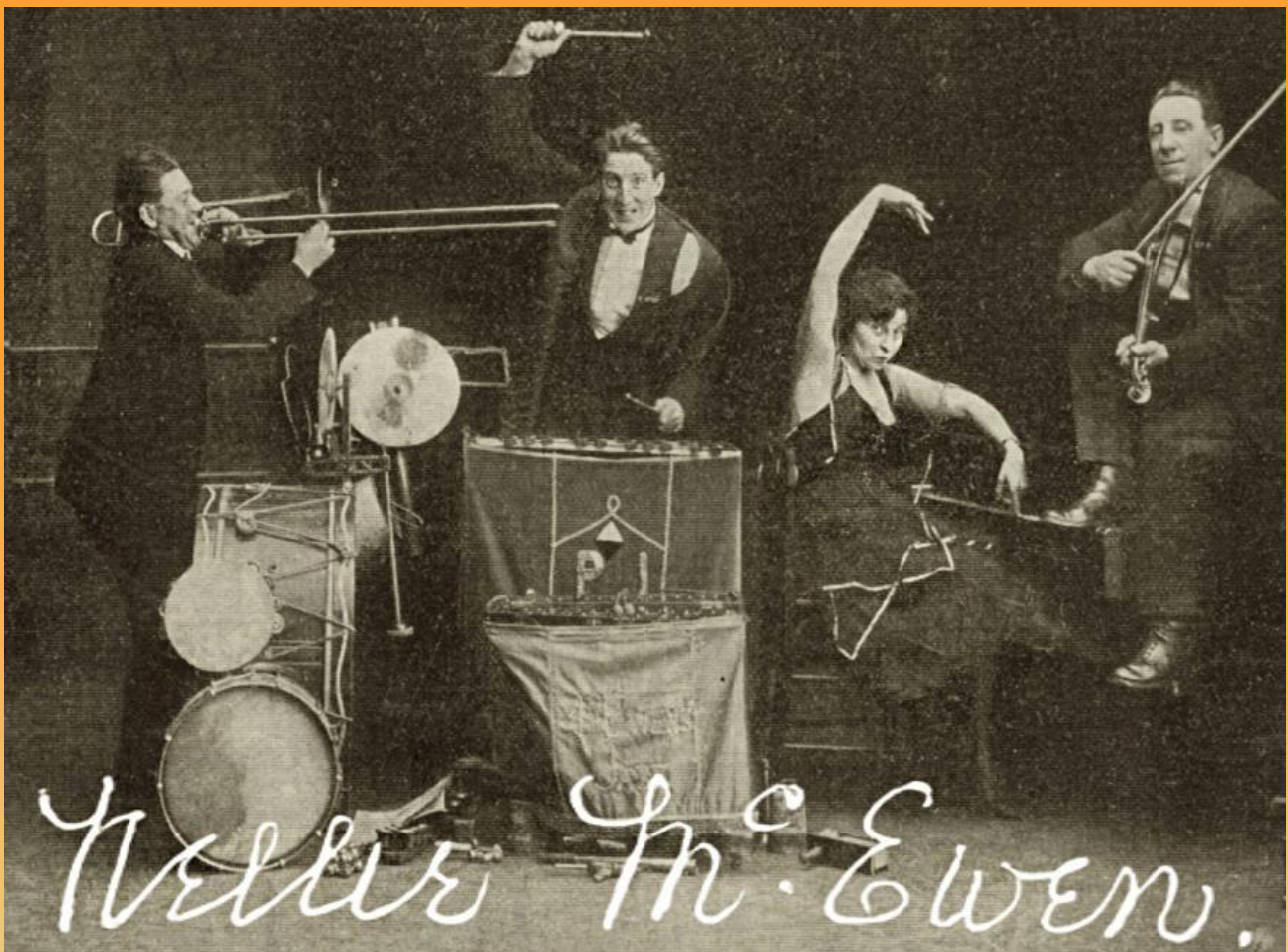


# AJAZZ

The Magazine of the Australian Jazz Museum<sup>©</sup>



australian  
**jazz**  
museum

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**Cover Image:**



Nellie McEwen's Jazz Quartette - 1919

**PLEASE NOTE:**

The deadline for contributions to the next AJazz is 15th October 2023

# Australian Jazz Museum

Established in 1996

A fully accredited Museum run entirely by volunteers.

Home to the largest Australian Jazz Collection.

All items catalogued to Museum standard and stored in archival conditions.

**Patron:** James Morrison AM

**Location**

AJM  
 "Koomba Park"  
 15 Mountain Hwy  
 Wantirna 3152  
 Melway Reference 63C8  
 Open Tuesday 10am-3pm

**Membership Options**

Regular \$75  
 Student \$25  
 Musicians \$75

All with a range of benefits

**AJM Jazz Ambassador Paul Grabowsky AO**

**Six days of jazz! Lots of opportunities to listen to bands and musicians from across Australia (and maybe some imports), meet new people and re-connect with old friends. Talk about jazz, or talk about nonsense! Follow us on [Facebook](#) and check in on the [AJC website](#) frequently**



To register click on this link

<https://australianjazzconvention.org.au/registrations>

In the spirit of reconciliation the Australian Jazz Museum acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, water and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



# General Manager's Report

By David Canterford

**W**antirna is now back in action. With COVID-19 lockdowns behind us we are as busy as ever with no shortage of work for the Collections Team as they sort and catalogue the large backlog of donated items, and administration staff keep the Museum ticking over.

It is pleasing to once again hear live music entertaining tour group participants. A particular thanks to the musicians who give their time to support AJM and the volunteers who organise these visits and act as tour guides.

Noteworthy recent activities include:-

**Launch of the on-line John and Shirley Ansell exhibition** which can be viewed and listened to on the [AJM website](#). Their story is told with a selection of images (photographs, posters) accompanied by highlights from the Museum's collection of their recorded works.



**Cataloguing of the Denis Farrington music arrangements** (see cover and page 2 of AJazz 95). Boxes have been labeled and their location registered in the database. Over 4000 arrangements can be searched by title.

**Loan of Australian Jazz Convention posters to the Australian Music Vault** (Arts Centre Melbourne). These posters, with historic photographs from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Conventions viewed on a touch screen, will be on display for 12 months.

Thanks to the many loyal staff who continued working from home and are now back on board. In recent months they have been joined by a number of new volunteers with an impressive range of backgrounds and skills.

Additional volunteers are always welcome (please contact Margot Davies, Secretary & Recruitment Officer, if you are interested).

## Collectors, Researchers, Jazzers

If you are looking for back copies of Jazz Magazines look no further.

The AJM has spare copies and incomplete runs of these titles

Sydney Jazz Club's Quarterly Rag 1956 - 2010

Victorian Jazz Club's Jazzline 1968 - 2009

Copies of:

Jazz Chord

Jazz Down Under

Mississippi Rag

Tempo  
Disc





# The Prince, the Piano Player and the Percussionist

## A Tale of Nellie McEwen and her Olympia Jazz Band

**N**ellie McEwen first appeared on the Melbourne jazz scene in the early 1920s. One of the first women to take a leading role as both performer and band leader, she stamped her reputation as a consummate pianist, vocalist and vaudeville comedienne from Perth to Adelaide, Melbourne to Hobart.

