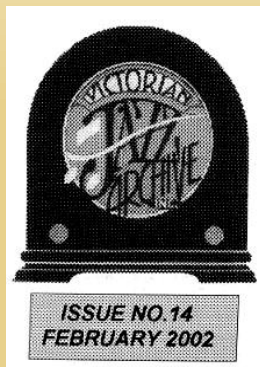


AJAZZ

The Magazine of the Australian Jazz Museum[©]



Celebrating the 100th edition of our publication
which began as VJAZ in January 1998



australian
jazz museum

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AJAZZ

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Cover image:



An historic collection
from Vjaz to AJazz
between 1998 and
2024

PLEASE NOTE:

The deadline for contributions to the
next AJazz is
April 15th 2024



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 Tue 10am-3pm

Membership Options

Regular \$75
Student \$25

All with a range of benefits

AJM Jazz Ambassador Paul Grabowsky AO

JazzXpress presenter Helen Simons has supported the Australian Jazz Museum with a large donation of modern Australian jazz recordings and publications, and by contributing the article "Music Is Not Only An International Language. It Is The Language of Themes And Dreams" to our AJazz magazine. Read her article on [page16](#) of this issue.



Helen with Collections Manager Mel and AJazz editor Ralph

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.



Dear Ralph:

As this year draws to a close, on behalf of UNESCO and the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation for your participation in the International Jazz Day 2023 celebration. A record number of partners worldwide presented a diverse range of musicians in performances, education programs, charity concerts, master classes, community outreach initiatives, lectures, literary evenings and many other creative offerings for people of all ages and backgrounds.

We continue to learn so much about virtual events and how we can connect people beyond in-person gatherings. So many of you expanded your digital connections and engagements this year – recording and streaming your own programs and the 2023 All-Star Global Concert to provide access for audiences far and wide as part of your Jazz Day festivities. The Global Concert has logged more than 100 million views on Facebook and YouTube alone.

These 2023 celebrations stand as a testament to the commitment behind jazz, and the unity and peace it can bring. Artists, organizers and jazz supporters like you came together in more than 195 countries to celebrate this 12th annual International Jazz Day. You and the rest of the widespread International Jazz Day family have continued to work tirelessly and passionately to infuse the joyous sounds of jazz into clubs, concert halls, schools, parks, ballrooms, backyards, museums, town squares and restaurants across all continents.

Your dedication to supporting International Jazz Day means so much to me and I am deeply grateful for all of your efforts. With registrations set to launch in mid-January, we look forward to your upcoming participation in International Jazz Day 2024.

Sincerely,



Herbie Hancock
UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador
for Intercultural Dialogue

Our thanks to the bands and artists without which it would not have been possible

Pippa Wilson with Jazz Notes

Pippa Wilson (Vocals)
Ann Craig (Flute)
Ashley Thomas (Reeds)
Kevin Blaze (Guitar)
Frank Morgan (Bass)
Alan Richards (Drums)

Anita Harris and Friends

Anita Harris (Vocals)
Kim Harris (Keyboard)
Dave Taylor (Bass)
Ron Anderson (Reeds)
Alan Richards (Drums)

Annie Smith with Spellbound

Annie Smith (Vocals)
Barrie Boyes (Reeds)
Grahame Taylor (Keyboard)
Doug Kuhn (Bass)
Brian Abrahams (Drums)

Barry Hanley's Riviera Jazz Band

Barry Hanley (Trumpet)
Ian Christensen (Reeds)
Cal Duffy (Drums)
Simon Vancam (Bass)
Peter McKay (Keyboard)
Ray Lewis (Trombone)

Blue Tango

Lynne Gough (Vocals and Percussion)
Dave Richard (Guitar and Vocals)

Our very first issue

ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE is a copy of the very first official issue of *Vjaz* (with one Z). We believe this was because the Archive's cataloguing system prefixed each asset number with the shortened version of "Jazz". Later issues of the publication reverted to the more logical full spelling. After issue No 2 of November 1998 the publication was published quarterly (with only a few exceptions). It remained a "newsletter" until it was referred to as a "magazine" in issue No 52, although it had slowly been morphing into magazine form for some time before this. *Vjazz* became *Ajazz* with issue No 69.

The names of the existing 70 members were listed in this first issue and included some memorable personalities: Diana Allen, Margaret and Don Anderson, Graeme Bell, Jeff Blades, Michele and Don Boardman, Ray Bradley, Eric Brown, Wes Brown, Nigel Buesst, Liz Currie, Rex Green, Ron Halstead, Tony Newstead, Tom Wanliss, and David Ward, to name a few.

Subjects included the introduction of "INMAGIC DB/Textworks" which was the preferred standard for museum and archival use to keep track of items in the Archive, a one-page article on the Archive's patron jazz identity William "Bill" Miller (founder of "Ampersand" Records), and the announcement that the archive had opened an Information Room at the old Museum of Victoria site. It was announced that the Museum of Victoria had been very generous in donating furniture and fittings for the repository at Wantirna now that the lease had just been signed.

PROLOGUE

JAZZ

AMPERсанд

RECORDS

The idea to start a project to interview jazz musicians arose with some famous veteran footballers. Early in 1994 I discussed this matter with several other jazz fanatics and, after receiving enthusiastic support, the Australian Jazz Interviews Project was formed with myself as Co-ordinator.

At this meeting, it was agreed that the interviews would be recorded on audio tape and eventually placed in a suitable archive such as the State Library of Victoria or the new Victorian Museum. It was also agreed to concentrate mainly, but not completely, on traditional and mainstream jazz musicians and identities. For obvious reasons, it was agreed to initially interview the older people involved.

An interview would cover the person's career in depth, including recordings, and to highlight his/her contribution to the Australian jazz scene.

The Project would be based in Melbourne but every endeavour would be made to interview musicians in other states and to recruit suitable people in those states to conduct the interviews.

This has been one of the most difficult aspects of the Project, but we now have Dr. Keith Brown, Mal Eustice and Carmel Finn as our NSW, South Australian and Queensland representatives, respectively. Diana Allen has also provided tapes of interviews she did with Tom Pickering and Ian Pearce in Hobart.

Eleven different people have conducted interviews, but four people – Eric Brown, Carmel Finn, John Kennedy and myself, have done the majority. As at 30th September 1997, 53 interviews have been produced and the tapes lodged in the Arts Library of the State Library of Victoria. We approached the Library in September 1998 at the suggestion of Eric Brown and found them enthusiastic and keen.

preservation and then transfers them back to cassette. Facilities exist in the Arts Library for people wanting to listen to these interviews. The original cassettes are returned to the Project and will be placed in the Victorian Jazz Archive's repository when it is fully operational. This means that there will be two areas providing facilities for listening access.

Two very significant interviews were those with Neville Stribling and Bill Howard who have both since passed away. Bill's interview was recorded only six weeks before his death and his was in very good form. Others who have been interviewed include Bob Barnard, Wes Brown, Tony Gould, Karm Jones, Tom Pickering, Harry Price, George Tack, Owen Yateman.

In conclusion, my impression is that I have got the Project is the pleasure musicians gain from talking their careers and knowledge to posterity.

SECRETARY'S REPORT
John Kennedy

IT IS NOW EIGHTEEN months since the Victorian Jazz Archive Inc. was formed at the inaugural Committee meeting held on 29th August 1996. In that time the committee has been working very hard to bring about the establishment of a Repository for Australian jazz material and memorabilia.

Time has been spent in building the structure for the receipt, identification and temporary storage for the material; and the production of the necessary systems to ensure the safety and security of the collections. The various forms of record, such as Donations, Deposit Contracts, Registry of Collection, Backlist and Interim Collection, all add to the development of the Archive.

On page 11 you will find a list of donors to the Archive. Their readiness to offer jazz material without prompting has vindicated our faith in the local collector to freely offer prized possessions for posterity. Future newsletters will list details of these donations.

The Archive became a member of both the Museums Australia (Vic) and the Museums Accreditation Program (MAP). After two years from incorporation, the Archive will be able to become an accredited Museum, and later eligible for Museum Registration.

On the 19th July 1997 the Archive opened an Information Room at the old Museum of Victoria site in Swanston Walk. Access to this room was unintentionally hindered by tight security, as the Museum items were packed for storage. This meant that the Information Room had to be closed from early in October. Photo identification for the Information Room was held at the committee's great September was a great success. A sizeable number of photos of jazz musicians and personalities were identified. Thanks should be extended to Mike Sutcliffe who came from Sydney for the weekend, and musician Eddie O'key and others, for the identification of some very early photos.

The Museum of Victoria has been very generous in donating surplus furniture, and fittings for our repository at Wantirna. Special thanks must go to the Museum's Marcelle Scott, Collections, Conservation and Regional Services Department. Thanks also go to Peter Boshier, Technology Manager, for the supply of three

fee of \$25.00, with one nominated member having voting rights. Current members can assist the Archive by renewing their own membership when it falls due, whilst encouraging others to join the Friends of the Archive.

With our lease now signed, the Archive has formally lodged the grant submission with Arts Victoria, with a decision to be made, hopefully, by the end of April.

Late edition news

Volunteers needed
With the lease for Koomba Park now in hand there is considerable work to be done to clean up our new repository premises.

We require the services of willing members who can spare just a few hours over a weekend (or more) to help us get the repository in top shape.

If you think you could be of assistance
Please contact
Secretary:
Phone (03) 9885 4018

VJA Executive Committee

- Chairman: Ray Marginson, AM 9583 6633
- Vice Chairman: John Rippin 5459 1008
- Secretary/Curator: John Kennedy 9885 4018
- Treasurer: Don Anderson 9802 5027
- Publicist: Michele Boardman 9802 5027
- Technical Adviser: David Ward 9592 1444
- Asst. Technical Adviser: Ron Halstead 9813 1303

General Committee Members

- Margaret Anderson, Jeff Blades, Ray Bradley, Eric Brown, Margaret Harvey, Tony Newstead, Dave Persons, Tony Standish, Neville Turner, Tom Wanliss.

Acknowledgements

The committee would like to thank the following for their support and input into the formation of the VJA.

Peter Arnold for VJAZZ artwork and brochure layout
Philip Branch, ANSPAC, Monash University
Brian Brown & Gillian Wills, Music School, Vic.
Wes Brown, Malvern Municipal Band for use of meeting room
Barbara Cullen, Curator, Essendon Football Club Hall
Graham Evans, Collections Manager, National Film & Sound Archive, Canberra
Geoffrey Jazz Club for a special donation to VJA
Adrienne Letts, Training Co-ordinator, Museums Australia Inc. (Vic)
Stuart McCaul, Assistant Arts Librarian, Victorian State Library
William H. Miller, Solicitor, for legal advice
Jack Mitchell, discographer, for enthusiastic advice
Penny Morrison, Director, Museum of Victoria
Sophia Pavlovski-Ross, Accreditation Manager, Museum of Victoria
Sally Robbins, Curator, Performing Arts Museum, Melbourne
Marcelle Scott, Collection, Conservation, & Regional Services, Museum of Victoria
Rodney Sturt, Manager Image Capture Unit IT, Museum of Victoria
Victorian Jazz Club, in particular John Crichton, Laurie Pearson (Newsletter) and Mary Lockhart (Jazz Line)
Whitmore Inn Hotel, 5 Burwood Road, Hawthorn for use of meeting room.

photos to thank the following people for their gifts, publications, photographs and memorabilia. Detailed published in future issues of this newsletter.

Barnard, Ray Bradley, Barry Buckley, Sid & Marge Burke, Royston Coldicott, Bob King & Freemantle for the Estate of Bill Linton and Gloria Green, John Kennedy, Ray Marginson, William H Newstead, Dave Patton, Jack Ricketts, John Rippin, Lois Stephenson, Mike Sutcliffe, George Tack.

The following letters were received with subscription fees from supportive friends interstate and overseas

REFLECTIONS
Jeff Blades

IT IS A WET AND WINDY Melbourne Sunday afternoon as I write, but that's OK. Margaret is beavering away on the computer and an early Australian jazz recording of The Bell Band is providing background music. We have access to a growing reference library through which we browse during a coffee break. The phone rings – it's reception, informing us that we have a visitor.

I descend two floors in an antiquated lift complete with a sliding grill door from another era. The interior is reminiscent of worn brown linoleum retrieved from the Spencer Street railway buildings. It is controlled by round black buttons protruding from dull brass escutcheon plates. Memories of the lift in the old 'Muso's club' behind the Town Hall come flooding back from the fifties!

Will anyone find me should this vertical coffin break down?

I collect our visitor from reception; we retrace my steps along the long dark corridor, past the giant squid and back into the lift. The emergency phone is made from shiny white plastic and out of place in this private time warp. I wonder if it is connected to the outside world as we grope our way skyward. Alighting from the lift we cross the hallway and enter Room Seven. Where the hell are we? Deep within the bowels of the Museum of Victoria - we have

The Archive has been a long time coming, but it is now a reality. You said that you wanted it and now you've got it. Don't on your hands – support it. There is a hell of a lot of work to do, and the Archive now come from ALL OF YOU.

P.S. Come home Bill, this is where belong!

N.B. For information on how you can see Chairman's report on the front of this newsletter.

Where to find us

The VICTORIAN JAZZ ARCHIVE
is located at
12 Hornswood Cr.,
Ashburton Vic 3147
PO Box 442,
Ashburton Vic 3147

For information on assessment procedures or ways to deposit or donate material to the Victorian Jazz Archive Inc., please write to: Victorian Jazz Archive Inc., PO Box 442, Ashburton Vic 3147.

12
(03) 9885 4018
PO Box 442
Ashburton Vic 3147

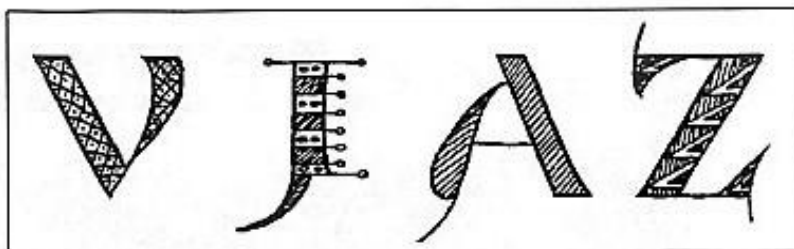
Save our jazz past for the future

Dear Sirs,

I have been collecting Australian jazz records for fifty years, and have possibly the largest collection in Canada. Mike Sutcliffe sent your brochure to me, and I read it with great interest. I would like to support your goal to preserve material relating to Australian jazz.

