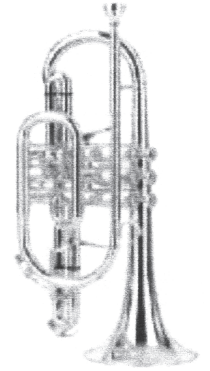


JAZZ SOUNDINGS

THE PUGET SOUND TRADITIONAL JAZZ SOCIETY



November 2022

Volume 47, Number 9

IT'S THE BLACK SWAN SEXTET, WITH MARILYN KELLER, ON NOVEMBER 20!

By George Swinford



Marilyn Keller, vocals; Rick Holzgrafe, cornet; Steve Matthes, clarinet;
Ron Leach, drums; Andy Hall, piano; Kit Johnson, tuba

to presentation and performance of Dixieland, old time gospel, early jazz and ragtime music.” The band’s name commemorates Black Swan Records, a pioneering black-owned company based in Harlem. That company, led by Harry Pace, marketed its classic jazz and blues to an African-American audience from 1921 to 1924, when it was absorbed by Paramount Records, which continued to serve that market.

(Continued on page 3)

WHERE:

Ballard Elks Lodge
6411 Seaview Ave. NW
Seattle, WA

WHEN:

November 20, 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.

Our jazz society has a long relationship with the Black Swan Classic Jazz Band from Oregon’s Willamette Valley. It goes back at least to 1992, according to information furnished by Carol Rippey. We last heard them in November 2021. They declare themselves to be “dedicated

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UPCOMING PSTJS EVENTS

December 18: Ray Skjelbred's Yeti Chasers
January 15: Alex Guilbert's Stampede Orchestra
February 19: The Ain't No Heaven Seven

GIGS FOR LOCAL BANDS

ALEX GUILBERT

November 3, 7–9 p.m., with Jacob Zimmerman
Osteria la Spiga, 1429 12th Ave, Seattle

November 9, 8:15–10:15, with T.O.P. Quartet
SwingitSeattle, Polish Center, 1714 - 18th Ave, Seattle
Website: www.swingitseattle

November 19, 2 p.m.
A little talk about stride piano
Ev Stern's Jazz Workshop, 1060 NE 100th St, Seattle

RAY SKJELBRED

November 26, 4–6 p.m.
Royal Room, 5000 Rainier Ave. S., Seattle
Website: <http://theroyalroomseattle.com>

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Wednesdays, 7–10 p.m.
The Pink Door, 1919 Post Alley, Seattle
(206) 443-3241; website: <http://thepinkdoor.net>

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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PREZ SEZ

By Terry Rogers

I was watching a YouTube video of the band Tuba Skinny playing a tune called “The Lonesome Road,” and I wondered if it was from the “traditional” repertoire. Tuba Skinny is a great trad jazz band based in New Orleans. It is led by Shaye Cohn, a very talented multi-instrumentalist woman, and its clarinet player is Craig Flory, who played for many years in Seattle with Tom Jacobus and The Great Excelsior Jazz Band. Tuba Skinny has a wide-ranging book of tunes and often wanders into territory that others might not consider to be real “trad jazz.”



This begs the question, what is a trad jazz tune and who gets to decide if it is or is not, and does it make a difference?

Generally speaking, I think trad jazz music comes largely from the first three decades of the last century. This was a time before radio and movies had grown to be accessible to most Americans, thus live music was the vehicle that brought this kind of entertainment to many people. The presentation was more than just the tunes and the notes. It served in many respects as reflections of the realities of life at that time: relationships, loves, sadness, wars, politics—the stuff of human existence. It was a major vehicle for commenting on life of that era, and thousands of tunes were written reflecting that experience. We had love songs, patriotic songs, blues, gospel songs, cakewalks, sad songs, happy songs, marches—you name it.

This music was played as solos, in small groups like what we identify as a trad jazz group, and in larger ensembles. It was played for listening, dancing, lamenting, and mostly for entertaining. This music developed its own character, largely comprised of a strong rhythm background joined by front-line players of the wind and brass variety. It is common to have spirited and talented soloists, but for me it is the underlying rhythm that carries the day with trad jazz. That is what captures the listener, gets them to tap their feet and to pay attention, and that gets them up dancing.

Back to the question about the tune “The Lonesome Road” that I posed in the first paragraph. Some might

consider it a “bluegrass” tune or, worse yet, a “country” tune. As it turns out, it was written in 1928 by Gene Austin and H. Shilkret and might even be considered a Gospel tune.

As for Tuba Skinny’s rendition, it clearly is from the “right” time period, and it clearly belongs in the book of any “trad jazz” group. So there.

