

THE CAT'S MEOW



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Special Guest Larry Conger

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

2:30-5:00 pm Sunday, March 4, 2018

It's always a pleasure when Larry picks up his horn and joins the rest of the gang. Dick Goodwin says it's almost like going back to grad school with Larry on the bandstand. Larry not only knows the chorus, he knows the verse, the bridge and the refrain. And Larry often calls some fun but obscure tunes.

As long time members know, Larry honed his chops playing with Turk Murphy at Earthquake McGoon's in San Francisco. Larry says that Turk always had about 200 tunes in the repertoire and each year he would drop a significant number and add an equal number of new tunes. Larry said that one night, Turk called one of the new tunes and Larry said, let me get the music. Whereupon, Turk said, we've played that number 20 times (at least I think that was the number) and you should know it by now. and he immediately started the count. **That's one way to keep band members on their toes!**

Larry grew up in California but some of you may be surprised to learn that Larry got a degree in music from Ithaca College in New York (by the way, Bob Iger, chairman of Disney Corp, is another grad of Ithaca College). And you may be equally surprised to learn that Larry played violin with the Greenville Symphony for a number of years.

Larry plays a distinctive, powerful cornet that really drives the band. I suspect that Buddy Bolden and Bunk Johnson look down from up above and clap whenever he takes a solo or sings an obscure verse.

THE CAROLINA JAZZ SOCIETY was founded in 1958 to enjoy Dixieland Jazz, one of America's original art forms

North Carolina Jazz Festival

Jerry Bright and I attended the NC Jazz Festival in Wilmington, NC. I like the Wilmington Festival because the acoustics are very good, there's no smoking and the attendees are there to listen to the music not to have something playing in the background while they talk to all their friends.

Ed Polcer was one of the featured musicians. Long time members will remember Ed for his fine cornet work when he came down from New York as a special guest at several of our concerts. The internet says that over the years, Ed has played for five Presidents and the King of Thailand (by the way, the King was a credible jazz musician himself). Ed is getting up in years but his playing is still strong. And when I met him in a hallway, I reminded him that he had played in Columbia with our guys. And Ed replied, "Oh yes, and Joe King led the group!"

I told Ed that it would be great if he could come play one of our concerts again. He said he appreciated the invitation but he finds travel to be tiring. He added that he chooses festivals where he can come the day before, get a good night's sleep and then play several sets over the next few days. Then, he makes a point of spending the night in the festival city before going back home to New Orleans. I was disappointed by his response but I understand exactly how he feels.

Adrian Cunningham is the new musical director of the festival (meaning he hires the musicians and decides who will play with whom on each set). But Adrian also played on some of the sets, on both reeds and flute. He is good on both but it is his flute work that I look forward to. He positions the flute so that when he blows across it (using normal flute technique), his breath can blow directly into the mike or not as he chooses. When his breath goes into the mike, it creates a roar in the sound system. And he uses this to develop a counter rhythm that is very dramatic. He has turned the flute into a real jazz instrument. I'm not sure I would want to listen to a whole concert featuring the flute but a few songs in Adrian's hands makes for exciting jazz.

Unsung Volunteers

To repeat, we're one of the oldest, continuously active Jazz Societies in the country. I think we've prospered all these years because we've had really good musicians **and** great volunteers. In particular, I want to recognize Myra Nelson. Myra, makes sure there is coffee and all the coffee supplies. **But wait there's more! When the center's coffee maker failed, Myra took it to the repair shop and paid for the repairs herself. I only found out after the fact! Thanks Myra!**

Red Smith, Editor