Enclosed is an international money order for \$15.00 Aust. for an annual subscription. I wish you every success in your efforts, and please tell me how I can

'No doubt about Victorian Jazz lovers - they do things. Best of luck with such an important project.'
Warwick Taylor,
Orange NSW



Newsletter of the Victorian Jazz Archive Inc

January 1998

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Ray Marginson

IT HAS BEEN A BUSY and eventful 12 months for the Victorian Jazz Archive and its committee. From the first discussion, at which the concept was outlined by Graham Evans of the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) the committee has been concentrating on the basic tasks. Amongst these were establishing the legal framework; comprehensive documentation of the process of recording, identifying, cataloguing and caring for the collections of jazz material in the future. Accessibility to these collections is also of paramount importance.

Above all, we have been seeking an adequate building to accommodate such holdings at minimal cost. In this regard the Archive committee is taking the occupancy of a sizeable building from Parks Victoria at 'Koomba Park', Cnr Burwood and Mountain Highways, Wantirna from mid February. Earlier, negotiations with the Victorian College of the Arts proved fruitless, as they have hardly any spare space and inadequate funding. The Head of the Department of Music, Gillian Wills, and key teachers in the jazz area such as Brian Brown, remain supportive. We plan to have an on-line facility with audio and visual information access at the College for the use of students and teaching staff. A similar terminal is also planned for the State Library of Victoria.

Recently, I have had discussions with Graham Evans (NFSA) in Canberra. The NFSA are very enthusiastic about our progress. John Rippin, our Vice-Chairman has been appointed as the Victorian delegate to the Australian Jazz Archive National Council (AJANC),



Ray Marginson enjoys a cup of tea at the first VJA function, a Red & Rare BBQ held in May at Nortons Park, Wantirna.

which will hopefully meet in a central location such as Canberra. We are asking the AJANC to forward all papers relevant to meetings, so the Victorian Executive can brief John fully before these meetings and thus ensure a Victorian input.

Your committee's policy, as you know, is to hold Australian jazz material here in Victoria, but make available with the agreement of donors, copies of all items that may be sought by the Australian Jazz Archive through the NFSA.

The Archive has been very fortunate with financial support in our formative months, notably a donation of \$2000 from the Trustees of the 50th Australian Jazz Convention;

The committee of the Victorian Jazz Club has donated \$500 and the committee of the Geelong Jazz Club has also contributed \$200. Many private and anonymous donors have made substantial financial contributions. The support of a small number of Life Members together with annual subscribers also ensures that we have sufficient funds in hand to make a start on the repository at Wantirna. It is vital of course, that we extend our number of subscribers to meet operating costs. Please recruit as many new members as you can.

However, we will still need to obtain the grants we are applying for, to get the technical equipment up and running. We will need volunteer labour of various sorts in the period through to June 1998, (approximately). We will be contacting you personally at a later date in regard to help needed.

Finally, I would like to thank all my colleagues on the committee for their tremendous enthusiasm and hard work, particularly our creative Secretary/Curator, John Kennedy. There is no doubt that the Victorian Jazz Archive is definitely launched and has a very bright future. What we have to do is to get the message out to the whole jazz community, whether trad, mainstream, contemporary or whatever the music inclination, that this is *their* Archive. The VJA is being created to preserve *their* collections, *their* photographs, and *their* memorabilia for the use of future musicians, researchers, students and members of the public who want to know about Australian jazz music.

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Some Recollections and Observations of my time as a volunteer with The Australian Jazz Museum

By Ray Sutton – Past General Manager and Special Projects Officer

Around September 2003, as Secretary of Knoxfield Red Cross, my wife Irene went to a Knox City Council community workshop about getting and keeping volunteers, and met a couple of people from the Victorian Jazz Archive Inc. (VJA) located in Koomba Park, Mountain Highway, Wantirna South. On returning home, Irene indicated that she had found something we could both be involved in after my retirement from full-time employment, particularly as we liked jazz music. We went to VJA's Senior's Week "open day" in March 2004 and immediately liked what we saw and heard. The volunteers were of similar age to ourselves, and very friendly, with great camaraderie between them. When the General Manager – John Kennedy OAM found I was retired and looking for some volunteer work and was computer literate, the red carpet was virtually rolled out to our home in Ferntree Gully. He explained that the VJA was a not-for-profit organisation run entirely by a band of passionate volunteers dedicated to "Saving Our Jazz Past for the Future", operating through a Committee of Management elected annually from among the Archive's members, and included jazz enthusiasts and active musicians, many of whom resided in municipalities surrounding Knox. This appealed to us greatly, so I started as a volunteer with VJA in May 2004 with Irene starting in June; little did we realise the impact this would have on our life over the next 18 years or so, and I still remain involved with the organisation.

up the data on each machine, however realised we really needed the PCs to be upgraded/replaced, and all having the same standard operating system. Ideally, they should be linked to a network "server" to provide uniformity and an automatic process to back-up all the data, including administration documentation and financial information. Based on my two-page submission to Arts Victoria, we were able to secure a grant of \$18,500 to enable the installation of a network of seven computers linked to a high-spec PC acting as a "server". During the years since those early days, VJA/AJM has upgraded its LAN to a one gigabyte connection throughout with over 22 PCs, a major A3 printer and several digital scanners.

In September 2005, John Kennedy let it be known that he wanted to back away from his heavy VJA workload and spend more time with his wife, so indicated he would not be standing at that year's AGM for any position on the Committee of Management. He approached me on two occasions to nominate for the General Manager's position, but I initially declined on the grounds that I knew absolutely nothing about jazz, and just liked listening to it. Several other senior volunteers also approached me about nominating, so after further consideration and with great reluctance I relented – and was duly elected as such at the AGM in November 2005, however making it clear all I could bring to the organisation was an element of business acumen and not jazz knowledge. Being elected annually, I went on to occupy the role for nine years.

The Museum is run entirely by volunteer labour, and in 2013–14 some 17,000 hours were contributed by over 60 people, aged from 30 to 90 years, with many individuals contributing in excess of 24 hours per week. Thanks to the extensive and excellent work initially done by John Kennedy and all the team who put together the voluminous documentation for museum accreditation, the VJA became a fully Accredited Museum with Museums Australia (Victoria) in September 2003. Such recognition has since been the cornerstone of funding grants and donations from all levels of Government and philanthropic organisations. As G.M. I had the privilege of being heavily involved in MA(V)'s MAP re-accreditation process for 2007 and 2012. The organisation was again re-accredited in 2017. John Kennedy had already persuaded retired Chemist and jazz enthusiast-Mel Blachford to try out the role of Collections Manager. Mel took to it like a duck to water, and has done a magnificent job over the years since he started in 2007. He's still in the role over seventeen years later. Collections Manager includes being responsible for: receiving, assessing for relevance, quality and significance, the official acknowledgement to donors, appropriate conservation and archiving in acid-free materials, correct storage, data-entry of relevant details, etc. of all donated jazz-related items including music records, cassettes, reel-to-reel tapes, CDs, videos, books, pamphlets, newspaper cuttings, posters, photographs, instruments, sheet music, ephemera, etc. – all with specific emphasis on Australian Jazz music heritage.

As more and more material donations were being received, we needed to increase our physical storage capacity dramatically; in 2005, we had only 57 lineal metres of open shelving, so our Collections Manager – Mel Blachford suggested compactus units in each of the shipping containers and other areas would provide extra storage with minimal cost. Over the next few years when funding became available, we installed an additional twenty-foot container located outside the building, leased a room in Millers Homestead from



Ray Sutton with Ray Marginson AM

The major driving forces behind the establishment of the VJA were John Kennedy and Dr Ray Marginson AM, together with a few other jazz enthusiasts. This quote from Dr Ray Marginson AM sets the scene.

"The moment we will always remember is that critical point at the 1996 meeting at the Whitehorse Hotel in Hawthorn, when John Kennedy made his celebrated statement that he was 'starting tomorrow'; he took us all with him on the road to an Archive."

John started the Archive in his garage where it remained for six months until his wife indicated she wanted the car moved from the nature strip back into the garage. A small room was found in the Melbourne Museum for six months until Ray Marginson was able to arrange a 12-month "peppercorn rent" on a Parks Victoria building in Koomba Park, Mountain Highway, Wantirna South in 1998 and where we still remain today.

In looking after the stand-alone computers in those early days, I managed to get some control on matters by backing

the Knox City Council (specifically for literally thousands of jazz sheet-music scores), and also reorganized space within the building. In 2016 we purchased two forty-foot insulated containers and another in 2021 for location outside the building – thus increasing our capacity to over 900 lineal metres of compactus and open shelving at the time of writing.

We also needed to increase our volunteer base to handle all the material now being received, and at one stage we had 65 active male and female volunteers on our books with a core of 30. Very often on a Tuesday, we would have between 25 and 35 volunteers attending. Staff supervision in any organisation is on the less-easy side, and even more so when volunteers are involved, so to have done so for nine years without any major hiccups is something I'm quite proud about. I think much of this success was that I endeavoured to treat everyone the same – with dignity and respect, helped to solve issues where necessary, demonstrated by example, and maintained an element of due communication in keeping everyone informed in a timely manner. Every two or three months, I would issue an Archive Chronicle internal newsletter for our volunteers – with the most current information relevant to all. Unfortunately, such communication has been absent during the past few years.



Volunteers are the lifeblood of any such organisation, and I pay high tribute to the wonderful people I've been associated with over my years at AJM. Without them and their unstinting enthusiasm, and dedication to the job, the organisation would not be recognised as the Premier Jazz Museum in Australia.

The VJA/AJM is not limited to the heritage of "old" music, as jazz is ever evolving. Experience to date has been that young musicians of today are only just coming to terms with the heritage nature of their art. Our policy has always been to welcome jazz musicians from all generations, and include their music (classic to contemporary) in the Museum. AJM also played a role in keeping jazz music alive by contributing to local community FM radio stations such as 98.1 FM Radio Eastern and 3WBC 94.1 FM – thanks to volunteer Peter Edwards.

Of course, there is a cost to keeping the Museum operating and adhering to the organisation's charter. Basic everyday operations of the Museum include leasing the property, security, power and electricity, telephone, insurances (buildings, contents, volunteers, equipment), rubbish removal, general maintenance, kitchen, office and toilet consumables, stationery, auditing of our financial records, general archival materials, and production of our AJAZZ Magazine, etc, and in 2015 had an annual operational cost of around \$40,000. Whilst every effort was made to contain these costs as much as possible, many are ever increasing (eg: energy, security, rubbish collection, etc). Such costs were generally covered with three income streams, namely, AJM Membership (then in excess of 500 financial members), Museum Shop Sales (principally our own in-house produced AJM series of CDs) to members and visitors, and regular Group ours – the latter bringing in about a quarter of the annual costs associated with keeping the Museum open. This is a very positive way for the AJM to continue spreading

the word about Australian Jazz – and keeping it alive. These group tours also assist in maintaining and increasing membership, and improving sales of jazz related material through the Museum Shop. Additional income was derived from general donations, fundraising activities including external concerts, and grants for specific projects.

Other important financial contributions were received from the estates of the late David Ward – VJA Sound Engineer and part-owner/director of the Ward-McKenzie Food Processing Company, Sam Meerkin – VJA volunteer, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC, DBE, and Dr Ray Marginson AM – Past VJA President, to name but a few. These were gratefully received and faithfully applied, enabling the VJA/AJM to initially become established then upgrade and refurbish many facilities such as the kitchen, toilet block, office administration, installation of a sliding security gate, sound room, digitisation room, and the installation of external shipping containers as storage vaults, etc. In addition, applications to local, state and federal government departments and philanthropic organisations were made for specific projects. For many such applications, I would often start the process with a "blank page" then pass my efforts onto the President, Collections Mgr, and the Projects Mgr for review – thus each application would take many hours to complete, unfortunately with limited success (about 30%) – due to an ever-increasing number of applicants vying for an overall decreasing pie during an era of general government cost-cutting.

In 2007 we realised our then leased piano needed to be completely overhauled and restored. The lowest quote was around \$1,800 plus. Alan Clark our Marketing Manager and a pianist, mentioned he could arrange the purchase of a good second-hand piano from his contact at Keyboard Corner in Boronia for around \$3,000 – having been a good customer of theirs for several years. Alan proposed paying for the "new" piano by "selling" the keys to VJA members at \$50 each (ie: 88 keys = \$4,400), and have the names of the recipients engraved on a replica keyboard displayed above the piano. This was done and the story has been espoused to many visitors as part of our group tours.



Alan Clark proposed a keyboard fundraiser

From the outset, VJA/AJM has been committed to community involvement rather than self-indulgence, and its Charter embraces the preservation of our jazz past for future generations. This includes the ability to understand and perform a unique form of music which is generally accepted as being a progressive and sustainable art form in its own right. Put simply, without young musicians learning to understand and play the music, Jazz has little or no future in Australia. To maintain a continuing interest in the jazz performing arts scene and encourage our younger generation to consider jazz as an extension to their musical interest, the AJM continues to support such endeavours by providing our Wantirna premises as the venue for jazz improvisation workshop instruction for under 25s and over 25s budding musicians.

Part of the AJM's Charter is to display for public viewing Australian jazz memorabilia at the Museum's premises in Wantirna, and at locations where it would be available to interested local, interstate and overseas visitors. The stories to be told refer to the musicians, bands and their music in the Australian jazz context, encompassing the widest range of material from the Collection. To support and illustrate this aim, some important memorabilia is on Permanent Display at our Wantirna premises, for example: a bust of the late Eric Child O.A.M. – ABC radio announcer and jazz presenter, a Grafton "white plastic" saxophone originally presented in 1952 to the late Adrian "Lazy Ade" Monsborough A.O. multi-instrumentalist jazz musician and composer, Jazz material associated with the late Graeme Emerson Bell A.O., M.B.E. – jazz pianist and bandleader, including one of his modern paintings donated to AJM in 2013 by his daughter Christina Bell.