By the way, if you are wanting or needing a trad jazz fix in the dead of the night, just type Tuba Skinny in the YouTube app and listen/watch to your heart’s content. There is an almost endless list of offerings available, and they are really good. Enjoy!

BLACK SWAN (Continued from page 1)

Our November concert will bring Black Swan to us for the twelfth time, this time reduced to the sextet pictured. Marilyn Keller is the crowd-pleasing vocalist. Cornetist Rick Holzgrafe and clarinetist Steve Mathes constitute the front line. Versatile percussionist Ron Leach will be the drummer. Multi-instrumentalist Andy Hall is pictured with his trombone, but he’ll be playing piano for this session. On tuba, leader Kit Johnson completes the sextet.

These days, most of the groups we hear are just assembled for the gig, from the diminishing group of musicians who believe in the traditional idiom. Not so with Black Swan. They have been together for years! Marilyn Keller will be making her eleventh appearance on our stage. For Ron Leach, Steve Mathes, and Kit Johnson it’s appearance number ten, and for Rick Holzgrafe it will be number six. We know Andy Hall as a sideman with several of our bands. This will be his fourth session for us with Black Swan.

Years of playing together make for a tight presentation of the jazz to which the band is dedicated. Their long-time backing of Marilyn Keller adds depth to her outstanding vocal performances. All this encourages us to join the crowd at the Ballard Elks on November 20 for the pre-Thanksgiving performance of the Black Swan Sextet with Marilyn Keller. Be there!

Welcome to a New Member!

Doris Bradburn

Welcome

THE “ORIGINAL DIXIELAND JASS BAND” (ODJB)

By Doug Parker

A few years ago, a British CD company named AVID issued a two-disc set of most, but not quite all, of the recordings made by this pioneering jazz group, made during their heyday from 1917 to 1925, plus their “reunion” sessions of 1936. This set was titled *The Original Dixieland Jazz Band: Creators of Jazz*, which is how they billed themselves, akin to the flamboyant bandleader and pianist Ferdinand Jelly Roll Morton's self-aggrandizing claim, “I invented jazz in 1902.”

However, there is evidence to back up Jelly's claim as, if one listens carefully to his compositions, many of them show the influence of ragtime. Chicago-based publisher Walter Melrose speaks of Morton thusly: “Scott Joplin was his God, and pieces such as ‘Maple Leaf Rag’ were his models.”

Perhaps the “raggier” Morton compositions, such as, for example, “Grandpa's Spells,” were the connecting link between ragtime and early jazz.

Similarly, the early (1917–18) ODJB discs show the influence of ragtime, and in fact, might be considered a connecting link between ragtime and early jazz. Perhaps, like several of the 1941 recordings by the Lu Watters Yerba Buena Jazz Band, “orchestral ragtime” might be a good description of what the ODJB played and recorded. There was certainly a “raggy” flavor to the selections composed by the band members.

While the white musicians who discovered and began playing traditional jazz were influenced by such black pioneers as Buddy Bolden, Bunk Johnson, Freddie Keppard, the father-and-son clarinet-playing Tios, and Joe “King” Oliver, the style they developed came from other sources as well, such as the brass-band recordings made in the first two decades of the 20th century led by Arthur Pryor, Patrick Conway, and Columbia Phonograph Company recording director Charles Prince. (Notice: Your author did not mention the name of John Philip Sousa, as he notoriously expressed his opposition to what he called “canned music,” but had no objection to having his name used on record labels. So one of his sidemen, such as Pryor or cornetist Walter Rogers, would do the actual directing. Case in point: an excellent recording of the famous cakewalk, “At a Georgia Camp Meeting,” issued in 1908, which the writer has heard [on the original 78] and enjoyed since childhood, before discovering jazz and ragtime.)

The first white jazz band leader that we know anything about was a drummer named Jack Laine, known as “Papa Laine.” It might be said that he was the white equivalent of “Buddy” Bolden, in that he organized first brass bands, then offshoots thereof. The second chapter of the book *Hear Me Talkin' to You*, covering the history of all styles of jazz up through 1955, devotes the second chapter entirely to the white bands, as does *A Pictorial History of Jazz* in the chapter called “Original Dixieland One-Step.” Jack Laine recruited and taught the young musicians who played in his bands, including his cornet-playing son, Albert, the great trombonist George Brunies, clarinetist Charlie Cordilla, and the young men who became the Original Dixieland Jazz Band!

The original lineup of the band was as follows: Leader Dominick “Nick” LaRocca, cornet; Eddie “Daddy” Edwards (called that probably because he was somewhat older than his bandmates), trombone; Alcide “Yellow” Nunez, clarinet; Henry Ragas, piano; and Tony Sbarbaro (who later changed his name to the more pronounceable “Spargo”), drums.

