

THE CAT'S MEOW



PO BOX 50806

Columbia, South Carolina 29250

803-432-1504

Special Guest, Steve Griggs on Tuba!

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

2:30-5:00 pm Sunday, October 7, 2018

Steve Griggs will bring his tuba down from North Carolina (actually, it may not be a tuba. There are several variants in this low brass family and Steve has a Helicon made in 1918 and other low brass instruments). But whichever instrument he brings, Steve will add a flavor from the earliest days of jazz – the days of street parades (string bass just doesn't work well in parades).

Tubas played a big part in the large concert halls in the early days of New Orleans also. They could fill dance halls with sound in those days before amplification. And they always added a touch of exuberance to any band.

You'll get to sample that sound for yourself at our concert and I think you will like the difference. Plus, Steve's visit will bring back memories for long time club members. Steve was a frequent guest with our guys when he lived in the midlands.

Steve founded his first traditional jazz band as a student at Indiana University. That's where Hoagy Carmichael started his musical career but that was before Steve's time. Steve's band at Indiana was known as "The Vintage Red Dixieland Band". They played gigs in the Bloomington area during the school year and then, during summer breaks, Steve played at both Six Flags and Opryland.

Steve also played regularly at Jackson Square in New Orleans. Steve and the band impressed the Mayor of New Orleans so much that the Mayor bestowed the title of "Honorary Citizen" on Steve.

After graduation, Steve formed a topnotch traditional jazz band where-ever his career took him. In Tulsa, it was the "Tulsa Vintage Jazz Band". Then, he repeated the process in St Louis, San Diego, Columbia, and now, in the Winston-Salem area.

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

More on the Tuba

A number of years ago, a store in NC sold nothing but low brass instruments (probably a pretty safe bet considering all the marching bands in the high schools and colleges in the area, plus all the military bands at bases around the South).

And I'm pretty sure it was the owner of that store who told the following story:

The tuba player (tubaist?) with the New Jersey Symphony, developed acute appendicitis on the morning of the Symphony's premier concert. He was rushed to the hospital and clearly would not be available.

The conductor contacted all of the subs on his list but they had gigs already scheduled. The conductor was getting desperate when someone mentioned a high school senior in Eastern Pennsylvania "who was quite good".

He called the kid and, with his parents approval, the student drove to New Jersey arriving shortly before the concert was to begin.

The student looked over the score and found that the music called for something over 100 bars of rests. Then he was to play one note to be followed by several more bars of rests after which he was to play another note. In retrospect this sounds a bit fishy but it's the story I heard.

The kid was counting diligently but lost his place at about the 90th bar. He turned to the guy next to him and asked, "Where are we?" The other guy said, "**all I know is that I come in two bars after you do**".

The kid said, "at what I thought might be the right time, I puffed out my cheeks but didn't make a sound". After the concert, he was handed \$100 for his work. He gratefully accepted it (without playing a single note) and drove home. The story sounds fishy to me but I was told that it was one of those strange but true stories.

Strangely enough, considering the prominence of the low brass in early jazz, when I searched the internet looking for names of early jazz tuba players, I came up with a blank. Apparently, tuba players back then got no respect even with the prominence of their instrument. But you can rectify that slight to tubas and tubaists. Come to our concert and bring a friend. I think you and your friends will have a good time.

Red Smith, Editor