

THE CAT'S MEOW



PO BOX 50806 Columbia, South Carolina 29250 803-432-1504

Sticking with Great Clarinetists, Doug Graham Will Lead this Session

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

2:30-5:00 pm, Sunday, December 6, 2015

Remember, there is **no conflict with a major holiday this month. That means we will return to our usual meeting date on the first Sunday.**

One thing that impresses me about Doug is that he makes it look so effortless. But that's probably true of almost everyone at the top of their craft. I remember one of the top sportswriters of the 30's & 40's saying "sure writing is easy. All you have to do is sit at a typewriter (remember it's the '30's) until blood oozes from every pore" (at least that is how I remember it). Wikipedia tells me the correct quote is "writing is easy, you simply open a vein and bleed". This from a Pulitzer prize winning sportswriter named coincidentally, "Red Smith". That Red Smith is one of only two sportscasters ever to win a Pulitzer" (by the way, I like my version of the quote better). Hmmm, that sounds a bit like the guy who said, "I used to be conceited but now you couldn't ask to meet a nicer guy".

The fact is that you really couldn't ask to meet a nicer guy than Doug Graham. More importantly, in my estimation, "Doug is right up there musically with all the icons of the clarinet". Of course, a mention of "icons of the clarinet" brings Artie Shaw to mind. And if all you've ever heard are his big band recordings, check out his "Gramercy Five" recordings and prepare to be impressed. Among other things, listen to his use of a Harpsichord.

Shaw, a brilliant musician, was self described as "a difficult person". But he also had great charisma (both evidenced by his eight marriages). And he was clearly a bright, intellectually curious person. In addition to his musical talent, he was a serious student of advanced Mathematics. But then, shockingly, he quit music at the height of his career. All these contradictions seem to be summed up by his choice for a theme song. Google "Nightmare" and you'll hear what I mean.

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.

The Clarinet

What happens in music depends on both the musician and the instrument – think of the difference between Louis Armstrong on either cornet or trumpet vs Bix Beiderbecke on cornet. In particular, the clarinet is such a versatile instrument that in the hands of a very good musician can take on many roles. It has a very wide range in pitch and tone quality that can be exploited to wonderful effect by a good musician. I remember a club in NY in the 50's featuring Tony Parenti (I think). It was just Tony on clarinet with a bassist. Tony would start out in middle register and state the theme. Then he would improvise on that theme in high register and then drop down to low register. A full evening with just the two musicians was a delightful musical event.

Another clarinetist from that era that I really enjoyed was Irving Fazola. The founders of the (sadly, short lived) American Federation of Jazz Societies, arranged a tour of the archives of the Music Collection in the Smithsonian. There, we saw, a host of music memorabilia; from the very first cornet Louis Armstrong ever played to the drums that Gene Krupa used in the Carnegie Hall Concert to instruments used by famous modern jazz musicians.

In talking with the curator, I happened to mention Irving Fazola. At that, he said, "Oh Man! Faz had the sweetest tone of any clarinetist ever!" I was shocked that someone so young (he looked to be in his 20's) had even heard the name much less knew his recordings. You can hear why the curator was impressed if you Google "My Inspiration - song".

Doug covers the full range with his clarinet, he can do "sweet" - think "A Closer Walk", he can do hot - think "The Saints", he can do pretty, think "New Orleans", the Hoagy Carmichael song. And he can do soft, low register bits, one of the things that set Tommy Wix apart. But Doug is also just as great in his role in the typical Dixieland front line, holding his own against trumpet and trombone. Truly in the hands of a master, the clarinet is a wonderful, versatile instrument.

Other Gigs

This is a busy time for musicians. You can hear Doug, Dick, Bruce, Aletha, Reggie and Jim in a wide variety of settings. **In particular, Dick and the Big Band will do their annual New Years Concert at the New Berry Opera House. Dwight Spencer, the fine guitarist, will come down from Virginia to join them. Plus, Winifred Goodwin will provide an interlude in a classical vein.** If you are looking for a really good New Years package, check out the Newberry Opera House deal. The great thing is that you can have a wonderful evening of music and then go to bed next door. No need to get on the road with a lot of drunks after the concert.

Elections

We were supposed to have elections at our last concert but I made the arbitrary decision not to interrupt Pete Neighbor as he illustrated the technique he uses to introduce cruise patrons to the world of jazz (Note: all of our members are all automatically "Emperor Class").

Bob Davis has been nominated for president, a good choice in my opinion (he already has experience). We will take time to elect a full slate of officers. Don't be bashful. If you have a talent, volunteer (no experience necessary at most positions). Positions include, President, Vice President, & Secretary-Treasurer. Anna Amick handles publicity but traditional publicity is venues are disappearing. She could use some help if you are a whiz at social media.

Red Smith, Editor (farrensmith@bellsouth.net)