Exhibitions are a key function of the Jazz Museum

Periodic Pictorial Exhibitions at our Wantirna premises include memorabilia associated with well-known jazz musicians, jazz bands and jazz festivals, for example: Bilarm (Bill Armstrong-recording engineer) and Swaggie (Nevill Sherburn-music producer) Fitzgibbon Dynasty – including Graham "Smacka" Fitzgibbon, his family, mother and sister, the Yarra Yarra JB and the Red Onions Jazz Band. As GM, I was extensively involved in the administration of a number of these exhibitions, including selecting and scanning many photos, compiling and writing complementary booklets, and creating captions for the ephemera items being put on display, etc. In 2006 we mounted a "Jazz From the Archive – Celebrating our Achievements" exhibition with eight specially designed display panels and jazz artefacts at the Wangaratta Jazz Festival. In 2007, thanks to our Marketing Manager Alan Clark, we arranged a marvellous and successful 13-day exhibition of our material – with various "live" jazz bands playing at the Forest Hill Chase Regional Shopping centre. As a lasting record, I compiled a History of Past Exhibitions and Displays mounted by the VJA/AJM, copies of which are in AJM's Collection and its Reference Library. It includes a brief exposé of each exhibition/display since inception in 1996, a small selection from our repository of then over 45,000 photographs illustrating and supporting the exhibitions, and where applicable a copy of the relevant complementary booklets published for respective exhibitions. To better reflect on our broader activities, our motto was changed to Proactively Collecting, Archiving and Disseminating Australian Jazz.

From 2004 to 2014, we endeavoured to have four fund-raising jazz functions each year held on the fifth Sunday of relevant months. In the early days, the events were at the Rosstown Hotel in Carnegie as the Management was pro jazz – offering their principal function room at no charge, and would cover their costs by selling food and beverages during the function. As the event organiser and compere, the late Marina Pollard would arrange a different good-quality six-piece jazz band for each well patronised function, and organise a general raffle for the day. An entrance fee of \$15 to

\$20 enabled payment for the band; the remainder going to the VJA/AJM. After nine years at this venue, we moved on to the Burvale Hotel for 15 months then onto the R.S.L. Clayton for a couple of years before reduced patronage caused a cessation of this activity.

In recognition of its valuable work over many years in Saving our Jazz Past for the Future, the VJA/AJM received several Awards and Grants as a testimony to its achievements – including: 2007 Victorian Community History Awards Best Exhibit/Display "Jazz Spans the Decades", 2009 NLA Community Heritage Grant "Archive Materials and Training", 2012 Victorian Museum Award for Volunteer Run Museums "For aiming for the Highest Standards in all areas of Documentation". Such awards and grants from local, state and federal government departments and philanthropic organisations don't come automatically. All require relevant, detailed applications to be submitted within very strict guidelines – as in most cases, public and private money is involved and must be correctly accounted for. With limited funds available and an ever-increasing number of applicants, it's indeed an accolade to be in the top 3 before the final decision is made as to the winner.



The VJAZZ magazine has evolved from a two-page black and white newsletter to keep members informed of what was happening at the VJA, including news of the jazz scene in Melbourne and around Victoria and was initially compiled and edited for many years by VJA Secretary the late Gretel James. Around 2009, I established a magazine editorial committee initially led by John Thrum to improve/expand this quarterly publication. It has developed to the extent of now being quite a professional full colour 16 plus

page publication; thanks to the wonderful efforts over many years of the editorial team led by Dr. Pam Clements – Editor, and since COVID-19, by Ralph Powell and Ken Simpson-Bull. In 2015, the magazine name was changed to AJAZZ to comply with our new trading name, and to better represent the Australian Jazz scene.

The Museum faces a number of challenges if it is to successfully live-on into the future. Technology is ever changing and we need to be cognizant that our jazz material should be accessible to future generations – for the electronic medium on which we are using today to record and store sound, images and video will be rapidly overtaken by future technological advances. As an example, consider the swift evolution of recording media such as LPs, Cassettes, CDs, MP3, MP4, and cloud-based technology – the latter being where much modern music and video of today is stored and accessible only via "the cloud" ie: no physical media. Therefore, it is extremely important to keep our recording and digitising equipment, computer hardware and software, and electronic storage capacity constantly up-to-date so that the Museum's existing material today can be speedily accessed when it's required in the future.

Another major concern is the need to adequately fund the Museum each year. As large material donations continue to be received, additional storage and administration space will be required. Even now, it's necessary to seriously "review and dramatically cull" our existing collection and triage any future material received – particularly where we already have multiple physical copies of some audios, videos, books, photographs and printed material such as documents, newspaper cuttings, booklets, posters, etc; much of the latter needing to be urgently digitised before it further deteriorates into eventual disintegration.

Space doesn't permit any more ramblings, so I will conclude by saying I had the wonderful fortune of working closely, harmoniously and successfully with all the volunteers, and in particular the Collections Manager – Mel Blachford and his very dedicated team, for which I am most grateful. ■

Vale Max Gourlay

(1926 – 2023)

By Dr Simon Petty

Early last year, Tasmania lost one of its doyens of jazz; Max Gourlay. A pioneer of the Tasmanian jazz scene for over seven and a half decades. Max was born 14 August 1926 in Launceston. At the age of nine, he started formal violin lessons with Lynda Sheen. A quick learner, his first performance was soon after at the Theatre Royal in Hobart at the age of ten. By the age of fifteen, he had begun playing professionally for fundraising concerts for the Second World War effort. As there were few local professional musicians in Hobart during the war period, Max was able to obtain regular pit work at the Theatre Royal in Hobart, and the country dance circuit in Hobart and surrounding suburbs. It was during this period; he was introduced to the jazz violin style of Stephané Grappelli from local radio programmes in Hobart. Immediately captivated, he was able to acquire some Grappelli recordings, and in his late teens, had started to emulate Grappelli's jazz violin style.

In 1944, Max joined the navy and worked on ships in northern Australia and Papua New Guinea, playing music and giving recitals for his shipmates whenever possible. Discharged in 1946 and returning to Hobart, he took up repertory theatre work at the Playhouse Theatre in Hobart, as well as numerous radio broadcasts. In 1948, he moved to Launceston, as his father had taken over Gourlay's Confectionary branch there. Max trained with his father as a confectioner but retained his musical interests. The square dance craze hit Australia in the 1950s and rose to major prominence in Tasmania from 1953. During this period, he worked as a confectioner during the day, and nights and weekends as a musician with Jim McBain (guitar), Madge Riley (piano), Jack Duffy (piano, piano accordion and vibraphone), and Bill Browne (drums) for square dances.



Max Gourlay performing at Shearwater, Tasmania. c. 1980s.

Soon after Max joined Ted Herron and Bill Browne's Jazzmanians for some performances. In 1951, Don Gurr, their pianist-turned-clarinetist, had relocated to Hobart to study pharmacy. Don had mainly played clarinet and tenor saxophone in the Jazzmanians, and his departure demanded a replacement. Ted and Bill noticed Max's swing approach to the violin and encouraged him to take up clarinet, copying his jazz violin style and phrasing to the instrument. Teaching himself to play the clarinet, and later saxophones and flute, he

joined the Jazzmanians full-time from 1951, and remained a constant member for the next sixty years.

Max's multi-instrumentality together with that of the other members of the Jazzmanians (Ted Herron – guitar and trumpet, Bruce Gourlay – piano and piano accordion) enabled the group great flexibility. The three main configurations included a traditional swing "Goodman" style quartet with Max on clarinet and vocals, and Ted on guitar; the second a "Hot Club of France" style with Max switching to violin; and the third, a traditional Dixieland group, in which Ted would switch to trumpet and Max back to clarinet and saxophones. The flexibility of the members enabled the Jazzmanians to remain in regular work adapting from jazz to cabaret and commercial performance settings. Bill and the Gourlays remained the nucleus of the band after Ted's death in 1986. The following years saw the band continue with success recording and performing at Don Burrow's Esso Australian Jazz Summit at Bondi Beach in Sydney in 1986 and teaming up with Bob Barnard in 1995 to record a CD "Bob at the Batman". Browne's retirement in the 1990s, saw him hand the leadership over to Max in which the group remained strong well into the mid 2010s.



The Jazzmanians, Launceston Jazz Club. Max Gourlay cl, Simon Petty t, Bruce Gourlay p, Ken Philpot bass, Bruce Innocent d, c 2012

Max was a prolific composer and poet, many of his composition's representative of Tasmania, appear on ABC, Festival Records, and independent labels, and his poems in the *Anthology of Australian Poetry*. He also wrote songs for Tasmanian country artist Jack Munting, which appear on several of Munting's Festival recordings. Max performed alongside many musicians from both Australia and overseas, a summarised list includes Kenny Davern, Acker Bilk, Warren Vaché, Kenny Ball, Don Burrows, Bob Barnard, James Morrison, Paul Furniss, Ade Monsborough, Roger Bell, The Dutch Swing College Band, and many others. He performed at countless Australian Jazz Conventions, jazz festivals, national TV shows, and radio programs nationally and internationally.

Teaching violin, clarinet, saxophones, and flute, Max also had immeasurable effect on countless generations of musicians in Tasmania. When people think of jazz in Launceston, they think of "The Gourlays". Max will be remembered for his great talent, humility, and generosity. To him, the little things throughout his career provided more enjoyment than his long list of accolades. He passed away peacefully in Launceston on 16 April 2023. Max will be deeply missed by the fraternity of Australian and Tasmanian jazz musicians. Vale Max Gourlay and "Keep swinging mate". ■

Rag-Time Australia

Music, Dance, Race, Revolution and War before the Jazz Age

Extracted from a lecture by Dr John Whiteoak in which he outlined his monograph-in-process *Rag-Time Australia* about jazz-related popular entertainment before Australia's 1920s Jazz Age.

THE terms "ragtime" and "jazz" are often used for things that lack precise agreed-upon definitions. For example, early Australian perceptions of both "ragtime bands" and early "jazz bands" were of ragtime-inflected musical clowning or novelty noise-making. A primary musical focus of Rag-Time Australia is the influence of the new Irving Berlin-style verse and chorus ragtime music and dance song hits of the era that, unlike classic ragtime, invited idiomatic and individualistic performance-time invention or elaboration, as so-called "ragging" – later called "jazzing".

Previous writings on the beginnings of jazz-related popular entertainment in Australia have mostly centred on the period between the mid-1918 appearance of the vaudeville act called "Australia's First Jazz Band" and the onset of the Great Depression. But Rag-Time Australia is about an even earlier Australian engagement with American popular modernity that, just before World War One, culminated in a complex, modern American popular culture-driven youth-oriented music, dance and fashion revolution. It argues that the roots of this revolution can be traced back to social traits already present in Australian society.

The "Rag-Time Australia" revolution was however a dramatic pre-WW1 collision of American popular modernity with a very British-Australia.

Key performative aspects of Jazz-Age popular music and dancing were already an established aspect of Australian popular entertainment by 1914, including so-called "ragging". "Ragging" referred to both the improvisatory rhythmic, harmonic and melodic embellishment of Tin Pan Alley music and also ecstatic spontaneous embellishment of new American ragtime dances considered by Australian moral guardians and dance teachers as iconoclastic and/or "immoral". The coming of Australia's Jazz Age was not a sudden post-war shift but,

instead, a more incremental transition and overlap.

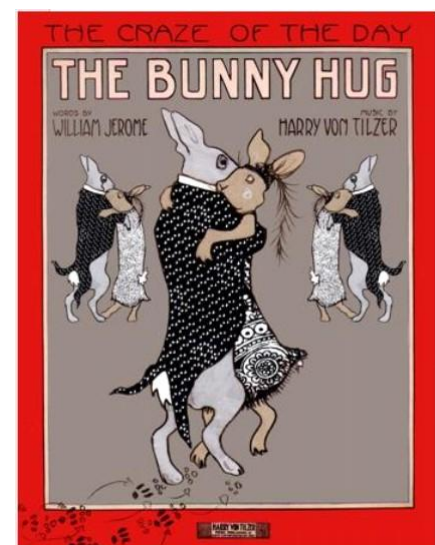
In Irving Berlin and Ragtime America, the popular music historian, Ian Whitcomb, explains that the "Ragtime America" scene commenced with the astonishing global success of Berlin's swinging hit "Alexander's Rag-Time Band". It was already being played, sung and danced to in Australia by early 1912 and became the sound track to the Australian popular entertainment era that followed. Whitcomb proposes that the opening lyrics of "Alexander's Ragtime Band", "Come on and hear! Come on and hear!" were an invitation to "come" and join in this musical revolution. The lyrics "And if you wanna hear that Swanee River played in ragtime", confirmed that spontaneous transformation of popular music as ragging (and later as jazzing) was the future of modern popular musical entertainment.

100 years of convict transportation had resulted in the formation of youthful anti-authoritarian, violent, racist and murderous street gangs of so-called Larrikins and Donahs (their female counterparts), who were directly associated with the racial mocking of black Americans through minstrelsy. Minstrelsy, as a significant predecessor of jazz in Australia, was both a medium for low-life expression and an Australianised form of racism.

Larrikins engaged with early ragtime music and dancing as so-called "coon song" and "cakewalk" music and dancing and, after 1912, with the new Berlin-style ragtime music and dancing. The arrival of these new so-called freak dances like the "Grizzly Bear" and "Bunny Hug" connected into public dancing where complete strangers could hook up at public dance venues like "Salon de Luxe" in Sydney or the "Palais de Danse" in St Kilda. Australian men and women stage artists and musicians took up ragging after learning how to "rag" from American vaudeville artist stage dance bands and ragtime

films. The 1918 vaudeville act, "Australia's First Jazz Band", for example, was in fact a ragtime band that ragged in a comedic way as so-called "jazz".