Born in Liverpool, England, in 1884 Nellie arrived in Melbourne with her mother in the early 1900s. She became a popular orchestra leader prior to the First World War. When many of her male instrumentalists joined the armed forces her orchestra was forced to cease operation.



**Nellie McEwen married Charles Ranshaw, valet at Federal Government House, on 10 September 1908**

She had married Charles Ranshaw, valet to the Governor General Lord Northcote, in 1908, gaining entrée into polite society to the extent it was claimed that, "All the musicians in the Melbourne Union have played under her at some time or other." (*Hobart Mercury* June 13th, 1928 p. 10) Nellie's orchestras performed at Federal Government House in Melbourne, at Victoria's Government House, at the Australia Club, at St Kilda Town Hall and at private balls.

***"All the musicians in the Melbourne Union have played under her at some time or other."***



With the return of musicians from the War, Nellie formed a Quartette to promote the burgeoning jazz craze. It was made up of the Jeacle brothers Paul (drums) and Stephen (violin) along with Jack Lazarus (trombone) and Nellie on piano.

In March 1920 Charles and Nellie entered into a venture with four partners, investing £3000 to lease Wirth's Olympia and set up an American Jazz dance pavilion with Nellie's Jazzola Band. Despite initial success, the venue closed after five months leading to protracted litigation between the Wirth brothers and the syndicate members.



In June 1920 Nellie was responsible for providing the official entertainment for the Royal Visit of the Prince of Wales, Prince Edward, at Government House and, on June 1st, Nellie's jazz band performed at a soiree at Mt Noorat in honour of the Prince. Later described as "an accomplished drummer", he had asked to sit in and the *Herald* reported that, "according to Miss M'Ewen [the prince] proved himself a first-class exponent of the art of syncopation, as applied to drums and effects."

He obviously appreciated the opportunity to perform with the band as Sir Godfrey Thomas, private secretary to the prince, wrote to Nellie on June 11th:

*Madame,*

*His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales desired me to say how much he has appreciated the playing of your orchestra during his stay in Melbourne, and there is, of course, no objection to your making use of the fact that you have performed on several occasions at dances in the Prince's presence to his complete satisfaction.*

Drummer, Paul Jeacle, who was quite familiar with the latest jazz trends, having taken furloughs in London during the war, described what led to the band presenting a gift of castanets to the prince "In memory of a happy evening at Mt Noorat".

*After I returned from the war I joined Miss Nellie McEwan's (sic) orchestra on flute and piccolo for a few months. Then jazz started to boom, and Nellie*

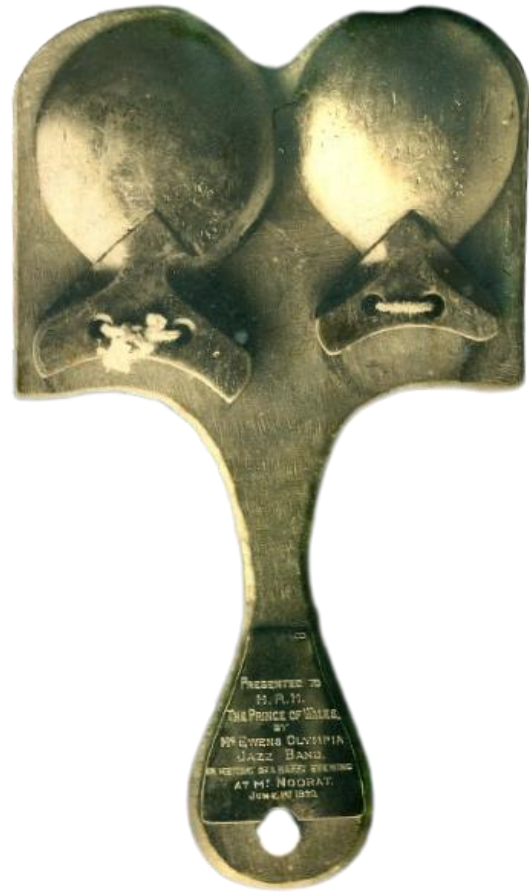
advised me to take up the drums, as a flute was hardly any use in a jazz band, and saxophones, banjos, trumpets, and drums were the big idea at this time. However, I bought a drum outfit cheaply from Tom Roper, now T. Roper, Surgical Specialist, Swanston Street, Melbourne.

**"Nellie McEwan had all the best - Toorak, Government House, and other swishy work."**

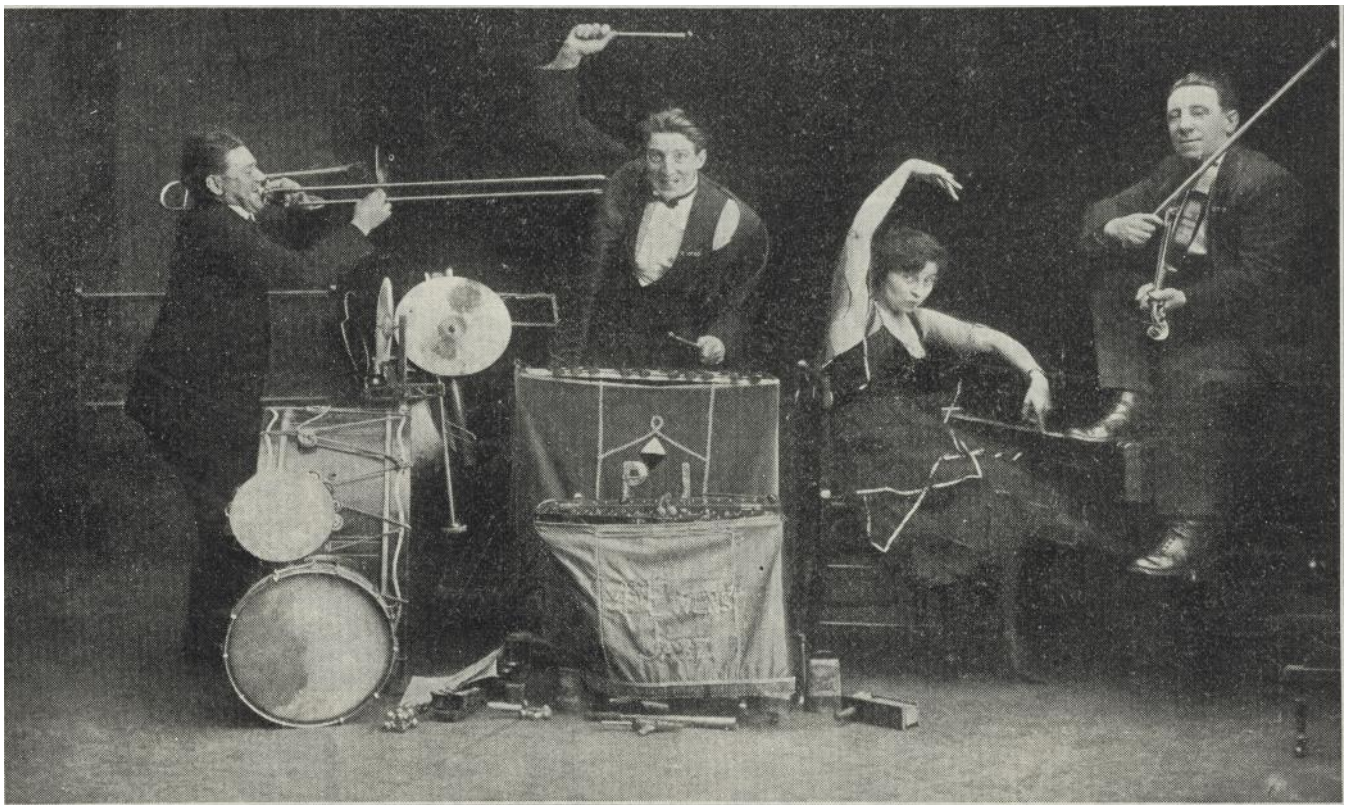
That was the starting of my casual work, and I am very pleased with my experience. Nellie McEwan (sic) had all the best Toorak, Government House, and other swishy work. It was at Government House that I had the pleasure to play before the Prince of Wales, now Duke of Windsor. During H.R.H.'s tour we did four of the most important functions at Government House, State Government House, the Matrons' Ball at the St. Kilda Town Hall, and a private ball held on Mrs. Black's ranch at Terang, Victoria.

