

THE CAT'S MEOW



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Young Man With A Horn

Lourie Center at Maxcy Gregg Park (just off Pickens near Blossom)

2:30-5:00 pm Sunday, March 3, 2019

Well, maybe not so young any more but you'll hear sounds that entranced a lot of young people in California when special guest, Larry Conger, picks up his cornet.

Larry got his start during a period called "The California Revival". This period was called "California Revival" because a group of California musicians were entranced by the music of New Orleans that Bunk Johnson brought with him to the Bay Area. By the way, "Bunk" earned that nickname because of his tendency to "enhance" stories of his early days, of the people he knew and of his contributions to Jazz. But there is no denying that Bunk had significant influence on a young group of musicians in California, especially those in the Yerba Buena Jazz Band, a band that I really liked. You might want to check out a fun piece called "Big Bear Stomp" composed in the "Big Bear Lodge" where the band rehearsed).

Bunk had moved from New Orleans to San Francisco and brought the sounds of New Orleans with him. (Editor's Note; I never liked Bunk's recordings but people in California said that he had been a fine player in his younger days). However, I gather my reaction is not uncommon. Most jazz lovers tend to fall into either of two camps; "Bunk fans" or "hit the off button now!"

I'm pretty sure that Bunk influenced Turk Murphy, leader of a band at Earthquake McGoon's (and that's where Larry got his big break). Then the New Orleans influence then made its way to the Midlands when Larry formed "The Two Rivers Jazz Band". Larry scouted the area for good musicians who could play early jazz. He found them at the Carolina Jazz Society and quickly recruited Tommy Wix, Ralph Goodwin, John Haynes, Charlie Borneman and Tony Torre. The group played gigs all over the area and made at least one vinyl record. **Does anyone have a copy?**

CAROLINA JAZZ SOCIETY was founded in 1958 to enjoy Dixieland Jazz, one of America's original art forms

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We will be the recipient of that long line of musical influence again this Sunday when Larry joins our guys! I might note that those kinds of threads are fragile. Just one job offer to a key musician along the way might have broken the chain (but it is equally possible that another musician might have gotten a similar offer and carried the thread forward to the same conclusion but by a slightly different route). Not to get too esoteric, there is a whole branch of mathematics called "Chaos Theory" that deals with this broad subject for those who are interested.

Wandering back on subject; we have benefited from the various musical influences that Larry brought to the midlands. And as long as I'm in the academic mode, I will confer the title of "Emeritus Cornetist of the Carolina Jazz Society Band" on Larry; a title that has been richly earned. **Thank you, Larry Conger, for all that you've done for jazz in SC.**

North Carolina Jazz Festival

Jerry Bright and I attended the NC Jazz Festival in Wilmington, NC recently. I've lost count of how many times I've gone but I go because it is one of the best managed Jazz Festivals that I've found.

There are many reasons to like the festival. First of all (at least for me), it is smoke free and has been since the beginning. Dr. Van Velsor, a physician, who played a big part in starting the festival made the festival non-smoking back in the day when smoking was de-rigueur at almost all concerts. Of equal importance, the room has excellent acoustics, a really good sound system and a very good sound engineer. The result is excellent sound quality all over the room.

And there is a fairly wide range of jazz styles but nothing that is "way out". In particular, Bria Skonberg is a regular (I first heard her as part of an all girl high school band from VanCover called "Mighty Aphroditie"). It was obvious, even at that young age, that she had real talent. She is now a featured player in NYC (most people, seeing her for the first time, are shocked when a young woman comes on stage, picks up her trumpet and really blows!). Feminists might be upset with that statement but she is a really good trumpet player. Not only that, she is also a good singer and not many people get that accolade from me!

Adrian Cunningham is another interesting musician. He is an Aussie who plays a number of instruments, including most of the reeds. And for one song, he used only a clarinet mouthpiece with his cupped hands serving as the body. I was impressed and told Doug Graham who replied, "Oh Yes. I used that technique to show my students the importance of the mouthpiece".

Red Smith, editor