Rag-Time Australia and its transition into Jazz-Age Australia remains a largely forgotten epoch of Australian cultural, social and popular music and jazz studies history. One key reason was Australia's entry into a war that dampened the driving spirit of the Rag-Time Australia boom. "Ragtime" remained analogous to "popular" in Australian perception, ragtime artists still appeared on the popular stage and ragtime bands continued to be formed, but the pre-war ragtime boom was over, with sombre patriotic concerts strongly challenging ragtime as public entertainment events. Ragtime dancing was blamed for a range of ills, including sex orgies, drug addiction, and divorce. By 1917, when America finally entered the war, newspaper reports and cinema were already bringing Australian music and dancing and, after 1912, with the new Berlin-style ragtime music and dancing.



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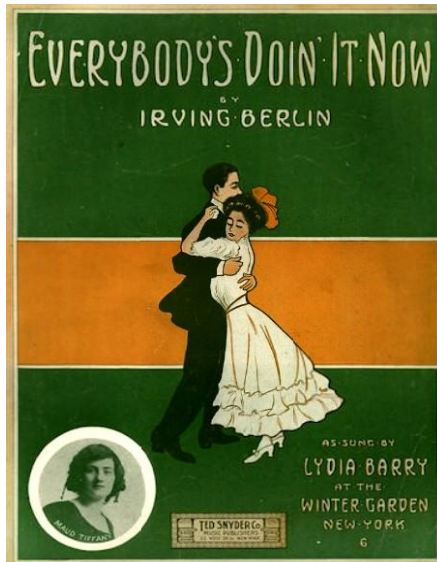
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Rag-Time Australia does not fit the, now strongly contested, traditional narrative of jazz history as commencing in New Orleans through a pantheon of legendary, mostly black American leaders and soloists, like Buddy Bolden or King Oliver. Nor does it correspond to the agenda of contemporary jazz studies forums like the US-based Jazz Studies Collaborative, which limits jazz studies discourse to being North America-centric and primarily about Black American music, culture, history and issues.

A 1929 Melbourne article called the "Long-Lost Days of Ragtime" by an Australian journalist reflecting personally upon the Ragtime era accurately predicted that Australia's hot Jazz Era was about to end:

Although it does not seem many years ago since syncopated music first became widely popular, there are many young people nightly dancing to the lilting measure of Jazz who do not remember ... its immediate predecessor ragtime.



One of the first ragtime melodies ... was the haunting ... "Everybody's Doin' It". It sent every messenger whistling in the streets and its opening phases, played by a band or on a piano, were sufficient to start the shoulders and arms of those who heard them swaying to and fro.

Before Mr Berlin captivated the pleasure-loving world with his dexterous compositions, we had to be content with cake-walks, one-

steps, and two-steps which were played mostly at minstrel entertainments. Time dims the recollection of many of the songs and their accompaniments of the "ragtime age".

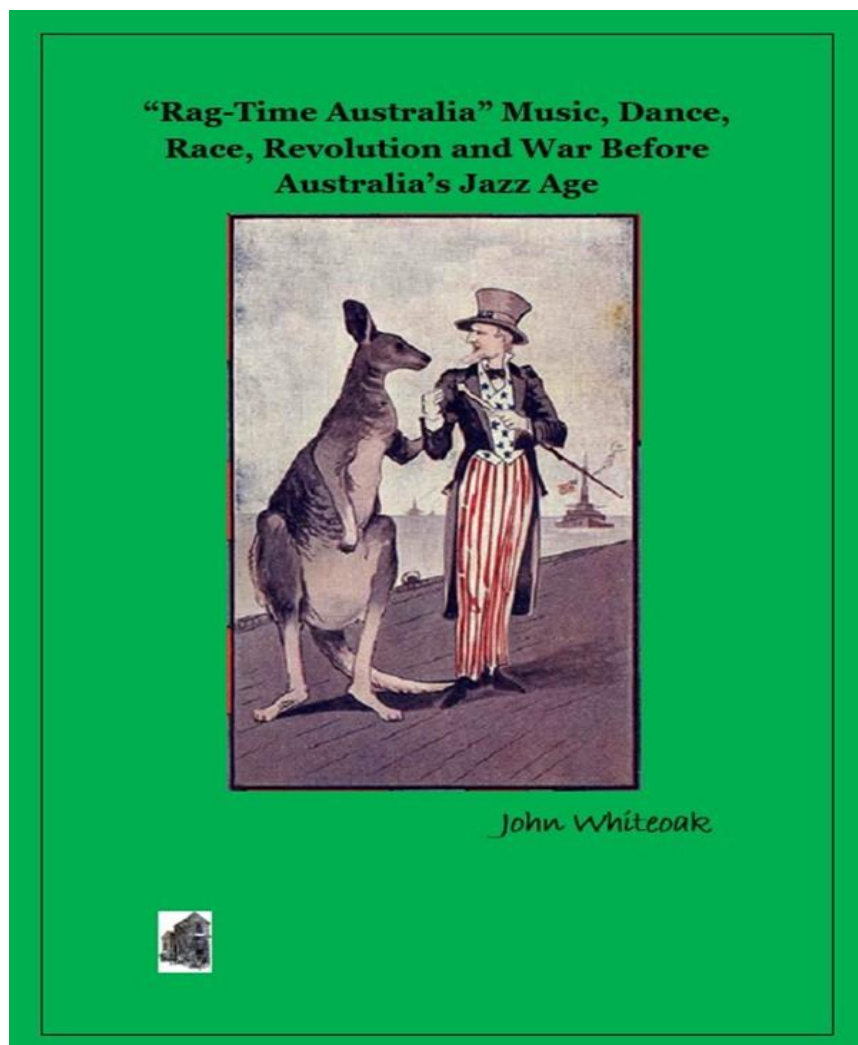
People whose hair is only now beginning to be streaked with grey can remember when the question was asked, "What is a jazz band?," and the reply was given that it was a band that played ragtime, and that the drummer's equipment consisted of a weird collection of boxes, cowbells, whistles, and other objects.

Ragtime developed into jazz almost imperceptibly. Someday, possibly, a musical historian will trace the transition for the enlightenment of humanity.

John Whiteoak's forthcoming *Rag-Time Australia Music, Dance, Race, Revolution and War before the Jazz Age* will hopefully accomplish this. ■

Footnote:

Historians of the jazz-related aspect of this period include Andrew Bisset, Bruce Johnson, John Whiteoak, Kay Dreyfus, Chris Long, Mike Sutcliffe, Ross Laird, Peter Burgis, Jack Mitchell, and Deidre O'Connell.



CROWEATERS and the BIG V

(A Fruitful Relationship)

Is it mere coincidence that the "playlist" for the first Australian Jazz Convention in 1946 was almost completely dominated by musicians from the "Australian Rules" States with New South Wales meagerly represented and as for Queensland, it may as well have been in the Northern Hemisphere. Victoria was at the centre – Graeme Bell, Frank Johnson, – some Tassies were on board and South Australia was worthily represented by Dave Dallwitz's Southern Jazz Group.

In point of fact there had been a good deal of cross-border migration (each way) for quite some time. Many South Australian musicians went off to the "brighter lights" of Melbourne or Sydney – Maurice Le Doeuff, Jack Brokensha, Errol Buddle, Bob Limb, "Ocker" Bamford, Bryce Rohde, Ron Loughhead, Ron Lucas, Clare Bail, Mick McCabe and, later, Roger Hudson and Mal Wilkinson. Others came west, some fairly briefly – Frank McMahon, Les Sims, Nick Stefakis, Roger Harkin, Russ Jones, Jack Banston, 'Doc' Willis.

Dave Dallwitz, of German ancestry, was born in the Barossa Valley. Early on, he played, at various times, violin, trumpet, ukulele, guitar and trombone. Through the mid to late 1950s and the 1960s, when he left the world of jazz for classical music, he played cello and bassoon. But to return to the 1940s he joined a band led by trumpeter Dave Jenkins. It was called the Southern Jazz Group (SJG).

When Jenkins left to explore more commercial possibilities, Dallwitz took over. He had definite ideas as to how the music should sound. Guitarist Johnny Malpas was told to take up the banjo and Bob Wright, who had started on drums, came in on tuba.

The virtuosi in the band were Bill Munro on trumpet, Bruce Gray on clarinet and Lew Fisher on piano. That having been said, Bob Wright quickly became outstanding on his new instrument. They recorded "Loopy Blues" and "Georgia Cakewalk" in Adelaide in November 1946 with Joe Tippet on washboard. Dave was very particular about



Dave Dallwitz and the Southern Jazz Group playing at the 1st AJC 1946

drummers. Claude Whitehouse, who rehearsed with the band for a while was told that if he continued to play as he was, he would finish up at the Palais Royal and that was not meant as a compliment. The joke was that Whitehouse wanted to play at the Palais and eventually did.

With talk of a Convention in the air, Dave journeyed to Melbourne in mid-1946 and recorded with inter alia Ade Monsborough. This was the beginning of a life-long musical association between the two interrupted only by Dave's absence from jazz after the 1951 Adelaide Convention. The SJG seems to have made a distinct impression at the first Convention in Melbourne in 1946. The story may or may not be true that Ade, having heard Bill Munro play, tossed his own trumpet at Bill's feet and said, "Take it. I won't be playing it anymore!" Of course he did. In fact with Bill Munro unavailable for the 1949 Convention, Ade took over the trumpet chair though no doubt displayed his reed talents as well.

Dave's arranging ambitions caused him to favour a four piece front-line, and who better to make up the number than the multi-instrumentalist Monsborough? In May 1950, the SJG went off to Sydney for recording sessions on Ron Wills' "Wilco" label. They picked up Ade on the way. Monsborough not only provided that fourth front-line voice

but also led the South Australians, with Dave on piano, on some "Backroom Boys" numbers and the "Jackeroos" material – "Columbus Stockade Blues", being one.

To my ears, the tracks "Emu Strut" (Dallwitz) and "Clever Feller" (Monsborough) are outstanding. Ade does some great two-clarinet stuff with Bruce Gray on "Clever Feller". Both Dallwitz and Monsborough had considerable abilities as composers. Dave won the Original Tunes Competition in 1948, "Ragtime Tuba", 1949 "Clarinet Sugar" and 1952 "Reed Warblers" and Ade won in 1951 "Stomp Miss Hannah" and 1959 "Bondi Babies". A portent of things to come at the 1950 sessions was "I Hear a Jazz Band" by Lazy Ade and His Late Hour Boys. Ade led on alto sax with Bill Munro trumpet, Bruce Gray clarinet, Dallwitz piano, John Malpas banjo, Wright tuba and Bob Forman washboard. On the way home, The SJG's appearance at Melbourne's Maison De Luxe may have been the group's swansong.

Back in Adelaide, Bruce Gray's All-Stars took over using Munro, Malpas and Wright among others and Dave turned his attention to other forms of music.

A chance meeting with clarinet player Tas Brown and pianist Kevin 'Gubby' Allen, who played on some of the 1950 tracks, brought Dallwitz back into the Jazz Scene in 1971.



Ade Monsborough

Ade, of course, had never left. Dallwitz now branched into his longer works – "Creation Suite", "Ern

Malley Suite", "Gold Fever" and "Floating Palais", but the LP I have in front of me as I write is "Nullabor" by The Dallwitz-Monsborough Jazzmen. The line-up was a great cross-border aggregation. Recorded by Swaggie in Melbourne on March 18 and 19, 1972, those involved were Bob Barnard trumpet, Tas Brown clarinet, Ade Monsborough, clarinet, alto and tenor sax, Neville Stribling clarinet, alto and baritone sax, Vic Connor piano, Peter Cleaver banjo and guitar, Ron Williamson brass bass and Len Barnard drums and washboard.

Seven of the tunes from "Brandy Cruster" to "Whim Creek Wobble" are Dave's (no doubt he also wrote such arrangements as were used) and the other four from "Clever Feller" to "Tell the Boys You Saw Me" were written by Ade. Len Barnard, in the sleeve notes to Swaggie S 1303 proclaimed:

"This is a steam roller alliance ... There are abundant atmospheric moments. 'Nullabor' is descriptively searing and full of red ochre. 'Crocodile Creep' is sinuous and

biting. If I remember well, the original alto part had Dave's instruction, Ade advances menacingly toward the foot-lights." In commenting on "Don't Monkey With It"; (Ade) and "Sprightly Nightly" (Dave) he likens them to the feeling once prevalent in Erskine Tate's Vendome Orchestra.

Well and good, but there are also references to 'the Australian sound' and why not – these two highly creative musicians were among its founders.

Is a cross-border fertilisation happening nowadays? COVID certainly put a temporary dent in it. And, if not, let's get it back again.

