

THE CAT'S MEOW



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Bruce Clark & his Trombone Will Lead the Troops

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

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

In my opinion, middle school band directors deserve a special commendation and maybe a special bonus (combat pay??). Many, if not most kids, are introduced to their instrument in Middle School. But this is a time when lots of new connections are being made between neurons in the student's brains and hormones are flooding into their bodies. Seems to me an ancient Chinese curse is pertinent. It says, "May you live in interesting times." I think that Middle School Band Directors live perpetually in interesting times.

Another thing that boggles my mind even more is that with all these beginning students, Middle School Band Directors need to know the fingering on each of the instruments. It's an especially cruel joke to ask this of a trombone player. But it was in this environment that Bruce toiled for many years. He deserves special thanks from a lot of parents in the midlands and our thanks also.

I asked Bruce what inspired him to choose the trombone, expecting him to say somebody like Tommy Dorsey or my favorite trombonist, Jack Teagarden or maybe more modern players like Bob Brookmeyer or Urbie Green. Bruce's answer, "my Mom". He said she had and still has the purest, warm, natural sound of anybody. How's that for making your mother proud! Not only that, he and we have the benefit of the treasure trove of arrangements and music he inherited from her. Bruce adds that another influence was his grandfather. Bruce said he had a fine collection of marches with Sousa's "The Thunderer" being Bruce's favorite.

Bruce is also a member of two other musical groups, "Dem Bones" and The Palmetto Brass. Turns out, Palmetto Brass had the dubious task of doing a series of **outdoor concerts during June, July & August**. Plus, Dem Bones regularly enriches the lives of oldsters by playing at retirement Homes. It's interesting to me that music reaches alzheimer's patients in a way that nothing else does. This really makes the concerts by Dem Bones and other groups so special.

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.

Other Trombone Tidbits

You can't mention trombone without thinking of Tommy Dorsey. When I was with GE, the guy in the next lab mentioned that his father was with the Cleveland Symphony, one of the great symphonies of the world. He said that after hearing Dorsey, trombonists in the symphony were inspired to change how they played and to expand their role in the orchestra. At least that's what I think I remember he said. It was a long time ago.

Jack Teagarden was another great trombonist (Pee Wee Russell called him the best trombonist in the world). With Jack, you also got a fine singer - one of the few people I enjoy hearing sing. I think that's because he used his voice the same way he played trombone.

Jack was from Texas and began playing professionally while still in high school with Peck Kelly. Peck had one of the top big bands in the region but like many very good regional bands, it was not well known outside Texas. Another bit that's not well known is that Jack had a second instrument, the tuba. He reasoned when just starting out that a second instrument would increase his chances of getting a gig.

Jack's innovative trombone style soon caught the attention of an agent in Hollywood and he lined up a series of gigs in California. But because Jack was not well known there, the agent wanted a publicity photo that would grab attention. To emphasize his Texas origins and his versatility, he said, "we'll get a picture of you on a horse playing the tuba." Jack said, there was just one problem - well two problems. Jack had never been on a horse before and the horse had never heard a tuba. When Jack gave the first blast, the horse took off at full gallop, leaving Jack and the tuba lying in the dust.

A Musical Dynasty?

Back in the '80's, before Dick Goodwin joined our group full time, the Society used a series of guests on trumpet, some local and some national. And I was always especially pleased when the call went to Ed Polcer. In looking into Ed's background, I discovered that Ed gave up a baseball career and job as an engineer to go into music full time. He ran "Eddie Condon's" for many years, playing cornet there. And music runs in the family; his father and grandfather were both musicians.

Now, **Ed's son, Ben, has a traditional jazz band based in New Orleans.** And his band is beginning to make waves nationally. What's more we all have a chance to hear him. Ben's band will be playing in Aiken on Friday, Dec 5, as part of the Cultural Arts Series. The concert will be at the Etherredge Center, 471 University Parkway. That's two days before our December concert. It should be well worth your time to make the trip. And wouldn't it be fun if somehow we could get father and son to join our guys at one of our concerts later on.

Red Smith, Editor