

THE CAT'S MEOW



PO BOX 50806

Columbia, South Carolina 29250

803-432-1504

Bruce Clark Closes Out Another Fine Season

Capital Senior Center at Maxcy Gregg Park (just off Pickens near Blossom)
2:30-5:00 pm Sunday, May 5, 2013

Bruce Clark will lead the group on this, the last concert of this season (but never fear, we will be back on the first Sunday after Labor Day). And Bruce brings a great trombone legacy from his mother. Just to remind you, Bruce's mother is also a trombonist and had a band before Bruce was born but gave it up while Bruce was growing up. Then, she resumed playing professionally after Bruce was out on his own. However, a few months ago, she decided it was getting harder and harder to play at the level she had maintained all those years and decided to give it up once more. As a result, she gave all of her material to Bruce; a huge collection of music, play-lists, instruments etc. And Bruce made liberal use of this legacy when he led the group the last year. His play list came from some of his mother's favorite songs, including one that's not a normal Dixieland piece, "Old Cape Cod". It was a hit back in the late 50's, I think by Patti Page. I always thought it was a nice enough song but nothing all that special. **But, Doug Graham showed us what a glorious song it really is.** If you missed it, you may want to plead with the band to do it again.

It's been long enough now that I don't remember the specific songs Bruce called but he had some great Dixieland standards on that concert also. Bruce, please thank your mother for me and for all of our members. I asked Bruce if his mother was a key instructor. His answer, "It's complicated. I started band in elementary school in Georgia but received little in the way of instruction. Then, a move to Asheville put me into an established band led by the mighty Patricia L Garren. That first day she began quizzing all the students on detailed musical knowledge and I was clueless. When my turn in the inquisition came, the kid next to me leaned down and whispered "D flat, 5th position". With such a narrow escape, Bruce begged his mother for instruction. Bruce says she got out her Arban trombone book and we went to work. And by high school, I could read anything that came along.

We've had a series of fine trombonists with the Carolina Jazz Society, starting with Charlie Borneman president of the club in the early days and who was responsible for changing the name from the Columbia Jazz Society to the Carolina Jazz. The list also includes Joe King, Jack Sutherland and now Bruce Clark.

Even though she gave Bruce all her material, his mother's retirement didn't last long. She has once again begun playing and had a **paying gig on Easter!**

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.

Swing 42 Hot Club of Columbia

Each spring Camden has "Jazz at the Center", featuring a concert at the Fine Arts Center on Friday night followed by various groups playing at a number of venues around town during the weekend. This year, the only group I had a chance to hear was "Swing 42, Hot Club of Columbia". **And it was one of the best groups ever to play in Camden.** The band features the music of Django Reinhardt, the great Gypsy Jazz Guitarist, and with a brilliant move, they used a clarinet to play the part originally done by Joe Venuti, the jazz violinist. Plus, they had none other than our own Doug Graham subbing on clarinet.

The group features two excellent guitarists, Richard Maxwell and Jerry Sims, owner of Sims Music. Plus, they had Jimmy Gibson on bass with Jerry's son on drums. This is one of the best Gypsy Jazz bands you'll ever be able to hear. By all means, go hear them if you get a chance!

If you are not familiar with Django Reinhardt and his music, Django was a true gypsy living in a caravan that moved around Europe. But the group settled in France on the edge of Paris. At some point, Django heard some records by Louis Armstrong and that changed his music. He began combining jazz elements with Gypsy harmonies. And later, he got to play with Louis. Django wrote a number of songs including "Nuages (clouds), Swing 42 (as well as swing 39, swing 41, Minor Swing, and Swing de Paris). He was also one of the first European musicians to appreciate Dizzy Gillespie and modern jazz.

Django was a true gypsy, with little formal education or musical training. He couldn't read or write music. Someone else had to transcribe all the songs he wrote. And if you listen to Django's solos on different recordings of a given song, you'll hear that most versions have the same feeling but not the same notes.

But the Gypsy ways stayed with him all his life. He was scheduled to do a major recording but couldn't be found. When asked why he hadn't shown up, he explained, "The peaches were blooming in the countryside" as if anyone who didn't take advantage of that had no artistic soul. He had taken his family in the caravan on a week's trip through the countryside.

And when he was given a prestigious award by a major French Government Ministry, he showed up, thanked everyone for the award and disappeared. Stephan Grappelli knew they were expected to play as part of the affair and dashed out to search Django's major haunts. Grappelli found him playing pool with a bunch of pals and hustled him back in time to play.

The amazing thing about Django's playing is that you'd never know that he was burned in a fire and had little use of two fingers on his left hand. He was both a brilliant composer and musician.

Another group that does justice to his work is Pearl Django out of Washington State (I think I said in an earlier newsletter they were from Portland but the internet says they are based in Bellingham, Washington).

Red Smith, Editor

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PO Box 50806 Columbia, SC 29250

Web: www.carolinajazzsociety.com

Facebook: Carolina Jazz Society