He may have been tipped off by writer Max Harris who, following his embarrassment over the Ern Malley, affair had spent a self-imposed exile in Melbourne and was a jazz enthusiast. In fact, listening to the Wilco records, one realises that Ade was a highly proficient trumpet player but then that was four years down the line from the first Convention. ■

By Dr Don Hopgood AO

Starting 'em young



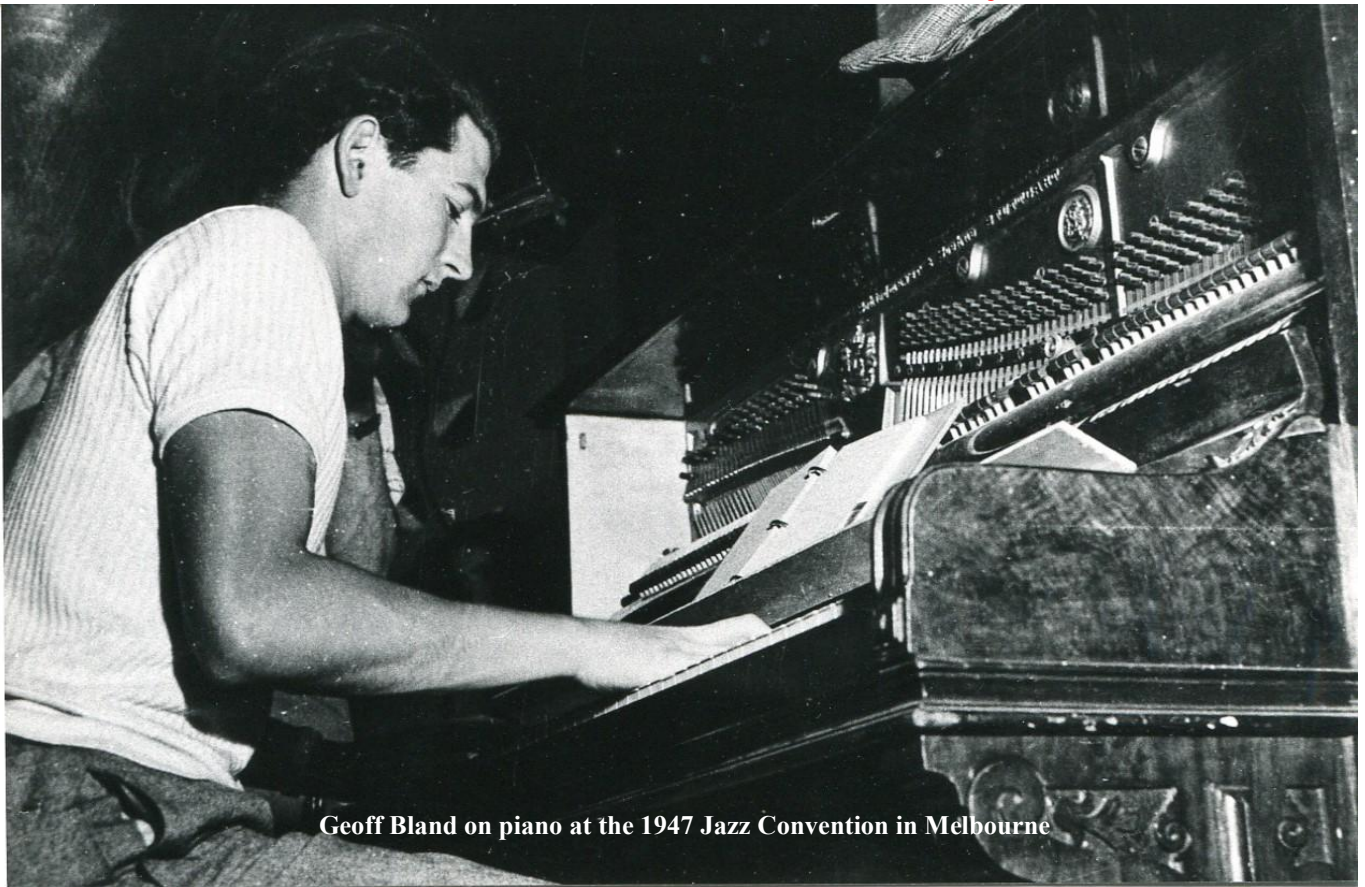
**Bruce Clarke's band
with an aspiring jazz
percussionist**

**A trio of young brass
instrumentalists at
Merimbula Jazz Festival
1987**



A Pianist of Note(s)

By John Chisholm



Geoff Bland on piano at the 1947 Jazz Convention in Melbourne

I love the piano. As an instrument, it's majestic, versatile – the best. I love pianists too. I was married to one. Over the years, I had the good fortune to play with some excellent pianists. But for me, one deserves special mention.

I first met him in the late 1970s when I was a member of the "Sny" Chambers re-incarnated Bayside Jazz Band. Sadly, no piano, but Jim Mills' banjo provided the chords. One Saturday night, at a private function in a house in Malvern, in the large lounge room where we played, I longingly eyed a piano standing lonely and forlorn. During the first break, the band retired to the garden at the rear for a breath of fresh air. Mingling with the fresh fragrances of the garden and the audible buzz of conversation from inside, my attention was claimed by beautiful, rich chords and arpeggios tumbling out of the piano. Curiosity dragged me back inside.

Hunched over the keyboard, as if he loved it and wanted it to respond accordingly, was a neatly dressed guy with greying hair, probably early fifties. Those chords slowly morphed into a familiar tune "Ain't Misbehavin' ". It could have been played by Fat's Waller himself. No, more like Jess Stacey – he was a favourite of mine.

Compelled to be part of this (after all, it was my drum kit), I grabbed my brushes and discreetly joined in. Eight bars later, the pianist turned to me, grinned broadly and nodded his approval. Just before the next set was due to begin, he closed the lid and introduced himself. Yes, I had heard of him, heard him on records. He was top drawer - already something of a legend, so I believed. He said he enjoyed my tasteful accompaniment and we exchanged phone numbers. It was as simple as that, and thus began a musical relationship that lasted through the 1980s, until he and his wife moved north and my wife and I moved south. We remained friends, visiting and keeping in touch until his death in 2013.

Only a couple of months before that fortuitous first meeting, while talking with Mike Rodgers, an excellent reeds player,

and his brother, trombonist, Dave, Mike said, "I've just heard a tape recording of this 'knockout' piano player, sounds like he's got fourteen fingers, and that left hand – wow!" I said I knew him from his recordings with Frank Johnson's Fabulous Dixielanders, and Roger Bell's Pagan Pipers. That "knock out" player was Geoff Bland.

Within a matter of weeks of that first meeting Geoff rang and booked me for a gig, and I found myself sitting at the drum kit, blown away by those beautifully chosen, expansive chords that swung all the way. He laced that rhythmic concoction with delicate single note runs through a couple of octaves and then delicately placed a melodic phrase or trill as a counterpoint to that large, powerful left hand. He could play ever so delicately, but oh, those passing chords. And there I was enjoying the delights for three hours, hoping I might be asked again some time.

Geoff's playing was always elegant, always tasteful in his choice of tone, colour and surprise. He was an artist, with an artist's understanding and appreciation of the rules of expression.

Some months after Geoff's death, in an article for the VJC Jazzline magazine titled, "Blandy", Steve Waddell wrote: "I really enjoyed playing in bands with Geoff. To stand next to him on stage watching with admiration, watching his hands walk across the keys was exciting, to say the least. He had an awesome technique and he knew how to get the sound he wanted out of any piano to complement his exceptional improvisational ability ..."

During the years I was privileged to watch those hands walk across the keys, and be inspired by his swing and phrasing, we did many wonderful gigs in private homes, wedding receptions and dinner dances at some of Melbourne's prestigious 'sand belt' golf clubs. The bands were almost always quartets and quintets.

I remember one night we played at the Melbourne Zoo – evening gowns, dinner suits, soft lights – a lovely setting. When I arrived to set up, Geoff was already sitting at the piano

weaving his rich tapestry of chords, his right hand fluently adding a tumbling melodic thread to satisfy his invention. My mind immediately flipped back to those nightclub scenes in Hollywood movies of the 1940s – dim lights, pianist caressing the grand piano to one side of the dance floor ... And I thought, "For the next 3 hours, I get to be part of this. How lucky can you be?"

In early 1982 we made a demo tape, to audition for a weekly gig at the Hampton Hotel. We got the gig. "The Rhythm Four" played there for the next six months or so, with a line-up of Geoff on piano, Don "Pixie" McPharlane on bass, Gavin Gow on reeds and myself on drums.

Although I had previously played a weekly gig in a band with Roger Bell, after Geoff mentioned my name to him, we did a lot of casual gigs with him and several of his associates.

Geoff once told me Roger used to berate him for appearing so serious on the band stand, saying the patrons wanted to see the musicians enjoying themselves. But it was not in Geoff's nature to be flippant, or light-hearted about his music; but did he enjoy himself.

Geoffrey Bland was born in Melbourne in 1928. He had a brother, five years older. He began his musical journey at six years of age with, as he put it, "traditional piano lessons". He was a member of a church choir until he was 14.

He attended Melbourne Boys High School, and for his last four years there, he was the school pianist, and was very proud of that achievement. In his words, "It was a 'Golden Era' of talent – including those 1939 migrants from Central Europe. It (MBHS) produced over 30 professional musicians."

At the first Australian Jazz Convention, held in Melbourne in 1946, an 18-year-old Geoff Bland was the youngest musician/delegate, an honour recognised at the 50th Australian Jazz Convention in Melbourne in 1996, to which he was thrilled to be invited as a special guest.

While still at school, Geoff joined budding trumpet player, Frank Johnson, a clarinet player, Geoff Kitchen, and drummer Wes Brown.

During the next few years, in addition to the commencement of a long and successful stint with Frank Johnson's Fabulous Dixielanders, of which Geoff was a founding member, he continued his studies in music theory and practice, winning a scholarship to the Melbourne Conservatorium to study composition and piano. (He was the joint winner of the 46th AJC original tunes competition with a song titled "You Never Care". (He sent my late wife Fay a copy of another composition of his, a beautiful jazz waltz he wrote for his granddaughter.)

It could seem incongruous that while immersed in a formal classical music education, he was belting out hot piano in one of the hottest, most successful bands in the country.

That could explain my lasting impression of Geoff as a practising musician. His musical thoughts were broadly based. To him, music was an art. Jazz is an art form, and all the rules of art applied. Within the broad genre called "Jazz", he was quite open minded. His knowledge of and understanding of the development of jazz was fundamental to his musical existence. But he never forgot the importance of classical music and its influence in the early development of jazz music.

There is a double CD from the Australian Jazz Museum's collection, "Jazz Masters of the 1950s" on which there are four tracks that particularly interested me, of the Geoff Kitchen Quintet, recorded in Melbourne in 1953. Featuring Geoff Kitchen on clarinet, Coco Schumann and Norm Baker on guitars, Geoff Bland on piano, Keith Cox on bass and Max Wally on drums, it is clear to see the influence of Benny Goodman's small group recordings of the late 1940s, which featured piano, clarinet and guitar playing in unison, with sparse block chords accompanying the clarinet solos. Here, Geoff's playing hints at "modern".

After leaving Frank Johnson's Fabulous Dixielanders, he devoted the next 25 years of his life to his family and establishing a furniture and interior design business. To quote Steve Waddell again from his article, "Blandy": "I remember visiting him in his office ... Here was this suave designer with his colour and fabric samples all around him ... Frank Johnson might have called me "Flash Henry", but Geoff was the real dresser – he had an innate sense of style."

During this period in his life, he managed to continue playing regular gigs, and record with many bands that included some of the best Australian jazz musicians.

In the late 70s, and during the years of my association with him, Geoff became an educator. After further studies in advanced music and teaching, as an education officer and keyboard consultant with Brash/Allans, he was appointed founding Director of TAFE Jazz Studies, CAE, a position he held until 1986. Geoff's passion for music education continued for the next 20 years.

In retirement in the late 80s, he and his wife Margaret moved to the central coast of New South Wales, then to Southern Queensland and finally settled in Bellerive, Hobart. My wife and I visited him in these locations over the years and we regularly kept in touch.

With his broad understanding of music history and theory and his years of performing at a high level, I was so impressed with his generosity in passing on his knowledge. In a letter he sent to my wife Fay in 1996, he concluded: "Every song has its particular "gem" – those few bars of surprise and wonderment – that little bit of beauty that makes it all worthwhile. Good luck and much enjoyment with your music and if there is anything and if there is anything I may offer to help you along, please ask me – any problem or query – put it on paper and I will try to help." And he was as good as his word.

During his retirement Geoff spent several years pursuing what became his ultimate passion – a crystallization of his years of jazz piano playing, when he set himself to score 500 of his piano solos – tunes that covered a whole range of jazz standards and ballads which he would sell to students of jazz or anyone who was interested. His aim was to research and meticulously hand write one tune a day. He sent us many such sheets of widely ranging tunes like "A Kiss to Build a Dream On", "Can't We be Friends", "Isn't it Romantic?", "Blue Bossa", and "Buddy Bolden's Blues".

In December 1996, he wrote to us: "Enclosed, some re-writes (for legibility reasons mainly). Done only 200 tunes this year – my 'run-rate' from one a day has dropped... The project should stretch into 1998 at this pace. No gigs this year but played at Noosa Jazz Fest. – (10 appearances) – too much for an old outa work muso!"

Six months later, he wrote: "Still proceeding with my project. Completed about 500 to date. Getting into the obtuse material and will need a bit of re-searching, so I've slowed down."

As far as I know, he ultimately completed over 700 tunes. In 2003, at his home in Bellerive, Geoff recorded on tape a selection of more than 40 of these tunes. Unpretentious, but at 73 years of age, what wonderful playing. A complete set: vol. 1–4, vol. 5–8 and vol. 9–17 are safely archived at The Australian Jazz Museum.

After the death of his wife Margaret, he sold the home in Bellerive, with its magnificent view across the Derwent to the city and Mt Wellington beyond, moving to a smaller place nearby.

Previously, he had worked regularly as a solo pianist at West Point Casino, with the odd band gig. In late 2011, then in his 80s, he wrote to us: "I'm playing at 'Shoreline', (my usual gig) for Christmas lunch and feast afterwards. I did buy a digital 'Kawai' ES6 portable and am enjoying it ... Glad to know your art keeps up and Fay – I reckon you would groove very well. Just keep on squashing those minor 3rds and major 7ths!"

In 2005, in an interview with Tim Cox on ABC radio in Hobart, on the subject of the Australian Jazz Scene, Geoff concluded: "Of course, newer styles (Bop/Modern) existed and developed continually alongside the more traditional styles, sixty years on (a bit like the "Rolling Stones" – but without the multi-million dollars) but we originals aged 70 – 90 won't lie down – playing remains our artistic expression ... Forceful, emotional, skilful and free-wheeling and creative, we sit comfortable alongside new styles and innovation. We do it well and we love what we do – keep music live and lively."

I think those last two sentences fittingly summarise the life of this talented musician, educator, mentor, and truly fine human being.

In the August 2012 edition of VJazz, Ken Simpson-Bull reviewed a CD of John Tucker's Yacht Club Band 1976. He wrote: "Geoff Bland is another veteran whose playing here will remind enthusiasts that he is one of the best pianists we have produced."

In August 2013, in the same publication, in an obituary, John Roberts, who had a long and distinguished career as a jazz trumpeter, wrote: "Geoff always played with masterful, exquisite taste and always pianistic. Could anyone ask for more? He joins the great few of jazz piano, both departed and still living, in my view. I shall sadly miss him." And so say all of us! ■

"Music is not only an international language. It is the language of themes and dreams."

