

# THE CAT'S MEOW



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## Who Better to Kick Off the New Season?

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

2:30-5:00 pm, Sunday, September 8, 2019

**(Remember it's the second Sunday because of Labor Day Weekend)**

Doug Graham, will call the tunes, set the tempo, and get us all off to a happy season of music – the music invented right here in the US of A.

Doug can play it hot and he can play it sweet. But no matter how he plays it, you'll like it!

I'd known for years that Doug played clarinet & sax in Dick's Big Band, his Modern Jazz Quintet and also played with the USC Symphony. But then I learned he had trained as a classical musician and that was a shock. All the classical musicians I'd heard who tried to play jazz were unbelievably bad (at least to my non-musician ears). But my training in physics taught me that it only takes one example to upset a paradigm. And here was a powerful paradigm. I can't speak for Doug's classical chops but it was clear to me from the beginning that Doug was a fine clarinetist.

All this got me to thinking about other clarinetists that I've enjoyed. Of course, the first name that popped to mind was our own Tommy Wix. And Tommy played a big part in the success of our club.

Then, nationally, the list probably has to start with Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw (I still think that Shaw's "Gramercy Five" recordings ought to be on anyone's playlist). On the other hand, Shaw's theme-song "Nightmare" might be a good window into his complex personality which included being married to eight beautiful women (including Ava Gardner & Lana Turner).

But I also enjoyed Woody Herman. And when he was playing regularly, he paid someone to warm up his clarinet. As Woody walked onto the stage, his assistant would hand the instrument to Woody – the curtains would open, and the concert would begin. That sounds crazy until you learn, Woody was playing four hours a night, seven days a week.

**THE CAROLINA JAZZ SOCIETY** was founded in 1958 to enjoy Dixieland Jazz, one of America's original art forms.  
Concerts are \$10 for non-members, \$5 for members, free for Patrons and young people under 18.

### **It's Both the Musician and the Instrument!**

The clarinet can take on many roles because it is such a versatile instrument. In particular, it has a very wide range in both pitch and tone quality that can be exploited to wonderful effect by a good musician. And when the clarinet is in Doug's hands you can be assured that it is in the hands of a very good musician. Of course, a sax in Doug's hands is also a fine instrument.

### **Changing Subjects Abruptly**

I keep being amazed at what you can find on "You Tube". I wanted to refresh my memory on some minor point and the search engine directed me to a "You Tube" video of the closing number at a big Jazz Festival in France (or maybe in Canada – all the closing credits were in French).

There were a lot of musicians on the bandstand and in my experience, this usually means a "muddied up" version of whatever song they are playing. But in this case, it included a group of older musicians who hadn't played together for a long time. And they were enjoying the chance to play with old friends again. But it also included some very good young musicians and they were excited to be playing with musicians who had been icons to them. Everyone on the bandstand was having a good time. And those in back were listening, smiling and nodding at what they heard. Then after a short while, those upfront drifted to the back to let a new group to the mikes. You could see someone perk up at something they heard and then build on it.

That video included musicians who made me fall in love with this music in the first place. It included "Art Hodes", the distinctive pianist (who was featured in the very first concert that the Carolina Jazz Society ever held). Plus, he was the pianist with the first live jazz band I ever heard and his style was so distinctive, you could recognize his playing after the first two bars. The group also included Wingy Manone on Cornet, another musician I "discovered" as a teen. Plus, it included a favorite from a later period, Kenny Davern (Kenny and Bob Wilber played together for the first time at a festival in Colorado and had such a good time that they formed a group called the "Soprano Summit"). In these recordings, both played soprano sax (but Kenny worried that the sax was affecting his embrasure and went back to playing clarinet exclusively). And there were three things you could say about Kenny; he was a really good clarinetist, a really good saxophonist and an interesting character. When I mentioned Kenny, Doug said that he'd played with Kenny at a festival in Lake Lure and found Kenny to be both personable and engaging. I'm not sure you can say that about every musician but it sure is true for our guys!

### **Music and Math**

Many studies have shown a correlation between music and math abilities (remember Einstein played the violin). I asked Doug to tell me more about his early days and he had this to say:

"I was considered a gifted math student in high school, but I drove my math teachers crazy because of my lack of initiative (read: laziness) when it came to my classwork. I spent all my spare time making music. Doug added that he did get the opportunity to apologize to one of his teachers at a class reunion". Sadly, in my case, when I went back to Ocala to tell two of my high school teachers how much I appreciated what I learned from them, both had passed away.

That tells me it pays to take time to say "Thanks" regularly. And with that, let me say thanks for our great musicians, our members, our volunteers & the Lourie Center.

**Red Smith, editor**