

# THE CAT'S MEOW



PO BOX 50806

Columbia, South Carolina 29250

803-432-1504

## Bruce Kicks Off Our Season

Heyward Street United Methodist Church

2501 Heyward Street

2:30-5:00 pm Sunday, September 10, 2023

**Note: Bruce will call the tunes next Sunday. Bruce had not decided what he planned to do just yet so we decided an earlier autobiography would be appropriate. Bruce is a musicologist and a teacher. We are his students. Whatever Bruce does will be great as always and we will learn more about jazz history. - JB**

### The countdown Continues – Autobiographical Sketch from Bruce Clark

I spent 12 years earning my first college degree, a BA in the short-lived Commercial Music program. Funds were limited so I went to school part-time while tending bar at night. (not sure which of those had more impact on my delayed matriculation)

One of the highlights was an arranging course led by Dick Goodwin. Dick's instruction along with superb faculty players like Doug Graham, Jim Hall and John Emche turned my stolid arrangements into music.

Some lessons you never forget. Like the assignment to choose an appropriate song and write out parts in the Dixieland style. I chose "Ain't She Sweet" and proceeded to assign notes. The uncharacteristically high clarinet part would have been turned down by most players. Fortunately, Doug was playing and graciously accepted his sentence saying only "I *should* be able to do that."

My jingle for the Unitarian Universalist Church made the unforgettable list too. I still have the tape...

Another of the course benefits was learning to write out parts by hand. Judy Green staff paper, Pelican Graphos pen with #3 nib in hand... I actually made a few coins as a copyist.

Better still, Ella Fitzgerald was performing at the Carolina Coliseum. That afternoon, her pianist, Jimmy Rowles found his way into my bar. I changed the music, got him another Heineken and admitted to being a trombone player too poor to afford a ticket. He was most understanding and got me in the back door that night as Ella's copy boy.

Composers wrote out the full score leaving the grunt work of engraving individual parts to someone else. In fact, Dick was the first to send work my way. Not sure what I was hoping for but got some unknown Harold Arlen Tribute.

I copied and hummed... *Come Rain Or Come Shine, That Old Black Magic, Stormy Weather*... a gold mine of great American classics and I didn't know the composer's name. Apparently, I was not alone.

Veracity notwithstanding, I have recited this story to hundreds of folks - at least dozens of folks - at our Dem Bones performances before playing *Over The Rainbow*.

The countdown continued... #3 – *This Land Is Your Land* by Woody Guthrie; #2 – *White Christmas* by Irving Berlin; and the #1 song of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - *Somewhere Over The Rainbow*. There was no mention of the composer, Harold Arlen.

Dick also relates the story of Harold Arlen in a New York taxi. The cabby was whistling *Over the Rainbow*. Arlen asked if he knew who wrote that song. The cabby replied Irving Berlin? Arlen said No, not Berlin. Then it had to be George Gershwin the cabby replied. Nope. Harold Arlen. To which the cabby replied: Never heard of him!

Bruce Clark