By Helen Simons



Image: William Yang

Helen Simons : broadcaster, educator, researcher

I first started to present **JazzXpress** every Sunday between 3–6pm on 94.1FM Jazz Community Radio on the Gold Coast in 2004. Over the next fifteen plus years other community stations also included JazzXpress in their programming. Co-hosting on Bay FM (Byron Bay) with Quentin Watts, sometimes on Sydney's Northside Radio 99.3 with Sharon Thompson, and Knox on Sundays at 4ZZZ Brisbane. I would play a sophisticated set of classic jazz recordings and new releases, addressing the listening members in an intimate tone that suggested a gathering between friends. Before I came to 94.1FM in 2004 after moving to live on the Gold Coast, I had undertaken a



The first female DJ at Ciro Beach Club West Berlin – 1973

broadcasting course through BayFM (Byron Bay). This capped off my extensive 30-plus year career as a teacher and lecturer both in Australia and the U.K.

My love for jazz and its various styles began from a young age, my mother played the piano and my uncle who was in the Australian Navy would bring home LPs from America, music was a big part of our lives, I also learnt the piano and guitar. In my early teens I would listen to hours of Arch McKirdy's evening ABC jazz program Relax with Me. Radio for me has always been about the VOICE and I modelled my own style based on McKirdy's training by speaking naturally "in groups of words, breathing and pausing naturally" and speaking to my audience as if I were talking to a personal friend. Whilst studying and travelling abroad my music interests led me in different directions. I became the first female DJ to work in West Berlin and London nightclubs between 1972 and 1974.

Being a radio presenter at Jazz Radio 94.1FM, meant more than just going on air at the appointed time and play jazz records. I spent a good deal of time programming the show in advance. I would take relevant news from the jazz world into account when selecting the tracks, and would sequence them to fit a coherent pattern so that the playlist would gel. I also thought it was necessary to give listeners some context about what they heard, making my role more of a musicologist than a typical DJ. Part of the discipline was to keep any commentary short – usually two minutes or so, meaning that I had to be selective about what to mention about a particular recording and artist. Preparation was always key in making a coherent playlist. The object was to keep the show fresh every time I went to air. I always put my listening audience first, rather than draw from my personal tastes. Although I never took requests, I always considered for another time suggestions from listeners who would regularly call into the station while on air. Depending on the nature of the program, and who was performing in the area promoting their new releases, putting one together could be a time consuming task, especially if one was pre-recording interviews.

In 2008 I first started podcasting, well before it became a worldwide phenomenon, and edited my interviews from home for JazzXpress on podomatic.com where they can still be heard today. Among the thirty two podcasts they include conversations with Graeme Bell, Janet Seidel, Bob Sedergreen, Kristin Berardi, Ingrid James, Leigh Carriage, Tina Harrod, JoJo Smith, Caroline Nin, France's premier cabaret performer and Helpmann Award nominee The Joshua Rodman Quartet (USA), and Jazz poet L. E. Scott, Jim Kelly, and Barney McCall among them.

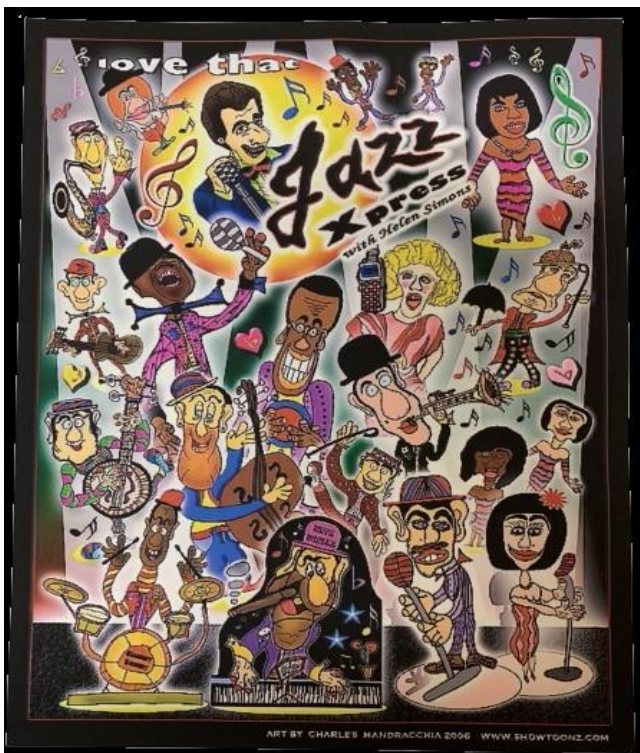
<https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/jazzxpress>

Initially the introduction of the one hour OzJazz segment was to introduce local audiences to Australian guitarists like Jim Kelly, James Sherlock, James Muller and Guy Strazzullo, as well as pianists Mike Nock, Bob Sedergreen, Stephen Russell, Matt Baker, and Paul Grabowsky. The award winning vocalist Kristin Berardi was also showcased. Kristin was the first Australian to win the Shure Jazz Voice Competition at the 40th Montreaux Jazz Festival in 2006. The catalyst for these shows was the Bangalow Jazz Festival that had been produced by the Southern Cross University Head of Music out of Lismore.

It was a huge success but it couldn't sustain funding after a few years. However, it was enough for me to connect to all the artists on the program and subsequently include them in the radio show promoting their latest recordings and interviewing them. This often complimented the national ABC Jazz programs which I always listened to. I listened to the American station WGBO Boston almost daily as their programs were

presented by exceptional radio personalities including Marian McPartland, Dee Dee Bridgewater and Awilda Rivera with her killer Latin playlists. I had several interview recordings by Marian McPartland, a wonderful inspiration, whom I admired. McPartland hosted Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz every week with jazz legends and up and coming artists on National Public Radio (NPR). She began her weekly radio show, Piano Jazz, in 1979 which – after 30 years of continuous programming – became the longest-running syndicated NPR program, and led to McPartland's induction into the National Radio Hall of Fame in 2007. She was the longest serving music radio presenter and had interviewed just about everybody in the music industry.

On JazzXpress, much of the music I played blended legendary favourites along with high profile artists from the Brit Jazz, Nordic Jazz, Euro Jazz (in particular French and German) bands including (Japanese) groups from the Asia Pacific Jazz scenes. Placing my audiences first, I would often imagine sharing a one-on-one relationship with the listener that felt like a friend who stopped by to play the latest albums. After all that's how my friends and I would entertain each other as we connected to cultural influences from around the world.



JazzXpress poster by New York artist Charles Mandracchia - 2006

The show was also formatted to present a variety of yesterday's American Jazz legends and the new generation of male and female musicians. I also would regularly enrich the playlist by dedicating sets to Latin Jazz, Bossa Nova and Gypsy Jazz. Cuban Jazz became very popular after Rye Cooder's Beuna Vista Social Club. This unique blend of black American music with pulsating Caribbean rhythms, was what many listeners wanted to hear more of, artists like Machito, Chucho and Bebo Valdes, Ruben Gonzales, Ray Baretto, and Roberto Fonseca who also toured Australia. The young female Cuban jazz pianist Marialy Pacheco had also come to live in Brisbane for a time and recorded with the Brisbane label Pinnacle Records produced by the late artistic director of the Women's International Jazz Festival and founder of Jazz Queensland Lynette Irwin.

The Brisbane-based band View from Madeleine's Couch (Anje West vocals/percussion and her partner Kim Ambrose on vibraphone) were often featured for their interpretation of Brazilian music. For over 25 years they still continue to be at the vanguard of Brazilian-influenced music in Australia, forging a glorious and lush sonic path through Brazilian jazz,

bossa nova and samba. The Manouche Jazz Festival started by guitarist Ewan McKenzie and accompanied by Kaye Sullivan on accordion, kicked off at the Brisbane Jazz Club. This was an exciting development in Australian Gypsy Jazz Oz Manouche music. There was a growing fan base for all string jazz bands influenced by Stéphane Grappelli, the French jazz violinist and best known as a founder of the Quintette du Hot Club de France with guitarist Django Reinhardt in 1934. Musicians like violinist George Waschmaschine, guitarist Ian Date, violinist Daniel Weltlinger and European band leader guitarist composer, Lulo Reinhardt, Brisbane based guitarist Cameron de la Vega, Pauline Maudy, violinist Shinzo Gregorio, and the Gypsy Jazz Project from Canberra injected their talents into the Festival with several gypsy jazz recordings followed by many concerts. They all were on the JazzXpress playlist and for the first time audiences were being made aware how good our musicians had become.

This style of music was being appreciated by new and old audiences. In 2008 and 2009, I was commissioned to curate a showcase of artists for the Gold Coast Arts Centre now the Home of the Arts from our local pool of musicians and recording artists. The six hour Latino Gypsy Passion Fiesta concept was to introduce Gypsy Jazz, Bossa Nova, Samba, Latin Jazz, and the new young talent (AGT winner) Joe Robinson on guitar in a cabaret setting with South American cuisine. Sixteen odd years later South American culture and music now forms a large part of our community and Joe Robinson has a successful recording and musical career in Nashville.

It was a stepping stone to promoting local musicians who had embraced these different styles of music through their overseas travels and performances. Thus the power of community radio forged new opportunities and shared interests.

Radio Cockatoo was created in 2009 and 2010 on the back of JazzXpress when at the request of John Pinder (Director) of the World's Funniest Island Comedy festival was set up in the Barracks Courtyard on Sydney's Cockatoo Island. The LIVE music marathon was programmed to run twelve hours each day... Every playlist covered various styles, moods and rhythms late into the evening.

During my academic and teaching career I implemented a Radio curriculum for students with special needs. The students would put together a playlist and then role play being Radio DJ's presenting their music in a purpose built studio. It enhanced their communication skills and confidence. This led to working on a research program for the Director of the Autistic Association Dr Sue Bettison, where the program successfully used pre-recorded music programs to help improve the learning behaviour and emotional development of "special needs" and autistic students. In 1996 I was awarded with an Excellence in Teaching from the Faculty of Education, University of Sydney. Music therapy and education has many benefits and there are many studies that support this. I still continue to share my love for jazz and world music. My friends still often ask me for my playlists to accompany their parties or special occasions.

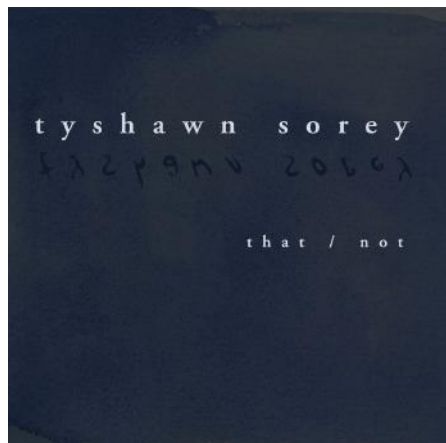
In 2023 I was pleased to gift my Australian Jazz recordings and publications collected during the years of broadcasting JazzXpress on community radio. Thank you to the Australian Jazz Museum in Melbourne who are now the new custodians. An even bigger thank you to all the musicians and their record labels who shared their music on JazzXpress was an honour.

Helen now lives an active retired life on the Gold Coast sharing her music collection with regional community stations and their volunteer announcers. In October 2022 Helen was invited to participate as a guest interviewer at the Headlands Writers Festival, Tathra run by South East Arts. She interviewed writer historian lecturer Deidre O'Connell, author of Harlem Nights: The Secret History of Australia's Jazz Age published by MUP. Harlem Nights is the untold story of race and power in the Australia's Jazz Age during the 1920s. ■

Old and New Jazz Dreams

" I dream all the time. This is not a piano, this is a dream." Duke Ellington

USA Jazz star Tyshawn Sorey – percussionist, drummer, pianist, trombonist – performed and composed a 43-minute work consisting of one piano note with minor variations. It was part of a double CD "That/Not" (2007). Sorey is a modern leader in the glorious Jazz firmament.



In that firmament there have been many comets and meteorites and some stars that may shine forever – Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, Gil Evans, Thelonious Monk – among them. In its evolution, in reaction to the times in which it lived, it went from event music like marches, funerals, work, to entertainment music, most notoriously, that music during Prohibition called The Jazz Age when thousands of small clubs thrived & provided employment. The small group work of Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong became models of polytonality and of polyrhythmic and of improvised music, elements of some of which had been evident in the world of Bartok and Milhaud. Diversions from these models – designated in time "classic jazz" – came to be seen as pollutions which gave rise to the post-WWII revivalist movement.

In the Swing era jazz became big business and popular, where simple riffs, tightly arranged music, strong melodies, strong rhythm and individual soloists shone. Throughout this evolution, racism played a decisive part. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band was all white and of limited talent. White band leader Paul Whiteman was known as the King Of Jazz.

White swing bands proved much more successful even though in musical terms, black bands were leading the way, artistically and in sheer talent. Where a "battle" of bands occurred, such as in New York, Chick Webb would be acknowledged as the best swing band by other band leaders, including Duke Ellington and Count Basie and Benny Goodman, even though Benny Goodman was designated commercially as the King of Swing. Music magazines like Downbeat reflected this racist element.

The revivalist movement, centred on Commonwealth countries like Britain and Australia, proved invaluable through introducing the young to the beauties of "classical" jazz and its major proponents – especially Louis Armstrong who post-WWII was making popular music such as the 1931 song "That's My Desire" (Dress/Loveday) which he recorded in 1947 – it had been a big hit for Frankie Laine in 1946.

In the USA the most outspoken musician and organiser in prosecuting the joys of traditional jazz was Eddie Condon. He put his money where his mouth was and led such brilliant recordings as CBS Jammin' At Condon's (1955) one of the finest jazz records of all regardless of genre with the cover featuring the checked socks and right leg of drummer George Wettling. Bob Barnard, Adrian "Lazy Ade" Monsborough, Graeme Bell, Paul Furniss and John McCarthy would all sit comfortably on a bandstand with these masters which included Wild Bill Davison on cornet, Edmond Hall, clarinet, Bud Freeman, tenor and Lou McGarity on trombone.

Around the same time the Lawson-Haggart Jazz Band paid homage to Satchmo and their 10" LP Louis' Hot 5's And 7's with Louis introducing the programme himself signing off, "Red beans and ricely yours, Satchmo".

