

THE CAT'S MEOW



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Aletha Jacobs Takes Up the Reins

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

2:30-5:00 pm, Sunday, January 4, 2015

It's almost as much fun to watch Aletha playing as it is to listen to her special piano artistry. And as usual, we will get to see and hear her at this concert. She will call the tunes and put her own special stamp on the music as she leads the band. Well, maybe lead is too strong a word. But she will **select the tunes** and provide input on tempo, phrasing and whether to do the verse or not. Plus, there's a chance we will get to hear her sing.

Aletha is another graduate of USC with a masters in Jazz Studies. She is director of "Carolina Alive" in the USC School of Music and she is also on the faculty at Columbia College. I personally think any student who has a chance to take lessons from Aletha is really lucky. I'm sure she adds zest and enthusiasm along with her constructive criticism. I firmly believe that zest and enthusiasm may not be essential in teaching but they make learning much more enjoyable and students get a lot more than just the basics.

Like most of our band members, Aletha's talents have given her a chance to play with a number of prominent musicians including John Pizzarelli, the Shirelles, the Drifters and Freddy Cole. Plus she has done her bit for our troops with tours in the Mediterranean Area and in Central America.

Dick Hyman

And as long as we are on the subject of pianists, one of the contemporary pianists I really like is Dick Hyman. He is one of the first to be called for recordings or special music in movies. If you want someone to sound like Jelly Roll Morton, Dick's your man, you need Fats Waller or Thelonious Monk? Dick's your man. I presume if you wanted someone to sound like, Debussy, or Mozart, he could do that too. But Dick is first and foremost a fabulous jazz pianist.

Dick says his father had little or no interest in music. But in an effort to bond with his 16 year old son, he took Dick to Jimmy Ryan's on 53rd St on Sunday afternoons. Back then, Jimmy Ryan's had a jam session every Sunday afternoon and musicians from around the city would drop in for a chance to play with someone new. Plus, it gave a chance for youngsters and "unknowns" to get exposure. Eddie Condon was the Emcee for the affair and Eddie noticed that Dick's father seemed to be out of his element.

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.

Dick Hyman (continued)

Eddie made a point of walking over and introducing himself. Dick said that after that, whenever his father met someone new, he would say, "shake hands with the hand that shook the hand of Eddie Condon". Interesting to me that someone with so little interest in music would be that impressed.

But the key point is that those sessions gave Dick a chance to play with professional musicians as a teenager and paved the way for his outstanding professional career.

That got me to thinking. I don't ever remember my father listening to music for pleasure and my wife said that was true of her father also. (but that was in the 30's. Jobs were hard to get and hours long). But music is an important part of both of our lives – just not the same kind of music. I tell new friends that I have a mixed marriage and while they are trying to figure out how to deal with that in our remnant of the old south, I add that my wife's CD's are almost all classical and mine are almost all early jazz. There is essentially no overlap. But we are compatible in other ways.

It is clear that musical connections are important to most people in all societies around the world. Still, I find the way that musical connections are formed by individuals to be very mysterious. To use a mathematical formalism "exposure is a necessary but not sufficient" meaning that you have to hear a form of music in order to make a connection but just hearing it, even repeatedly, is not enough to develop a taste for any given genre.

John Haynes

I received a nice note from John in response to last month's Newsletter (if you remember, John was our bassist for many years). In his note, he mentioned how much he admired Jim Hall and how much he enjoyed playing with him. John also reminded me that the Brit, whose name I couldn't remember, was Mike Atterbury (Mike is the Brit who came down from Charlotte to play with our guys) Mike played a nice sax and a very good clarinet. John went on to say that after Mike returned to the UK, Mike and his wife put on jazz festival's several times a year, mostly with American jazz musicians.

John is well up in years now and the years of lugging a bass around have taken a toll on his body, not to mention the 40 years or so that he worked for DuPont. That's why he decided recently to move into an assisted living facility. I'm sure he would like a note or call from time to time. His address is Room 209 Pinedale Residential Center, 798 Hermitage Pond Rd, Camden, SC 29020. His phone number is still 803-432-6848.

Don Boyd

Lastly, Don Boyd's widow and daughter dropped by at our last concert. It was so nice to see them. If you remember, Don had a stellar musical career; playing with Glen Gray before becoming the featured trombonist with Les Brown. Then after moving to this area, he co-lead the Helms-Boyd Big Band that played at the old Adam's Mark Hotel.

Red Smith, Editor