It was here that we were introduced to His Royal Highness, and then came my big moment when he asked me if he may play my drums. I was delighted by jove, he could manage them, too!

In fact, he turned out to be a better drummer than myself, because I wasn't so hot on the drums, but I filled the bill at that time, as jazz drummers were scarce, and I made up for it with my xylophone playing.



The Castanet set presented to the Prince of Wales by Nellie McEwan's Olympia Jazz Band "In memory of a happy evening at Mt Noorat on June 1st 1920"



Nellie McEwan's Jazz Quartette - 1919

Made up of Jack Lazarus tb, Paul Jeacle perc, sax, Nellie p and Steve Jeacle vn, the band was formed from members of McEwan's Orchestra which had been discontinued during the First World War.

Image: State Library of Victoria "The Graphic of Australia", 20 November, 1919



After we got going, and became more friendly with Prince Edward, he turned to me and said, "What can you play besides the xylophone?" I replied, "Well, I have an old saxophone here, but I'm ashamed to take it out of the case."

It was an old brass sax in a common black wooden case, which looked like a miniature coffin. I had picked the outfit up cheaply in a pawn shop. However, the Prince kidded me to take it out and advised me to "Let it go," so I strutted my stuff on those two popular numbers, "Johnnie's in Town" and "How Yer' Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm."

"Good!" he said. "Let's go again." We went all right, and it's a wonder to me that everyone else didn't go also. After a time he said, "Why don't you take the saxophone up seriously?"

Well, that put the lid on it, as I did flatter myself I was doing well. Anyway, I was wise enough to take his good advice, and for the next six months I practised my old sax six hours a day and I'd like to mention here that within that six months I had to move three times (dink-di). So I'll leave it to you to nut out for yourself. I got married shortly after, and then, of course, my poor wife had to put up with it.

Paul Jeacle subsequently went on to a successful career as a saxophonist and band leader in his own right.

Nellie performed with the Revellers at His Majesty's and Ozone Theatres in Geelong between October and November 1920, and later joined Shafto's vaudeville circuit in December 1922 performing as Joy Barry in Perth at the Shaftesbury Theatre where she was described as a ragtime pianist, who "proved herself ... excellent ... her jazz music being greatly appreciated". She spent four months with the Revellers and New Exotics at Adelaide's Semaphore Open-air Pavilion from January 1923.

As a result of Nellie's extramarital dalliances Charles Ranshaw divorced her in November 1923. Her subsequent marriage in 1924 also ended in divorce 16 years later on the grounds of desertion.

Nellie was employed as musical directress at several Melbourne movie houses including Smith and Crisp's Empire, Lyric, and Alhambra Theatres at Brunswick, Barkly Grand, and Trocadero at Footscray, the Lyric at Fitzroy, before going on to direct the orchestra of Hobart's His Majesty's Theatre in June 1928.



She continued advertising herself as a teacher and orchestra leader in Melbourne papers until 1934. Fifteen years later in 1949, aged 65 and living in Carlton South, she was still describing herself as a musician.

Nothing further comes to light until Nellie is admitted to Mont Park where she languished from April 9th, 1959 until her death from pneumonia at on February 18th, 1963 aged 77. She is buried at Coburg Cemetery. ■

## Aunt Hagar's Blues

"Aunt Hagar's Blues" is a jazz standard that has been recorded by many Australian bands. These include those of Graeme Bell, Paul Furniss, Les Haines, Mike Hallam, the Society Syncopators, and Nat Oliver. The New Harlem Jazz Band version with Pippa Wilson vocal is available on the Jazz Museum's double CD AJM 045.

The tune was written in 1920 by W.C. Handy with Lyrics by Tim Brymn. It has also been known as "Aunt Hagar's Children" or "Aunt Hagar's Children Blues".

### So who was Aunt Hagar?

Hagar, in the Old Testament, was Abraham's concubine and the mother of his son Ishmael. Purchased in Egypt, Hagar served as a maid to Abraham's childless wife,

Sarah, who gave her to Abraham to conceive an heir. Sarah treated her so harshly that she fled into the wilderness where an angel of the Lord told her to return home and promised her that she would have many descendants through her son. The church-going coloured people of the Southern United States sometimes called themselves Aunt Hagar's children. ■



# Jungle Jazz

## In War Torn Bougainville They Were Real Troopers

**D**uring the latter months of 1944 and early 1945 some of the Australian troops in the Pacific Theatre were stationed at Torokino on the central west coast of Bougainville. Two jazz musicians, Sid Bromley from Queensland and Eugene "Gene" Dolheguy from Victoria were among those in the 61st Australian Infantry Battalion who were based there.

Band leaders like Jim Davidson, Frank Coughlan and Wally Norman had also joined the services and Entertainment Units were quickly formed to play on the mainland and ultimately to tour the Middle East and New Guinea.



The Tasmaniacs tuning up in the Bougainville jungle

The "**Tasmaniacs**", led by Lt Arthur Edward Benton, was an entertainment unit formed in Hobart. Eventually based in New Guinea and Bougainville, the unit spent long periods without a break playing concerts in frontline jungle clearings and even on the decks of transport ships.



Clarinet player Eugene Dolheguy and drummer Sid Bromley outside Sid's 'Party Tent' on Bougainville in 1945

The all night record sessions of the Bougainville Jazz Appreciation Group were instituted by jazz drummer Sid Bromley in early 1945. After demobilisation Sid became a significant voice in the Queensland and Australian jazz scene. He attended the first Australian Jazz Convention in 1946 and his band, "**Cane Cutters**", was the 'Tempo Best All Round Jazz Unit in Australia' in 1949.

*"Here we were in the middle of nowhere and a swing band was playing Stardust"*

(Sid Bromley 1997)

Clarinet player Gene Dolheguy was transferred into the AIF Entertainment Unit No.16 in December 1945. Together with his brother Vern he had played in Geelong's first band dedicated solely to jazz - the "**Dixieland Ramblers**".