The programme included "Cornet Chop-Suey" (Armstrong), "Skit-Dat-De-Dat" (Lil Armstrong), "Potato Head Blues" (Armstrong), "Gully Low



Image: Ian Muldoon

Trumpet of Melbourne artist Audrey Powne, JAZZLAB, Brunswick, Victoria, 3rd December 2023

Blues" (Louis Armstrong), "Heebie Jeebies" (Atkins), "Melancholy Blues" (Bloom/Melrose), "Wild Man Blues", (Morton/Armstrong) and "King Of The Zulus" (Lil Armstrong). The band was bass, and whistling (uncredited) – Bob Haggart, clarinet – Bill Stegmeyer, drums – Cliff Leeman, guitar – George Barnes, piano – Lou Stein, trombone – Lou McGarity and trumpet – Yank Lawson. These musicians were graduates of the great swing bands of the 1930s and 1940s and were masters of their genre. It was the best possible introduction to the glory of Armstrong's compositions and standing and to the Chicago Jazz genre which included the likes of Wild Bill Davison, Jack Teagarden, Vick Dickenson, Muggsy Spanier and Max Kaminsky. The trumpet was the lead instrument. Who knows but that such enthusiasm for classic jazz may have encouraged CBS to record such classics as Louis Armstrong Plays W. C. Handy in 1954 a return to the small group jazz that cemented Armstrong's work as a musical legend. In "classic" jazz the lead instrument tended to be trumpet.

Music may be bromide or soup, cocaine or a delightful sonic degustation of the best music – it's what you bring to it. Sonny Rollins said the audience is part of the band. Jazz is like the English language, it takes what it wants from wherever and whomever to make a more beautiful language which reflects the human experience now. Jazz is not preserved in aspic. Thus evolution and good music came together in the genre

labelled "Jazz". The evolution of the English language, once the bailiwick of gatekeepers such as priests, teachers, governments and writers, changed under the influence of other cultures, other languages, so that now, it's not enough to know the rules of grammar and rail at split infinitives and the absence of the possessive punctuation – in jazz it's not enough to have perfect pitch, or the rules regarding harmony, or knowing how to read music. Some of the greatest artists of the 20th century – including Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Bessie Smith, Thelonious Monk and Art Tatum – were self taught.

Like the English language, but unlike *Academie Francaise* which regulates the French language – ruling on its correct use – Jazz is unregulated but subject to much argument, speculation, controversy and misunderstanding mainly by armchair critics but also by musicians who have emerged with a particular style which proved successful. Some artists may remain steadfast in their style, trumpet players such as Louis Armstrong or Chet Baker, whilst others may change with a changing world, like Duke Ellington and Miles Davis. Producers too, change. Teddy Reig of Savoy records, a company successfully producing "dixieland" jazz, took a punt on Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis et al and the rest, as they say, is history. CBS too, not only released Eddie Condon, or Bessie Smith in boxed sets, but Dave Brubeck, Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis. The word itself is eschewed by some artists because of its associations, and its connotations. It's a word that seems to suggest fizz, insubstantiality, entertainment, fun and "loose living". It is also black man's music, and being black is, to many in the Western world, especially the shrine of capitalism, the USA, not a matter of celebration. To casual listeners it may be defined as up-tempo loud music stomping in a pub on Saturday afternoon.

To most young listeners, it's an unknown world where it's hard for them keeping up with new sounds let alone new voices like Agung Mango or Banjo Lucia or new bands like Katanak or The Shang. Yet Jazz is the most influential music of the 20th century and has influenced all other Western music. It was the trumpet that led the way.

From an early age I was exposed to good music, including Tchaikovsky, Louis Armstrong, Beethoven, Eileen Joyce, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Port Jackson Jazz Band, The Mills Brothers and Dizzy Gillespie.

Through personal ups and downs, through historical events of the first magnitude, through pandemics, recessions, and existential threats to existence on the planet because of global warming, good music has provided not just comfort, joy, and pleasure but inspiration and guidance. And that music called jazz, has been the lode star, not just because of its artistic beauty, but because it is the driven expression of the struggle of a great people from the largest continent on earth Africa, to slough off the horror of slavery and to blossom and thrive and give examples of how life can be lived. A coal delivering grandson of slaves rose to become the most influential artist of the 20th century, Louis Armstrong. Just saying that almost makes one weep, when one reflects on the music and persona of that great artist and his works, and the modest rewards he received over his lifetime considering the great gifts he made to humanity.

Some say jazz is a niche music, an elite music. The thing is that jazz – let's not get hung up on the term or definitions – you know what music I'm talking about – is both elitist and low class. It's elitist because it is the most difficult music to master, and it's low class because it came out of the degradation and horror of the mass slavery of "black savages", and not from the church, aristocracy or opera houses of Western classical music and the "cultured advanced civilisation" of that music's birth.

Jazz is a great many sounds and it is a thief like the native Australian Satin Bowerbird (*Ptilonorhynchus Violaceus*) which is obsessed by the blues – well, with the colour blue – and collects anything blue, whilst jazz will steal sound from inter alia the whippoorwill, footsteps, traffic, Edgar Varese, Debussy, electronics, a baby's cry or steam from a locomotive to make music. A Jazz Artist can make a simple note magnificent, majestic, rhythmically powerful – as Louis Armstrong could – or can arrange and orchestrate like Debussy – as Duke Ellington did – or can swing so light, so sweet, like

air through your being lifting your soul – as Count Basie did. And now, in 2024, a renaissance in music is upon us with a new generation of artists moving onward and upward from the great innovators of 1940–1970 admitting and changing with the electronic age, some of the finest established artists are from Melbourne, including Andrea Keller, Eugene Ball, and Paul Grabowsky as well as new rising stars like Audrey Powne shown here with the all female quartet Aura as part of the 2023 Melbourne Womens' International Jazz Festival on stage at Brunswick's JAZZLAB.



Image: Ian Muldoon

New trumpet star Audrey Powne, JAZZLAB, Brunswick, Victoria, 3rd December 2023

Jazz is the most difficult music to play well. The main reason for this is the nature of improvisation. With classical music composition the realisation of the score to best mirror the composer's intentions is the main goal. In jazz, the player is the composer. If we take a well loved standard like "Alone Together" (Schwartz/Dietz) its major/minor ambiguity has an appeal to improvisers. Artie Shaw did a dark version with strings. The version by Dizzy Gillespie was also sombre with string accompaniment and the version by Miles Davis (1955) owed much to bassist Charles Mingus. Mal Waldron, Sonny Rollins, and Wallace Roney have all put their own unique stamp on the piece, as has Brad Mehldau (2000) whose urgent, brilliant, turbulent, up-tempo rendition makes the melody almost unrecognisable but not quite. In short, jazz artists' take an



The band Aura with Audrey Powne, trumpet; Flora Carbo, alto saxophone; Helen Svoboda, double bass; and Kyrie Andersen, drum set performing on the opening night of the Melbourne Women's International Jazz Festival 2023, JAZZLAB Brunswick, Victoria, 3rd December 2013.

established composition as a starting point to place their unique voice on its structure, and melody. Nina Simone's up-tempo romp of "Mood Indigo" (Ellington/Bigard/Mills) originally a ballad featuring the voicings of a high register trombone, and low register clarinet and trumpet, was given by Simone at mid tempo, a piano and voice outing with Jimmy Bond, double bass and Albert "Tootie" Heath, drums. It was a remarkable opening work of what became an iconic album called "Little Girl Blue" (1959) Bethlehem Records.

An art's audience sometimes resists the new as happened during WWII when the new jazz of Charlie Parker et al arrived. Such moments for artists is captured in *Septology* by John Fosse (Giramondo, 2022, p 411) where the painter protagonist Asle has been offered hanging space for an exhibition based on the knowledge of his former output, but the space owner is taken aback by his nine new works which are so different to his former subjects of studies of barns and houses. Similarly painter Asle doesn't believe in words or what he thinks in words, but when he paints a picture well it is the distinct unity of form and content in one – like the spirit – which is invisible in the picture whilst the picture is visible. And music too is about that unity as it is not the notes, the chords, the changes learned, and it's not the

content, the idea, but the unity of matter and form and soul that becomes spirit – that's what good music is. It is common for music lovers, jazz lovers, to be taken aback by the evolutionary steps of the art of music, just as they were taken aback by Beethoven, Bartok, Louis Armstrong, Thelonious Monk, Steve Lacy (his transition from Dixieland to free jazz), Ornette Coleman, The Necks, Cecil Taylor, or John Zorn and now Tyshawn Sorey.

Like many, many others, born in the 1930s, the music called jazz was a pervasive sound on the radio, in film, on records, and at clubs and sometimes on the Manly Ferry. It was a musical education of a kind where one encountered swing on radio programmes like Juke Box Saturday Night; Duke Ellington on film; Fats Waller on 78 records; and the Cootamundra Jazz Band in that town on a Saturday night with Eric Costelloe on trumpet and John Costelloe on drums or trombone. Every home had a radio. My own home was a rented one yet we owned an upright piano. I was given a wind up record player, a number of steel needles, and a few 78 rpm Bakelite records including a 12" edition of Fats Waller with "Ain't Misbehavin'" (Waller/Brooks/Razaf) on Side A and "Blue Turning Grey Over You" (Waller/Razaf) on side B. The fact that I can in 2023 recall this detail amongst the thousands of

events out of those 12 years of my life up to 1951, says something about the impression it made on me amongst the wealth of jazz music available at the time. Music by Dizzy Gillespie (Things To Come/Two Bass Hit) and others fuelled my interest in the variety of sounds called "jazz". Then came the 10" LP and I particularly recall two Ellington albums, one was called Duke Ellington Masterpieces (Ko Ko etc) and the other called Ellingtonia Volume 2 Creole Rhapsody – Part 1 and 2, recorded January 20, 1931; Tiger Rag – Part 1 and 2, recorded January 8, 1929; Yellow Dog Blues, recorded June 5, 1928; Tishomingo Blues, recorded June 5, 1928; Jazz Convulsions, recorded September 13, 1929; and Awful Sad, recorded October 10, 1928. This latter programme was like my first kiss of a beautiful Balmain girl in 1952 and its glory has stayed with me since. When meeting Bob Barnard in 1980 I asked him what he was listening to, and he replied very quickly "Early Ellington." Particularly memorable to me was the solo clarinet of Barney Bigard on "Tiger Rag" (Edwards/LaRocca/Ragas/Sbarbaro/Shields) Part 1 and 2. It's hard to explain the effect on one's heart and mind that this music had. But the moment I remember well whilst millions of other moments are lost to the fog of my childhood.

In retrospect the 1950s were a golden time for jazz lovers when musicians were bursting with pent up creativity. The booming economy was driven partly by the newly invented teenager who had oodles of discretionary money. Then came rock and roll. For decades the "death of jazz" was predicted. Big bands became untenable. Record sales of many rock and roll bands' documents, concerts and cinema saw jazz clubs fade away, fusion and jazz rock displace jazz leaders, and leaders in jazz also taking the advice of record producers into jazz rock as Miles Davis did when with CBS when advised to do so: the result was the revered "Bitches Brew" (1970). The 1970s also saw Keith Jarrett become a noteworthy jazz pianist. In Sydney, in the 1950s the Sky Lounge, and El Rocco provided succour to many jazz lovers, with youngsters Don Burrows leading the push along with Lyn Christie (bass), John Pochee (drums) and Bernie McGann (alto sax). The



L-R Stefan Karl Schmid, tenor; David Helm, bass (obscured); Shannon Barnett, trombone; and Fabian Arends (obscured), drums. JAZZLAB, Melbourne International Jazz Festival, 26th October 2023

venue acquired legendary status amongst jazz lovers enamoured of Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan and Miles Davis who were making large musical waves at the time. In my view, since the turn of the 21st century, there is a renaissance of Jazz, one small sign of which is the appointment to Harvard University of Professor Vijay Iyer, modern jazz pianist and composer. Australia has been making a major contribution to this renaissance through the involvement of women artists.

Judy Bailey pianist and both Andrea Keller of Melbourne University, pianist and composer, and Dr Sandy Evans, tenor and soprano saxophones, University of New South Wales, have been leaders in the music for many years and are distinguished role models for young women considering a career in improvised music (jazz).

Others working overseas include bassist Nicki Parrott and her sister Lisa Parrott on baritone and alto saxophones and bass clarinet. Our most distinguished jazz vocalist Chris McNulty, whose career spans 50 years, relocated to Australia from New York in 2016, and now resides in Ballarat. More recently bassist Linda May Han Oh has impressed New York with her brilliance, and has been formally embraced by some of the greats including Dave Douglas, Vijay Iyer, Joe Lovano, Pat Metheny, Tineke Postma and Terri Lyne Carrington as a member of their recorded groups. When I attend

live performance and witness a young girl make jazz I can't resist a feeling of joy that the young are embracing this great art, a joy just as in 1952 I first heard trumpeter Bubber Miley on record, or in 1981 Paul Furniss live on clarinet in Armidale, or bassist Reggie Workman live at Sweet Basil, New York, 1996. Post COVID I've heard live some young women that are undoubtedly the future leaders in this music.



Helen Svoboda, contra bass, JAZZLAB, Brunswick, 3rd December 2023

I believe, rightly or wrongly, we live in one world and that the days of Nationalism with its libidinous shout for "our country" should be buried deep in the living earth and turned to dust. The young musicians

I've heard in the recent past are not of one country but of the world. Even though they may call Australia home, their cultural background may be varied but their music is universal and they are so good they can play in any country – Russia, Japan, Sweden, Croatia, Italy, USA – and be recognised instantly as great practitioners of their art. And they are so young still. The future of the music seems to be entering a glorious time, and gives hope for humanity's collective thriving.



Tessie Overmyer, alto saxophone, JAZZLAB Brunswick, Melbourne 26th October 2023

These are the new female artists who call Australia home whom I have heard in the recent past that make my heart sing: Helen Svoboda, contra bass; Hilary Geddes, guitar; Chloe Kim, percussion; Tessie Overmyer, alto saxophone; Hannah James, contra bass; Shannon Barnett, trombone amongst the finest I've ever heard on that instrument; Holly Connor, drums and percussion; Philippa Murphy-Haste, clarinet, violin; Emma Stephenson, piano; and Nat Bartsch pianist. With recognition and support, the musical world may be their oyster.

