recorded around that time. A French CD company issued a two-disc set of records, including bands of this nature. Some were quite good, such as the aforementioned Durante band: but then there were some, of which the less said the better, such as the Earl Fuller band, whose records on Edison and Victor included the clarinet playing of Ted Lewis!

Upon returning to the U.S., the ODJB tried to pick up where they left off, with Robinson and Edwards rejoining their bandmates LaRocca, Shields, and Sbarbaro. Unfortunately, Victor executives wanted a more “commercial” sound and insisted not only on them recording the hits of the day, but adding Bennie Krueger’s alto saxophone to the mix. While he was a fine technical player, who later formed a good band of his own, including the great banjoist Harry Reser, he was *not* a good fit for the ODJB, as in their 1920 and ‘21 recordings, there seemed to be a conflict between Krueger and Nick LaRocca as to who was playing leads.

This was, in the writer’s opinion, the beginning of the end for this history-making band. They did not record at all in 1922, when they cut four sides for the Okeh label in 1923. LaRocca, Edwards, and Sbarbaro remained, but Shields and Robinson were replaced respectively by Artie Seaberg (clarinet) and Harry Vanicelli (piano), with Don Parker added on soprano sax. Unlike Bennie Krueger, he played in close harmony with Seaberg. These were the last recordings made by the ODJB before they disbanded and became a part of jazz history.

*(A footnote: On the Okeh session, the selection from their first record, *Livery Stable Blues*, was renamed *Barnyard Blues*, with a wider variety of animal imitations.)*

As part of the “March of Time” radio broadcast series, which aired in the mid-’30s, the historic band that made the first jazz records—the Original Dixieland Jazz Band—was reassembled, with all surviving members from their first recordings in 1917. Included were Nick LaRocca, cornet; Eddie “Daddy” Edwards, trombone; Larry Shields, clarinet; and Tony Sbarbaro, who by now was using the simplified spelling of his last name “Spargo,” which was also easier to pronounce. Not surprisingly, J. Russell Robinson was at the piano, replacing the deceased Henry Ragas.

This broadcast led to the RCA Victor company engaging them for a series of recordings, according to British writer Brian Rust’s *Encyclopedia of Jazz Records*, a two-volume set that is an excellent source of detailed information about records of ragtime, jazz, and “hot dance” recordings made between 1897 and 1942. The band recorded not only a half-dozen small-band sides, but about a dozen by a big, swing-influenced band directed by Nick LaRocca.

These sides were issued as by “Nick LaRocca and the Original Dixieland Jazz Band,” but except for “Clarinet Marmalade,” on which both Nick and Larry Shields take solos, LaRocca serves only as a non-

playing director. However, Robinson and Spargo are included in the personnel. The six quintet sides were recorded under the name of the “Original Dixieland Five,” and make an interesting comparison with the original acoustical recordings. They appear as the last six tracks on the aforementioned “AVID” two-CD set. Unlike the original 1917 and ‘18 discs, which are mostly all-ensemble, there is space for solos.

In 1938, at the famous Carnegie Hall concert featuring Benny Goodman’s orchestra, plus special guests, there was a segment called “Twenty Years of Jazz.” Appropriately, the first selection played was “Sensation Rag,” introduced by the ODJB. This recreated ODJB included “B. G.,” of course, special guest Bobby Hackett on the cornet, and Gene Krupa at the drums. Goodman took a bit of artistic license by adding a string bass, played by Larry Shields. Eddie Edwards acted as the non-playing director of a big band, which although it included Shields and Spargo, unfortunately did not recreate any of the ODJB’s classics!

But with the Dixieland and trad jazz revival, which began in the late ‘30s, the jazz classics introduced by the ODJB began to be heard and recorded again, by such bands as those led by Mugsy Spanier, Pete Daily, and Bob Scobey, plus Portland’s famous Castle Jazz Band. One by one, the members of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band left the world behind: First, Larry Shields in 1953, followed by Nick LaRocca, Eddie Edwards, and J. Russell Robinson in the later ‘50s and early ‘60s, with the last to pass on being Tony Spargo in 1969.

Well, this great pioneering jazz band did not literally “create” jazz, but thanks to the medium of phonograph records, they did introduce it to the public and added several fine pieces to a then-receptive audience. One thing this writer regrets is that these jazz classics are not played as often as they should be nowadays.

And *that’s* the saga of the Original Dixieland Jazz/Jazz Band.

Welcome to New Members!

Rhea Nagle
James & Vivian Roll
Rebecca Kerr
Horace Ace & Candice Cathcart
Dave Menz

These members joined in 2022 and their names were unintentionally omitted from this column.
Our apologies!

Photo Review of Josh Roberts Sextet, October 16, 2022

Courtesy of Allen Reed



The band: Eric Eagle, drums; Patrick Metzger, bass; Josh Roberts, guitar and banjo; Jacob Zimmerman, clarinet and alto saxophone; Emily Asher, trombone & vocals; and Ray Skjelbred, piano.



Guitarist Josh Roberts moved to the center of the stage to lead the band during his PSTJS debut as leader.



Eagle & Metzger anchored the rhythm section in Eagle's second PSTJS appearance and Metzger's first.

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The Puget Sound Traditional Jazz Society is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to the performance and preservation of traditional jazz. Your membership and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law. Thank you.

PUGET SOUND TRADITIONAL JAZZ SOCIETY

PSTJS officers and board members—December 2022 absentee ballot

* Incumbent

If you must miss the December meeting, here is your chance to vote for your PSTJS officers and board members. Remove the ballot from the newsletter, vote your preference, and mail by Dec. 12, 2022 to: PSTJS, 19031 Ocean Ave., Edmonds, WA 98020-2344.

Place your name(s) and the word **BALLOT** on the top left of the envelope. Your name will be checked on election day and your vote added to the rest. On election day the ballots will be removed and the envelope discarded before the ballots are tallied.

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The nominating committee recommends that you vote for ALL of the following candidates.

Carolyn Baker* Keith Baker*

Jim Blokzyl* Sharon Dooley*

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If you intend to vote at the concert in December, you will be required to present your membership card to receive a ballot.

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