Kookaroos Concert Party band rehearsing at Toroki-

Under the direction of Ed Corderoy the Victorian Lines of Communication Concert Party's "**Yarra-roos**" aka "**Kookaroos**", first performed on September 14, 1942 at an anti-aircraft station on Coode Island. The Kookaroos were also heavily involved in entertaining allied troops located at Torokino from May 1945 until the cessation of hostilities in the September of that year. ■

*By Ralph Powell*



## The History of Jazz Australia - Parts 1 & 2

**I**t is almost 50 years since I began presenting jazz concerts in Terang in the Western District of Victoria with the Storyville Jazzmen, The Creole Bells, and the New Harlem Band etc., and no-one is more surprised than me that I am still presenting jazz events on a regular basis, seasonally these days, on the Bellarine Peninsula.

However, I am now aiming at celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jazz Australia in 2025, as I am still enjoying it so much. In fact I presented "*Stevenson's Rockets*" for a Jazz Australia Autumn Concert recently and have two more events in the pipeline for Winter and Spring later this year. 100 were in attendance for the recent Autumn luncheon concert at The Vue Grand Hotel in Queenscliff which is a typical attendance.

And everyone listens!

I moved to Point Lonsdale 14 years ago thinking that I might be able to put on the occasional jazz event but they have been so popular that I am still at it with a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary now in the pipeline if I can hang in there for another two years! Interesting venues and fabulous jazz is the secret of course. One consistent annual event has been "*Stevenson's Rockets*" and everyone looks forward to hearing them each year as they become more and more skilled in performing first class classic jazz.

This ensemble consists of four world class Melbourne jazz musicians in Jo Stevenson, reeds and leader; Steve Grant, piano; Chris Ludowyk, bass, and the inimitable Ian Smith on drums, vocals, cornet, washboard and special effects ... is the "icing on the cake"!

This inimitable Quartet also performs every Wednesday night at the Emerald Hotel in South Melbourne where they have now "held sway" for 15 years and have a devoted and loyal following. The story of The Rockets and others from over the past 48 years are all in my new book *The History of Jazz Australia* which is for sale at the Australian Jazz Museum.

The Jazz Australia story of events of almost 50 years such as Jazz Festivals, Jazz Cruises, Jazz tours, both overseas and interstate plus the wonderful jazz gigs in collaboration with Graeme Bell AO MBE during the 25 years that I was his Melbourne representative, all make up this colourful story. Graeme's and my long friendship and working relationship began with the launch of his autobiography in the mid eighties and didn't cease until his death at the age of 97. This collaboration was a highlight of my jazz career as you can imagine.



Diana Allen with Graeme Bell when he received the 2006 J C Williamson Award from Live Performance Australia

During COVID I took the opportunity of putting "pen to paper" so to speak, about these last 48 exciting years of jazz events that I have so much enjoyed presenting, whilst also offering much pleasure to so many classic jazz enthusiasts.

*The History of Jazz Australia* is now available for sale through *The Australian Jazz Museum*, which will benefit from the sale of each book which retails at \$25.

So I do hope you will consider purchasing a copy ... I'm told it's a good read! ■

**Diana Allen, OAM**  
Principal of Jazz Australia



# Gumleaf Bands

## The New Orleans Jazz of Australia?

In his 2013 essay, "The Music of Place", Don Banks Music Awards winning multimedia artist, violinist and composer Jon Rose asks, "What has happened to this [gumleaf playing] tradition?... Why isn't there a 20-piece gumleaf band marching down George Street on Australia Day? This is the New Orleans jazz of Australia – who is looking after this, who is nurturing this?"

**Gum Leaf Rag**

Ragtime ♩ = 144



The Wallaga Lake Gumleaf Band - 1922

Source: Tilba Times revisited by Laurelle Pacey

*A native jazz band ... played on gum leaves producing a disturbing yet not unpleasant musical effect by blowing on gum leaves. **Indeed, if this band could be placed in a theatre it would cause a sensation. It completely outbuzzes the saxophone, and reduces the oboe to the rank of a tin whistle. The black musicians played tenderly and very solemnly, visibly affecting many spectators.***<sup>2</sup>



The Gumleaf band from Wallaga Lake even performed at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in March 1932.

**A DUSKY TROUBADOUR**  
The Music of the Leaves  
**ABORIGINE PLAYS JAZZ**

*The jollity of the occasion being added to by musical items supplied by an aboriginal jazz band, consisting of violins, banjos, steel guitars, and gum leaves*<sup>3</sup>. ■

References:

1. The Daily Telegraph, 1925
2. The Wingham Chronicle and Manning River Observer, 1926
3. Grafton Daily Examiner, 1933

Further Reading:

"A Spiritual Sound, a Lonely Sound": Leaf Music of Southeastern Aboriginal Australians, 1890s-1990s - Thesis by Robin Ryan (2017)

Historically, Gumleaf Bands had very catholic repertoires that included jazz, corroboree steps, hula, vaudevillian clowning, hymns, patriotic songs, and country and western tunes.

Between the 1920s and the 1940s gumleaf bands were quite popular in Australia with up to 10-member bands.

When violinist Fritz Kreisler was visiting Australia in 1925 he asked whether Australia had a folk music tradition and he was told, "Only Aboriginal jazz"<sup>1</sup>. Newspapers of the time reported on Aboriginal Jazz Band performances, heaping praise on their efforts and claiming they would cause a sensation.

# WE ARE NOT ALONE

## Selected Jazz Museums from around the World

Although jazz originated in America it has very much spread throughout the world. As witness to its social significance it was worth checking out a number of museums and institutions like our own scattered around the globe all dedicated to preserving jazz heritage. Here are a few:

**AMERICAN JAZZ MUSEUM** is in the Historic 18th and Vine Jazz District in Kansas City, Missouri. It showcases the sights and sounds of jazz through interactive exhibits and films, the "Changing Gallery" exhibit space, the Horace M. Peterson Visitors' Center, the Blue Room, and the Gem Theatre. Since its inception in September 1997, the Museum has hosted thousands of students, scholars, musicians and fans of the arts for performances, education programs, special exhibitions and community events, providing an opportunity to learn about the legends, honor their legacy, or simply enjoy the sounds of jazz.



**THE NATIONAL JAZZ MUSEUM IN HARLEM** is at 104, E 126th Street New York. It is situated on the second floor and is primarily a suite of offices with a large front area that displays photographs, video documentaries and books on jazz to the public. Harlem has been the home of many jazz luminaries including Duke Ellington, Benny Carter, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, Count Basie, John Coltrane, and Billie Holiday, all represented in the Museum's archives. The National Museum in Harlem is dedicated to fostering jazz music as far into the future as into the past.

**THE JAZZ INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO** is a not-for-profit arts-presenting organisation that produces concerts and runs educational programs. It was founded in 1969 by a small band of jazz fans, writers, club owners and musicians to preserve the historical roots of Chicago's jazz heritage and to ensure that the music would not be lost.



**THE LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOUSE MUSEUM**, at 34-56 107th Street Corona, Queens, NY, is a National Historic and New York City landmark. It is a member of the American Association of Museums, the Association of African American Museums and is a constituent of the Kupferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College. The House is owned by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and administered by Queens College. The Louis Armstrong House Museum was once Louis and Lucille's private home.

The Museum's mission is to operate as a historic museum, arrange, preserve, catalogue, and make available to the public the materials held in its collections, and to collect, preserve, catalogue, and make available to the public other materials relating to the life and career of Louis Armstrong, and to present public programs.





**JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER** is dedicated to inspiring and growing audiences for jazz. With the world-renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and a comprehensive array of guest artists, Jazz at Lincoln Center advances the continuing development of the art of jazz by producing a year-round schedule of performances, education and broadcast events under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis and others. Its home is at the famous Lincoln Center in New York City.

**THE LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM**, founded in New Orleans in 1906, is a complex of National Historical Landmarks housing thousands of artifacts and works of art reflecting Louisiana's historic cultural diversity. It encompasses the **LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM JAZZ COLLECTION** which opened its doors in 1961 at 1017 Dumaine Street. Generous donations began to flood in and it became apparent that the cottage on Dumaine Street was too small to house the collection. It relocated to the Royal Sonesta Hotel in 1969, then to 833 Conti Street, but the collection was put in storage.



In 1977 the collection became the New Orleans Jazz Club Collections of the Louisiana State Museum which now has the world's largest collection of instruments owned by important figures in jazz. Some late 19th-century instruments date from the early days of jazz, others were used by important local New Orleans jazz musicians.



**THE SWISS JAZZ ARCHIVE (SWISSJAZZORAMA)** was founded in 1989 in Rheinfelden, Switzerland, but was relocated to Uster near Zurich in 1998.

SwissJazzOrama collects and archives all kinds of sound carriers, pictures, literature and other testimonies from the Jazz world. It registers these documents in databases that are continuously updated and provide rapid access. The public can obtain access to the archives with examples of sound, images, sheet music, books, magazines and press articles on jazz.

The archive has associations with Swiss Jazz schools and provides contact to related institutions in Switzerland and abroad. Membership is open to all persons interested in culture. It stores more than 6000 Shellac records, 18000 LPs, 7000 CDs, 600 Videos, 3000 Magazines, 1300 Books, 2000 photos, and 2400 posters.



**THE (British) NATIONAL JAZZ ARCHIVE** is a collection of materials pertaining to jazz and blues that is kept at the Loughton Library in Essex, England. The archive was founded by British trumpeter Digby Fairweather in 1998 and holds the UK's finest collection of written and visual jazz-related material, along with an important collection of oral history recordings. Their website is a window into their work. The Archive collections, dating back over 100 years, documents this ever-evolving musical phenomenon. It also tells

the story of social and cultural development, including diversity and integration, fashion, dance, art, and popular music. It is a fascinating resource of interest to far more than just jazz fans. Its team of volunteers is engaged in cataloguing, digitising, preservation, digital media display, creating exhibitions, and running fund-raising events. Sadly, the future of the NJA is under a cloud due to problems associated with retaining the current premises.



**THE SCOTTISH JAZZ ARCHIVE** is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Association, regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator for the purposes of advancing heritage by identifying, collecting, cataloguing, digitising materials, and the production of filmed oral histories relating to the history of jazz in Scotland through the preservation and curation of cultural artefacts. It advances education by raising awareness and providing access to the history of jazz in Scotland through a permanent and publicly accessible online educational resource and through public events including talks and exhibitions.

**THE JAZZ MUSEUM BIX EIBEN** at Scheffelstraße 26a 22301, Hamburg, Germany, was founded in 1987 and houses over 95,000 78s, 75,000 LPs, many thousands of tapes, books, obscure recording formats such as piano rolls, Edison records, reel-to-reel tape, etc., plus memorabilia and other unique ephemera. Much of it has been digitised for online exhibition. The museum's strength lies in early jazz. Available Online are many on-demand episodes of old Jazz-Revisited radio programs, anecdotes, music clips, and much more. Although German, the Web site is available in several languages.



**THE CENTER FOR DANISH JAZZ HISTORY** at Aalborg University, Aalborg Denmark, contains virtually every type of sound carrier: CDs, LPs, EPs, V-discs, Reel-to-Reel tapes, 78s, etc. In addition, there is audio-visual material such as photos, 16mm film, VHS tapes and laser discs as well as a very large magazine and book collection. The foundation of the center's archive is the collections of Erik Wiedemann, Peter Tages, and Karl Emil Knudsen. The center has been provided with financial support from foundations and the university. It has been further supplemented by donations from several institutions and private individuals. The collection is registered when it comes to books and partially registered when it comes to CDs and LPs. The collection also houses a sheet music archive. The web site is available in various languages.



**PARIS JAZZ MUSEUM** – We were disappointed that we couldn't find an accredited Jazz Museum in France. However we did find this: At No. 68 Rue du Poteauis in Paris is a small shop called the Jazz Museum, run by Alain Marquet.



The store opened in 2009 and specialises in rare jazz recordings and artefacts. Alain was just another avid jazz collector but his passion and collection grew so large that he ran out of room in his apartment and he decided to rent space in his neighbourhood. The storefront became a cosy place to enjoy his collection and share it with others. Alain is an excellent clarinettist, so much so that musicians who come to listen to his rare jazz record collection rehearse and play together. ■

*(Some entries sourced from the Bix Eiben Museum website)*



**2023**

## **Seniors Festival Concerts**

We are fortunate to have two wonderful Jazz performances to help us celebrate

### **Seniors Week at the Australian Jazz Museum On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

Bookings open 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023



By Telephone 9800 5535 10:00 am—3:00 pm Tuesdays

Cost \$10 for concert and refreshments (Tea, Coffee & Biscuits)

Seating for 30 people per session

**Anita Harris and Friends**



**11.00 am**

**Pippa Wilson and Jazz Notes**



**2.00 pm**

# The Bell Boys

## By Sylvia Eriksson



It was late afternoon in 1939 when I saw two handsome young men emerge from Camberwell station deep in animated conversation and obviously enjoying each other's company.

Discussing books and authors, they attracted my interest as, although only 13 years old, I was an avid reader. I walked behind them as we walked along Burke Road and enjoyed every word they said. Smartly dressed, one in grey tweed jacket and the other in brown tweed both with plain coloured trousers to match and for some reason the leather patches on their elbows convinced me that they were worthy characters. I guessed they were in their mid-twenties and they looked very much like brothers.

My mother had given me a large suitcase to carry the groceries in and it was very heavy, I had to keep on putting it down to change hands and I hoped the boys would turn around to see who was clunking along behind them but they were oblivious to the outside world. They laughed a lot, role-played some of the stories they were reading and I was learning a lot and totally fascinated.

They turned into the street right opposite my front gate. I watched them wondering who they were and who was Franz Kafka, Gustav Meyrink and Geoffrey Household? I decided to look them up in the local library. The librarian was reluctant to give me the books saying that I was too young to be reading these European authors, but I insisted until she finally gave them to me.

Seeing the Boys over the road, my neighbour explained that these were the Bell Boys. The grey tweed was Graeme who played piano and the brown tweed was his younger brother Roger who played cornet, they sometimes played at local events but were talking about forming an Australian Dixieland Jazz Band. I was surprised at this news as I had never heard them talk of music. It was always Literature and the Arts.

I was already a lover of Dixieland Jazz as my neighbour Vinnie had always passed on his Jazz magazines to me and I listened to as much Dixieland Jazz as I could find on the Radio.

I followed the Bell Boys for 12 months listening to their conversations and learning a lot that I knew I could never have learnt at home. My parents were well educated and belonged to the local library but I knew their reading would never extend to European authors.