Young clarinetist Anthony “Tony” Parenti, who would have been 15 in 1915, was *almost* the original ODJB reed man, but his parents refused permission for him to join this band, saying that he was too young. He went on to a distinguished career in New Orleans and later in New York.

In 1916, The ODJB traveled to Chicago, where they crossed paths with trombonist Tom Brown, who had a career lasting into the 1960s. The clarinetist in his band was young and promising—Larry Shields. So the two bands, or their respective leaders, LaRocca and Brown, traded reed men, with Nunez going to Brown's band, and Shields joining the ODJB.

With the personnel set to the group that made the first jazz records (also the first jazz band to play in New York), the ODJB got a job playing at Reisenweber's in Columbus Circle. There, they were heard by scouts from the Columbia Phonograph Company and recorded for them in January 1917, making a test pressing of “Darktown Strutters Ball” and the then-very-popular ballad “Indiana” (which was incidentally the *only* jazz record of this standard on which the very nice verse was played). Unfortunately, Columbia executives thought the sounds of “jass” were just noise, and this recording was shelved.

So, in February of the same year, our heroes trekked to Camden, New Jersey, the headquarters of the Victor Talking Machine Company, where they had

better luck. Their first record was of two compositions by band members, the “Dixie Jass Band One-Step,” which is now better known as the “Original Dixieland One-Step,” and “Livery Stable Blues,” with the front-line horns imitating the neighing of horses.

Unfortunately, the boys ran into another glitch; when ragtime composer Joe Jordan heard the “One-Step,” he said “Neigh” (pun intentional), as he claimed they had taken the trio of the tune from his ragtime song, “That Teasin’ Rag.” Litigation went in Jordan’s favor, resulting in Victor withdrawing the recording, then re-releasing it with the following title: “Dixie Jass Band One-Step, introducing “That Teasin’ Rag.” This apparently appeased Jordan. (A digression of local interest: according to ragtime pianist-researcher Dick Zimmerman, Jordan spent most of the latter part of his life in Tacoma!)

Next, a few months later, the ODJB went to the New York studios of the Aeolian-Vocalion Company to record about a half-dozen sides by this company’s “vertical-cut” process, in which a mechanical feed propelled the needle across the record, in a similar process to that used by Edison records of 1913 to 1929. This was in opposition to the lateral-cut records made by Victor and Columbia, on which the record groove itself controls the motion of the needle.

In 1918, it was back to Victor and some of the most remarkable recordings, of which the best known was undoubtedly “Tiger Rag,” which according to Jelly Roll Morton was taken from a French quadrille. (How he named it is another story!)

On “Skeleton Jangle,” trombonist Eddie Edwards was called upon to take a solo, so he played the first thing that came into his head, which was a passage from Franz Liszt’s “Hungarian Rhapsody #2.” Incidentally, Edwards was the only member of the band who could read music well, so he taught the tunes to his bandmates.

Belatedly, Columbia released the two sides that ODJB had recorded in January, but found out that by now, the band belonged to Victor. They spent much of 1918 and ‘19 trying to compete with the successful ODJB recordings, but to no avail.

One competing group was the Louisiana Five, whose leader, ironically, was the ODJB’s former clarinetist, Alcide “Yellow” Nunez.

This article will be continued in the December issue.

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We know that there are many many jazz events and stories that have played an important part in your life. Our goal is to gather a collection of stories for our editor to use in the *Jazz Soundings*, when space is available. The topics could include such things as:



- When did you first listen to this kind of music?
- Where did you hear it?
- Who were you listening to?
- Is there a particular melody that brings back a flood of memories?

Did you ever have the opportunity to listen to or chat with the musicians, (or leader) of any bands that are no longer in existence? This invitation is not only extended to our listening and reading members, but also to our musicians. Don’t worry about grammatical or spelling errors; we have an expert proof reader on board.

You may put your memories down on paper and mail them to PSTJS, 19031 Ocean Ave, Edmonds, WA 98020, or email your stories to pstjs.editor@gmail.com. We hope to be overwhelmed with stories and memories sharing the joy of loving this music.

Photo Review of Dave & Mike's Jelly Roll Jazz Party, Sept. 18, 2022

Courtesy of Bob Morgan



The band: Mike Daugherty, drums; Paul Hagglund, tuba; Dave Loomis, trombone; Michael Van Bebber, trumpet; Ron Peters, guitar; Hans Teuber, reeds; and Ray Skjelbred, piano.



Loomis & Skjelbred discuss Ray's 1982 experience of recording an album with Garvin Bushell, who had recorded with Jelly Roll Morton in 1928.



Bandleader Dave Loomis signals that the out-chorus is about to begin.

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