

THE CAT'S MEOW



PO BOX 50806

Columbia, South Carolina 29250

803-432-1504

Aletha Jacobs Will Brighten Your Afternoon

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

2:30-5:00 pm Sunday, March 2, 2014

Dick Gordon pulled Aletha's name out of the hat to lead the group this Sunday. This is good. I think we can all agree on that. In particular, I got an email from a member saying "we had struck gold" when we got Aletha as our regular pianist (But we had a really good pianist before Aletha too).

I called Larry Conger to tell him how much I had enjoyed last month's concert (I don't believe I have ever heard Larry play any better than that!). During the conversation, he commented that Aletha is playing with **real authority** now. He said there are lots of talented musicians who never achieve that authority and it makes a big difference.

Of course Aletha has a day job teaching at Columbia College and the students there are lucky to have someone like that. Plus, Aletha is another of the talented students who went through the Jazz Studies Program at USC.

She has toured the Mediterranean and Central America performing for our troops and had a chance to play with some big name musicians, including John Pizzarelli, Freddy Cole and the "Drifters".



The thing I like is just how much fun Aletha has playing with the rest of the gang. Jerry Bright said it's a genuine pleasure just to watch her play because she so obviously enjoys it. But as those pesky infomercials say, "Wait!!! There's More!!! Aletha is also a doggone good singer too".

We had a really good turnout last month (and thank Anna for getting the meeting notice in the State Newspaper - this is not easy to do). What's more, everyone had a good time. But we're going to do it again this month.

Table set-up

Thanks to everyone who pitched in to help to get the room organized and the tables set up (**I think we have the best members of any club in Columbia - if not the State**). The church group that uses the facility before us were very late removing their equipment. Mary Kessler, the Executive Director, is aware of the problem and has taken steps to prevent a recurrence of this inconvenience.

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.

NC Jazz Festival

I went to the NC Jazz Festival in Wilmington in early February. If you haven't been there, I can recommend it. They have a bunch of first class musicians playing in a room with excellent acoustics all over the room. And as befitting a festival started by a physician, it has been non-smoking from the beginning. Also, like our concerts, nobody talks while the musicians are playing.

The festival has an interesting format. Every musician has a chance to lead a group for a set. And there are lots of mixing and matching among the sets. That helps keep everything fresh. I've gone to this festival for a number of years and I've seen some very good combinations develop. And the musicians have gone on to play together at other venues with some regularity.

Some Dixieland is always included but there is a lot of other really good jazz played. Everyone there were good but the two who stood out for me were Bria Skonberg and Ed Polcer. Bria is an attractive young woman but when she picks up her cornet, within the first bar, you know you are listening to a first class musician. She is from Victoria, British Columbia. I first heard her play at the Sacramento Jazz Festival in an all girl band. You could tell even at that young age, you were listening to a talented musician. And she has taken that opportunity and run with it. Bria is touring with her own band right now but she has regular gigs in NY City, her home base now. I don't know if we can work anything out with her busy schedule but I made contact with her and she expressed interest.

The other person that impressed me was Ed Polcer. If you remember, Ed managed Edie Condon's while playing cornet and leading the band there. Ed and the Carolina Jazz Society go back a long way. In the 80's, we tried to schedule Ed once or twice a year and those were always good concerts. Like many musicians during the downturn some years ago, Ed had to get a day job but still played regularly around New York. One tidbit, Ed and his wife both ran the NY Marathon and finished in respectable times.

Ed and his wife retired from their day jobs a few years ago and moved to New Orleans. The move has been good musically for them and for us too. He is playing regularly and it shows in his playing.

Ed has lots of contacts and he was the principal music director for the Festival (he does this for several other festivals also).

Another person who impressed me was Herman Burney on bass. We have a really fine bassist in Reggie Sullivan. It would be fun to have the two of them together on our stage. I've heard Herman for several years and he seems to get better each year. Everything he did was outstanding. Nicki Parrott was another bassist there. She did a lot more singing while playing the bass this time. She has developed into a very good vocalist (and I don't say that about very many singers).

Perhaps I will say more about the festival in a future mailing. Go if you are so inclined. I am sure you will enjoy the Festival.

Red Smith