It didn't occur to me that I was doing anything wrong, I was just enjoying the Boys' personalities and learning much that was new to me.

In my young mind I decided that these would be my brothers, a precious secret that I would keep to myself. After 12 months of following them around my "brothers" disappeared and I was devastated.

I told my story to Rose, my school friend, and we agreed that as soon as we were old enough to be allowed out on our own we would go to hear the Bell Boys and their Dixieland Jazz Band.

It was three years later that we found the Bell Boys playing at The Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne every Thursday night. Their band alternated with the Palais Dance Band and the fans stood 10 deep around the front of the Bell band with much banter going on between the Bell Band and the fans.

Rose and I stood right in front of Graeme's piano and he soon noticed us and welcomed us. Most of the Fans were university students but as time went on many famous people attended. Artists, actors and people like John and Sunday Reed who started the Heide Museum of Modern Art, artists from the artist colony at Montsalvat, Bill Miller who recorded the Bell band in his studio and put them on the Ampersand label and many celebrities of the time.

The band at the time included Don Roberts on clarinet. He was called "Pixie" because he had one brown eye and one green one which fascinated us. Don was friendly, and a reliable and excellent player. Roger Bell played a very old cornet until he appeared one night with a shiny new silver trumpet. He played like one possessed every night. Roger was also very witty and kept us laughing with his funny comments. Harold Broadbent from the Palais orchestra sat in on trombone. An excellent player, he could play in any style needed. On banjo was Jack Varney, always friendly and smiling, with the whitest teeth ever seen. Sometimes, Bud Baker also played banjo but had very little to say.

Graeme, on piano, played with great, driving rhythm, keeping everyone in time. Russ Murphy was on drums. He was always called "Russ wiv me drums" because if there was a change of venue he always said, "But how will I get there wiv me drums?" Fans always got him there in their cars.

Graeme and Roger did not have a car and went everywhere by tram and train. The fans were also there to take them wherever they needed to go. Lou Silbereisen always stood at the back of the band playing the big, tall bass and contributing a few wise words when needed.

The Bell Boys were very generous with their time and expertise, and encouraged many aspiring young musicians to sit in with the band every night.

George Tack was a handsome young Chinese who played the clarinet expertly. He had a smile that endeared him to the audience before he had the clarinet to his lips. He sometimes played in a lower register than



Don Roberts and as they wove their melodies around each other I was ecstatic as the clarinet is my favourite instrument.

The night that a young Geoff Kitchen appeared we were all entranced, his fair curly hair and his youth reminded us of the boy from the Millais painting *Bubbles*. He played the clarinet perfectly and impressed us all and he went on to play with the Bell Band many times. Tony Newstead was amazing on trumpet, he was welcomed many times and he was loved and respected by us all.

There were many others including Tom Pickering on clarinet, Ian Pearce on piano and Ade Monsborough who was trying to play the valve trombone. I was always nervous when Ade appeared. He made very hard work of it. His face grimaced and turned bright red, the veins in his temples stood out and I was sure he was going to burst a blood vessel and fall dead at our feet. It was always a relief to me when he left the bandstand. We had no idea then that Ade would become an amazing musician mastering many instruments and becoming such a towering figure in jazz circles — that he would be known as Father Ade.

Rose and I adored the Bell boys and centred our lives around them. There was no romance as the boys each had their own girlfriends and at 16 we were beginning to attract boyfriends but could not keep them as they became jealous of our love for jazz and the Bell Boys so they soon faded away.

My mother, concerned that I was 'running around with a mob of musicians', asked Graeme to listen to her

He adhered to his promise and Graeme watched over us at every opportunity and always kept us safe from harm.

Graeme was pleased that I lived nearby and invited me home for afternoon tea. It was a middle class home filled with books and interesting pictures hanging on the walls. Mrs Bell was a tall, stately woman who had been a concert singer, her air of authority was so overwhelming that I went weak at the knees and could not say a sensible thing to her. I realised that she had given Graeme his leadership skills.

Mr Bell was shorter, rounder and had spent years in vaudeville. He kept us laughing and I warmed to him immediately. It was obvious that he had passed on his sense of humour to Roger.

On other nights Rose and I went to Heidelberg or Hawthorn Town Hall or Leggett's Ballroom in Prahran. We loved the Trocadero just over the Princes Bridge. Frank Coughlan and his band greeted us warmly but Frank was very business-like and had no time for small talk. We were there the night an Australian soldier swung a punch at an American soldier and soon the dance floor was a mass of fighting soldiers. Blood flew on to the floor and we went and hid in the toilets.

Frank Coughlan and his band did not miss a beat but kept playing until the American and Australian Military Police arrived and arrested all the fighters. The floors were mopped and the dance continued. My mother was horrified when she heard about it and forbade me to ever go to the Trocadero again but I managed to sneak in two more visits without her knowing.



**Graeme Bell's Jazz Band outside the Centreway Radio Shop, July 1943**

concerns. Graeme arrived smartly dressed and full of charm and explained that the band had never met young girls with such a wide area of jazz knowledge and we were loved and respected by the band and he would personally watch over us so that we would be protected from all undesirables.

I was pleased when the Bell band played at a distant venue because I knew it was a long tram ride home with Graeme. We would discuss the event and then he would always ask, "What are you reading?" We would discuss the book in depth and I loved these discussions because I was learning so much from him.

*Continued overleaf*

Continued from page 15

When I finally confessed to the Boys how I had followed them and listened to all their conversations they were incredulous and said, "We didn't see you. Why didn't you speak to us?"

In 1946 Graeme married Liz Watson. She was a very intellectual girl and pleasant to us.

In 1947 the band played at the Eureka Youth League which was Communist-based and Graeme and the band were invited to tour Czechoslovakia. The tour was a resounding success. By this time Graeme and Liz had a baby girl but they found it difficult to find the right formula and other needs for the baby in Czechoslovakia. So Rose and I sent parcels of all that was needed. We then received this card from Graeme:

*From Czechoslovakia Praha, Nov 3rd. 1947*

*Dear Shir,*

*Your letters are always appreciated and it's very kind of you and Babs to send parcels to Liz. I have just come out of the National Theatre after seeing Smetana's opera "Hubicka" (The Kiss) A wonderful performance and what sensible hours - 7pm-9.15pm! For the price of about 1/6! Last night Rog and I saw Mozart's opera "Don Giovanni" at the Valka Opera. Tomorrow we are meeting Rafael Kubelik the Czech conductor who (last line missing when card cut to fit frame.)*

*Best of Luck, Graeme.*

It was 1945 when I was released from my essential work machining military uniforms that the Manpower Office allowed me to join the Australian Women's Auxiliary Airforce. I became a WAAF and was stationed at RAAF headquarters in the old Reid's Building in Prahran.

Happily, I was able to gain leave to attend the Exhibition Buildings to hear the band every Thursday night. I wore a dance frock and put my uniform into a small suitcase. Rose would be waiting for me and Graeme would hide my case behind the piano.

We would join the fans and meet many interesting celebrities.

In 1947 I was discharged from the Air Force and Rose and I decided to go on a working holiday up to Queensland. Graeme gave us a letter of Introduction to the jazz people in Sydney. We said a tearful goodbye to the Bell Boys not realising that we would never see Roger again and it would be 30 years before I saw Graeme.

Graeme and I corresponded until I met and married an Australian man in Darwin who objected to me writing to Graeme so I stopped my letters to him but kept up with his career through the Newspapers.

Thirty years later I read that Graeme would be playing at the rotunda at Balmoral Beach in Sydney. As I lived nearby, on my second marriage, I rounded up my friends and we sat right in front of the rotunda.

Graeme recognised me immediately and during the break he questioned me closely about my life. So closely that I did not learn much about his life except that he was doing well. Graeme went on to win awards and honours that he truly deserved and I did not see him again.

I feel deep gratitude to the Bell Boys. They were my mentors, they opened the windows of my mind to literature, the arts and many possibilities in life that I could never have learnt at home. Their care and concern for me was a great strength in my life. I play their CDs now and I wish that I was hearing them live. To hear a good band live is exhilarating and brings much joy to the heart. ■

## Another Man Done Gone

By Bill Brown



**S**ad news for jazz fans. British clarinet player Wally Fawkes died last March aged 98. I say British; he was actually born in Canada but his parents moved to the UK when Wally was seven. By his twenties he had taken up the clarinet and joined George Webb's Dixielanders, a leading band of the emerging traditional jazz revival. Indeed a world-wide enterprise. In 1947 an old Etonian trumpet player called Humphrey Lyttelton joined the Webb band and he and Wally forged a lifelong rapport.

In 1948 Humph (as he became known) formed his own band with Wally as his clarinet player. This liaison existed up until 1956 when Wally left the band. His day job was as a cartoonist (trade name Trog) with the Mail newspaper.

Wally still played clarinet, recording and broadcasting around the London scene. He took part in small group jazz with fellow jazzmen, reed players Bruce Turner and Scotsman Sandy Brown. His band the Troglodytes had a residency at the Six Bells a pub in Chelsea that had a jazz pedigree going back to the thirties. On record I have him on an EP from March 1957 where he and trumpeter Al Fairweather and pianist Stan Greig backed visiting American blues singer Brother John Sellars. Then in 1958 the six piece Trogs performed an LP of tunes connected with singer Billie Holiday. This LP was called Fawkes On Holiday (what else?).

Over the years there were various reunions between the two musicians. One I prefer was a DVD made in 1983 celebrating Humph having led a band for 35 years. With Humph at that time were Roy Williams, trombone, Bruce Turner, alto sax, John Barnes, tenor and baritone sax, Mick Pyne, piano, Dave Green, bass, and Adrian Mackintosh drums and washboard. Two guests were on hand; former members of the band, the lady tenor saxist Kathy Stobart and, of course, Wally Fawkes and his clarinet. One of the tracks Humph, Wally and Bruce featured was a repeat of a track Hump, Wally and another alto man recorded in 1951 in London. It was a Humph original dedicated to his drummer George "Hoppy" Hopkinson and called "Hoppin' Mad". The other side of that 78 was an original by the alto player and called "Don't Monkey With It." And the other sax player? Australia's own Lazy Ade Monsborough.

There are plenty of other recordings I could list of the two players coming together down the years. I shall catch up with them, never fear,

R.I.P Wally Fawkes. ■



# AUSTRALIAN JAZZ DIVAS

Since its early days, jazz music has had its vocalists. Male singers have tended to be members of the band, mostly neither trained nor skilled in vocalising. However, the ladies were more often talented and experienced singers. Jazz singing entails particular skills – a strict sense of rhythm, syncopation, anticipation, and emphasis. Witness an experienced scat singer or a blues singer for instance.

In a new double CD album, the AJM has assembled chronologically a wide-ranging selection of renowned female vocalists who have specialised in jazz singing.

The earliest available choice was Des Tooley who was known as the lady baritone and began recording for Parlophone in 1929. Although she recorded with "Cliff Clarke and his Kookaburras" most of her recordings were popular songs with instrumental accompaniment. Of female jazz singers before her time, no definitive recorded examples appear to exist.

From the mid-1930s there is Australia's Marjorie Stedeford who made several jazz recordings in England with the Mario "Harp" Lorenzi group. Another of the few recorded examples of female jazz singers of the 1930s was Alice Smith, who performed with Jim Davidson's dance band.

By the 1940s female pop singers had become ubiquitous, but only a few sang in the true jazz style. Joan Blake, Barbara James and Marie Benson (née Harriott) are among the examples chosen.

With the revival in the '40s and '50s of traditional (New Orleans) jazz, several new singers like Joan Bilceaux, Terri King and June Carey appeared who specialised in jazz. This was probably the beginning of female jazz singing *per se*.

Well-known Judy Jacques, who although originally specialising in gospel-singing, began her jazz career as early as 1961 as a vocalist with the Yarra Yarra Jazz Band. The 1960s also saw the emergence of several eminently skilled jazz singers such as Kate Dunbar, Pat Purchase, Helen Violaris, and Beverley Hay.



Pippa Wilson at the AJM's recent Open Day.

Judith Durham is remembered by much of the Australian public solely as a member of The Seekers, however many do not realise that most of her singing career was in the jazz field. Her sister Beverley Sheehan's vocal career was almost 100 per-cent jazz. Both sisters began their vocations in the 1970s.

The Australian Jazz Museum has just released a new Double-CD featuring outstanding Australian female jazz vocalists from 1929 to 2013. There are 51 tracks with a total playing time of 2 hours 37 minutes. Purchase on-line at [www.ajm.org.au](http://www.ajm.org.au) or by phone on 613 980 5535 or at the AJM retail shop or email us at [info@ajm.org.au](mailto:info@ajm.org.au) . \$25 or \$22.50 for members.



Pippa Wilson, as popular today as ever, began her singing career as early as 1979 when she recorded with the New Harlem Jazz Band.

From the 1980s, prominent jazz vocalists included in the CD set are Pat Thompson, Kate Ceberano, Grace Knight, and Carol Ralph, and from the '90s Margie Lou Dyer and Janet Seidel.

The more recent ladies included are the still-active Nichaud Fitzgibbon, Nina Ferro, Rebecca Barnard, Anita Harris, and Hetty Kate. ■



Anita Harris at the AJM's recent Open Day.

# CHRISTOPHER HALE: RITUAL DIAMONDS

Album review by Eric Myers

On first hearing *Ritual Diamonds*, one is struck by how beautiful the music sounds on the surface. Subsequent attempts at analysis do not very much disturb that initial impression. There's a unique soundscape in operation here and, given the dominance of electric instruments, it's primarily electronic. Leader Christopher Hale is on electric bass (among a bewildering variety of other instruments), keyboardist Andrea Keller is on electric piano, and Theo Carbo is of course primarily on electric guitar. Such an electronic soundscape is relatively unusual these days, even unfashionable, but it's so well put together here by extraordinary musicians, that it sounds fresh and innovative.



**Christopher Hale**

Image courtesy of Melbourne Jazz Co-op

Overall, I found *Ritual Diamonds* a strange and unusual album, and difficult to categorise. Listening to it is a transporting experience, as if one is in a dream, or experiencing a reverie. The electronic bed is rich and lush, over which very attractive melodies are played with the time-feels often ambiguous. I feel this album is further testimony to the fact that the greatest Australian jazz musicians welcome the sort of complexity which tests their instrumental expertise. With music so challenging, I found it best not to over-analyse the music, but simply surrender to its beauty. The declared purpose of the album is to reimagine Korean ritual drumming in the context of Western contemporary jazz.

For ten years, Hale has been studying with the Korean drumming innovator Woo Minyoung who shares with him a fascination with rhythm. Hale explains it this way: "Minyoung shared with me her

deep knowledge of shaman ritual drumming styles and traditional rhythms. I shared with her the rhythms of my communities in Australia: the flamenco cycles of my background and the mathematical rhythm codes of the Australian percussionist Greg Sheehan." Other than the three musicians already mentioned, saxophonist Jamie Oehlers plays a significant role. With enviable skill as always, he demonstrates how to construct a lyrical solo over a complicated time-feel; and there are some majestic guitar solos from Carbo. Luckily,

I enjoy immensely grappling with music I don't fully comprehend, and find addictive the sort of mystique such music creates. *Ritual Diamonds* is a milestone album for Australian jazz and I believe that musicologists, and serious students of contemporary jazz, will long be fascinated by the music here, along with Hale's detailed and stimulating explanations of what is being attempted on each track. It's entirely appropriate that drummer Simon Barker, who has done so much to introduce elements of Korean drumming to Australian audiences, is part of Hale's group, and that his student Chloe Kim, herself originally from Korea, is a special guest.



**Label: Earshift Music**

**Personnel:**

Christopher Hale (bass guitar, baritone guitar, acoustic & electric guitars, kkwaenggwari, ching, percussion); Woo Minyoung (changgo, kkwaenggwari, p'aram, percussion); Jamie Oehlers (tenor & soprano saxophones); Andrea Keller (Rhodes, piano); Theo Carbo (acoustic and electric guitars) Simon Barker (drums, mujing), Two special guests are Chloe Kim (cymbals, percussion) and Nadje Noordhuis (trumpet).



# CARIBÉ: DISTANT WATERS

Album review by Eric Myers



**Saxophonist/composer Gai Bryant**

Image courtesy of AustralianJazz.net

**M**y enthusiasm for Gai Bryant's Afro-Cuban jazz projects has been documented previously, in reviews published in the *Australian* and on my Australian jazz history website. Her 18-piece big band Palacio de la Rumba has been going for over a decade while her sextet ALLY, playing Peruvian/Brazilian jazz, made its debut album in 2022. Now for "Caribé", a nine-piece band which melds musicians and dancers from Sydney's Cuban, jazz and Latin communities.

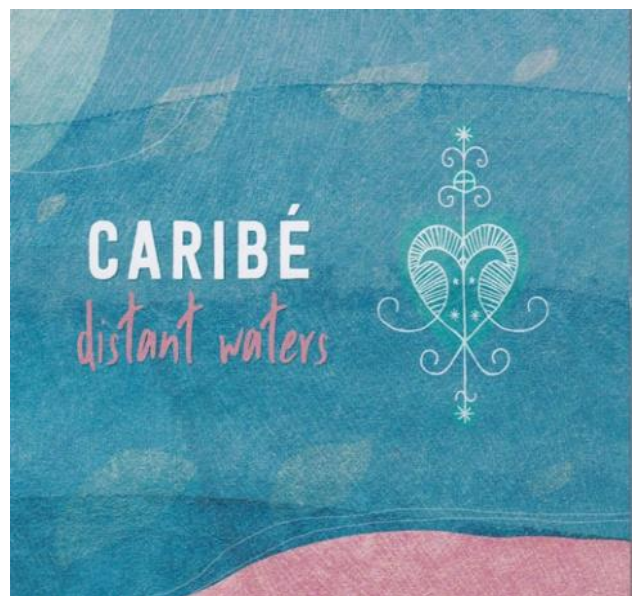
This group was formed by Bryant and the Sydney-based Cuban dancer Adrian Medina in 2017 to perform in Sydney's Afro-Latino Festival. "Distant Waters" is their debut album, and the personnel are listed above. Some of the musicians are not household names, but their playing is exceedingly impressive on this fine album, suggesting that Bryant is able to tap into an unprecedented surfeit of well-educated and experienced jazz musicians in Sydney, who not only excel as section players, but also produce the sort of convincing improvisations essential to first-class jazz performance.

"Distant Waters" includes eight Bryant original compositions/arrangements, which reflect her jazz consciousness as much as they reflect their inspiration, derived from classic Latin time-feels. In this music I detect a purity of spirit, courtesy of the seriousness of jazz as a genre. As a jazz musician Bryant goes for substance; her music is never flashy for the sake of it. Without that jazz consciousness I suspect the music might tip over

into vacuity. Also, high energy and excitement in this sort of Latin music are of course inevitable but, at the same time I also prefer that sort of excitement to be offset by contemplative and ruminative sections.

Accordingly Gai Bryant's thoughtful soprano saxophone solos are always particularly welcome. I would say something similar about the beautiful title track "Distant Waters", written as a tribute to the well-known Brazilian-born artist and cultural activist Marily Cintra. It includes solos from pianist Pliner, bassist Alduca and Bryant herself on soprano and is a model of sensitive dynamics, demonstrating the sort of characteristic restraint in the playing, which gives the piece, and the album for that matter, real distinction. I reiterate my admiration for the pianist Daniel Pliner whose contributions here are always packed with interest. Pliner, trombonist James Greening and Bryant herself are the three key musicians who are common to Gai Bryant's three Afro-Cuban groups.

Have a listen to the album's opening track "Mozambique Muckle" where all three solo. After a splendid improvisation from Bryant on alto saxophone, note how Greening paces himself in his solo and takes the music unerringly into high energy. The individuality of these three musicians goes a long way towards the evolution of what one can increasingly call Bryant's oeuvre, an oeuvre which I believe now has a unique character.



**Label: Independent  
Personnel:**

Matt Collins (trumpet and flugelhorn), Gai Bryant (soprano and alto saxophones), Julian Gough (tenor saxophone), James Greening (trombone, tracks 1, 4, 6 and 8), Nick Barnard (trombone, tracks 2, 3, 5 and 7), Daniel Pliner (piano), Max Alduca (electric & double bass), Stave Marin (drum set & congas), Kent Windress (bata drums), Adrian Medina (vocals (tracks 2 and 5))



# Reminiscing about Alan Stott's Long Yellow Horn



**L**ooking for all the world like a deconstructed alpenhorn, Alan Stott's Long Yellow Horn has a colourful history.

Assembled in the early 1970s by Kelvin Wright of Legato Musical Instruments, in the Melbourne suburb of Reservoir, from parts of an old tuba and galvanized iron tubing, it was first played by Kelvin in a long note band competition.

Alan later purchased it and he believes he first revealed it to the jazz public in the AJC street march at Queenbeyan in late December 1973. The B<sup>b</sup> instrument is over three metres in length and requires several people to support it.

Painted bright yellow, it has generated a lot of interest and garnered media attention upon its various appearances.

Alan recently donated this unique instrument to the Australian Jazz Museum and volunteer Richard Desmond dusted off his chops, managing to produce a rather mournful sound in stark contrast to renditions of "Advance Australia Fair" and the ABC News fanfare Alan is credited with performing in the past. ■



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