Jazz lives still Bird! ■

By Ian Muldoon

Editor:

Jazz has provided Ian with a lifetime of inspiration and joy. He is a prolific jazz commentator with a wide range of experience and we are pleased he has agreed to join the AJazz team.

JAZZ MUSICIAN, ARRANGER, FILM COMPOSER AND THEATRE DIRECTOR

The versatile Sydney John Kay alias John Kurt Kaiser (1906 – 1970)

By Dr Albrecht Dümling

When German troops occupied Paris in June 1940 and an invasion of the British Isles threatened, nervousness also spread in faraway Australia. Almost all Germans who were here at the time were arrested and interned as "enemy aliens". This also affected a Leipzig-born musician named Sydney John Kay. He protested strongly against his arrest and pointed out that he was not German, but Peruvian. Even when Kay presented his Peruvian passport, the Australian authorities did not believe him. He was only released from internment after several months.

Sydney John Kay's original name was Kurt Ned John Kaiser. His grandfather Jacob Kaiser had moved from Lübeck to Peru in the 19th century with his wife Lina, née Weinstock, where they lived in Callao, the country's most important port city. It was here, where there was a German colony with a German consul and a Club Teutonic, that their sons Moritz and Paul were born. Before the turn of the century, they both returned to their parents' homeland of Germany. In 1900, they



Sid Kay's Fellows were a popular band in late 1920s and mid 30s Germany

founded an electrical engineering factory in Leipzig in 1900 (initially Berliner Straße 69, later Dessauer Straße 13). According to the Leipzig Economic Handbook, the Kaiser brothers A.G. manufactured "smaller electric motors, especially for musical works and speaking machines." The Jewish engineer and manufacturer Moritz Kaiser, who lived in a stately house at Christianstraße, married Gretchen Baum, who came from Zwickau and was also Jewish, in 1904. Two years later, their son Kurt was born on November 3, 1906.

In the meantime, the small family had moved to Fritzschestraße 13 (now Schorlemmerstraße) in Leipzig -Gohlis. Kurt attended the nearby Schiller-Realgymnasium, whose pupils included Wolfgang Fortner, born in 1907, who later became a well-known composer. The musicality of the young Kurt Kaiser was obviously not yet so obvious that it could have influenced his career choice. After leaving grammar school in 1925, he set his sights on studying engineering. For six

months, Kaiser worked at the Leipzig elevator factory ATG, a company founded by Kurt Herrmann, later a member of the State Council and Göring intimate. In October 1925, he moved to Berlin, where he had recently obtained a Peruvian passport, and began studying mechanical engineering at the Technische Hochschule (now the Technical University).

Kurt Kaiser, whose parents died at an early age, must have been intensively involved with music as a schoolboy. He continued this in Berlin. In 1926, he founded the jazz band Sid Kay's Fellows with a friend from university, Sigmund Friedmann, who was born in Leipzig in 1903. Friedmann ("Sid") played piano in this group and Kaiser ("Kay") played drums. Kaiser quickly learned to play other instruments. It is not known where he acquired these musical skills. As early as July 1927, he performed not only as a drummer but also as a saxophonist and trombonist at a "Little Magic Theater". The trombone was soon to become his main instrument.



The Kaiser family home in Leipzig



The Weintraubs Syncopators 1928

During cabaret evenings in Berlin, Kurt Kaiser came across another jazz band that fascinated him even more than his own: the Weintraubs Syncopators. In 1927, he switched to this band, which had just been discovered by Friedrich Hollaender. The Weintraubs enjoyed great success in several Hollaender revues and soon recorded records. They became the best-known entertainers of the Weimar Republic and appeared in several films. In the sound film "The Blue Angel", they could be seen and heard alongside Emil Jannings, Marlene Dietrich and Hans Albers. Friedrich Hollaender's film music, including the song "Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt", was arranged by Kurt Kaiser together with Franz Wachsmann. The Weintraub Syncopators differed from other jazz bands in that they were more versatile. They presented their performances as variety acts, combining music-making with comedy.

Due to the Jewish origins of its members, the band received no further engagements in Germany from 1933 and went into exile. After extensive tours through Italy, the Soviet Union and Japan, the band came to Australia in 1937. Probably in memory of the name of his first band, Kurt Kaiser now called himself John Kay. The Weintraub Syncopators also thrilled audiences in Australia until they were considered enemy aliens after the outbreak of war. Kay was arrested, as were two of his German-Jewish bandmates. The long internment led to the dissolution of the group, which was also suspected of espionage. The persecution did not cause the

energetic and tall Sydney John Kay to resign, but on the contrary, spurred him on to greater activity.

He founded his own music publishing company in Sydney, worked as an arranger for a commercial radio station, wrote several orchestral works and managed a children's theater. Inspired by the thriving theater culture of Berlin, in which the Weintraubs Syncopators had participated, Kay founded the Mercury Theatre in Sydney. Like Orson Welles' New York Theater of the same name, it aimed to offer world theater. It opened on July 6, 1946 with three one-act plays by Nikolai Gogol, Lope de Vega and Heinrich von Kleist.

Sydney John Kay was the driving force. He organized the performances, wrote the stage music and provided the financing – often out of his own pocket. The performances at the Mercury Theatre Sydney were greeted with enthusiasm. In anticipation of public funding, Kay rented his own house for his troupe, which was run as a cooperative. Due to a lack of funds, the theater had to close at the end of 1953. Within two years, it had performed 29 plays in its new home, including works by Plautus, Shakespeare, Strindberg, Chekhov, Wedekind, Shaw, Maxwell Anderson, Jean Anouilh and Christopher Fry.

To fill his empty coffers, Kay now turned to film music again. His music for "Bush Christmas", an adventure film with children, had already been praised in 1947. This film was also shown in London, Copenhagen and New York and was voted the best film of the year by the Sydney

Telegraph. John Kay worked on several projects with director and producer John Heyer, a pioneer of Australian documentary film. In 1954, Heyer created the film "The Back of Beyond" about the hard life of a mail driver on the remote Birdsville Track. Kay wrote a stylistically diverse score for the film. It probably contributed to "The Back of Beyond" becoming the first Australian film to win the Grand Prix at the Venice Biennale in the same year.

In 1955, Kay left Australia and moved to London, where he continued to be involved in film, television, record and opera projects. When he was asked for a Swiss radio program in 1964 what the secret of the Weintraubs Syncopators' success had been, he replied in German and with a slight Saxon accent: "There is only one answer: we were very young and we were very enterprising. We weren't ashamed to take full advantage of the freedom that the brand new jazz music of the time gave us." On May 23, 1970, Sydney John Kay died after suffering a stroke in London's Middlesex Hospital at the age of 63. ■



John Kay in London

Editor:

The article appeared on pages 100–102 of the essays accompanying the exhibition of the same name "Hakenkreuz und Notenschlüssel – Die Musikstadt Leipzig im Nationalsozialismus ("Swastika and Clef – The Music City of Leipzig under National Socialism") at the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig, and is reprinted with the kind permission of Albrecht Dümmling and Kerstin Sieblist. The author has also published separate books on the Weintraubs Syncopators and on refugee-musicians in Australia.

Translated by Detlef A. Ott with kind permission of the author

The Fiftieth Anniversary of Jazz Australia 1975 – 2025

When I first began presenting jazz concerts in Terang in Western Victoria, to raise the funds to save the Terang Civic Theatre from demolition, it never crossed my mind that I would still be presenting such concerts on a regular basis fifty years later, nor for that matter, that the 19th century Terang Civic Theatre would still be standing, robust as ever. However on completion of this successful project, which took several years to complete, I had well and truly acquired the "jazz bug" and had decided that the life of a jazz 'promoter and presenter' was what I would like to do for the rest of my working life; that was 1975 and although I'm still at it, I'm now on the homeward stretch.

The Terang Civic project took around ten years to complete and by then the sturdily built Victorian era Theatre was as solid as the day it was built, beautifully and appropriately decorated in the Victorian style, and in demand for every sort of occasion from Theatre productions and concerts, to private functions such as weddings and formal occasions and it still looks great in 2024! On completion of this rewarding project it was time for me to move on and maybe create a new business for myself with my newly acquired skills. However in order to do this I needed to move back to Melbourne after living in the Western District for 25 years. My three sons had flown the "coup" and I was free to start a new life in Melbourne again. Many of the musicians that I'd been presenting in Terang had kept telling me that they could do with my help in Melbourne! They had all enjoyed the Terang concerts.

What *eventuated* over the next 40 years is all in my recently published book *The History of Jazz Australia*, which is available at the AJM for \$25, and I'm told it's a *good read!* Jazz Australia did in fact eventuate into a unique piece of Australian jazz history with many amazing stories as a result, and most of them are in the book!

A few snippets however are as follows. On moving back to Melbourne I started a monthly Sunday Jazz Luncheon Club which I named Club 177 at the Danish Club in Albert Park at 177 Beaconsfield Parade, hence the name! I was there for about a year for monthly Sunday jazz luncheons, and soon began to build an enthusiastic clientele who liked the idea of a "smokeless" Jazz Luncheon Club (remember this is 40 years ago when every second person smoked).



**Diamond Jubilee celebrations at the Uptown Club - 1993
Diana Allen, Neville Stribling, Ade Monsborough, Graeme Bell.**

My next move was to arrange to meet Graeme Bell AO MBE for the first time and ask him if he'd like me to launch his new autobiography in Melbourne, and to my great pleasure he

jumped at the suggestion. Thus began a great mutual friendship and collaboration that led to many memorable events over the next 30 years, most in unusual venues such as Graeme's original jazz club, The Uptown Club in North Melbourne, where the first Australian Jazz Conventions also took place.

However one major obstacle that I was confronted with was that by the 1980s this building had become the HQ of *The Legion of Mary!* However I was so convinced that this old but beautifully restored hall was the perfect venue to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the original Bell Band, that I had to do all I could to enable it to eventuate! So I took the bull by the horns and visited the priests and nuns at the HQ of The Legion of Mary and explained the venue's history, and enquired if there was any possibility of Graeme and me "borrowing" their HQ for one night and transforming it into a jazz club for the Diamond Jubilee of Australia's most distinguished and legendary jazz musician and jazz band! What transpired is an *amazing story* and it's in the book!

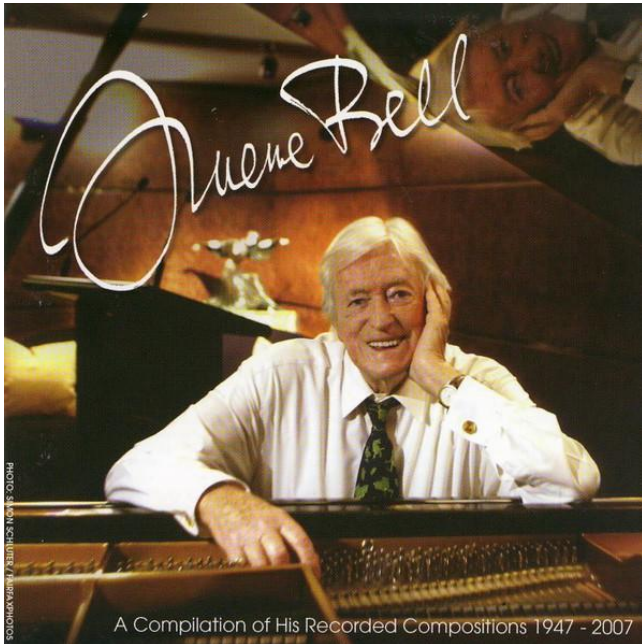


Diana with Graeme at the Helpmann Awards in Sydney - 2006

Other venues that Graeme and I used over the years were, the now demolished Dallas Brooks Hall in East Melbourne, The Assembly Hall in Collins Street, Mietta's, Scotch College etc etc. Everything that Graeme and I collaborated on proved a success and he and I enjoyed working together which we did until his death in 2012, aged 97.

The last thing we achieved together, and as a result of my encouragement, was a collection of *his own compositions* for a double CD presentation. He told me that he had been thinking of doing this and had planned to have 100 copies made for his friends and family, but instead I encouraged him to let Newmarket Music produce this unique collection, which he eventually agreed to do, as hundreds and hundreds of people would want this recording. It turned out to be the biggest selling double CD recording for Newmarket that year and Graeme also concluded that it was one of his most successful recordings.

He wrote a beautiful little booklet to go with it explaining the stories behind these compositions. This double album is still available at the AJM and is a "must have" for all *classic jazz* and Graeme Bell enthusiasts. Stephen Grant performs a number of Graeme's compositions on this recording and Graeme was thrilled with the result. We launched it at the Bentleigh Club when Graeme was into his 90s and he was greatly moved and very happy to hear his compositions being



The Double CD of Graeme's own compositions – 2008

played by some of Melbourne's leading jazz musicians including Steve Grant and Tony Gould and various other musicians of his choosing. Graeme died a year or so later, well content with his life's achievements and rightly so.

In time I had got to know all the major jazz musicians in Australia and presented them at my Sunday Jazz Luncheons and Festivals. This included people like James Morrison, the Barnard brothers, the Pearce Pickering Jazz Band from Hobart and also the incredible ragtime pianist John Gill from Perth. There is a staggering story about John in my book when he opened the first jazz venture at Queenscliffe in 2009, which sadly wasn't long before his sudden and tragic death in his 50s in Perth.



John Gill playing "Kitten on the Keys" - circa 1998

Other highlights of my career as a jazz presenter included the exciting USA Jazz Tour I led in the '90s with 22 in the group. This included a week in New Orleans and a trip up the Mississippi on the Delta Queen paddle steamer for three days with the fabulous Jim Cullum Jazz Band on board for nightly concerts. Also the Jazz Cruises to the South Pacific and another to the Islands around the north coast of Australia. These also were a huge success until COVID eventually and sadly brought them to a halt.

I have also been the Co-ordinator of quite a lot of small Victorian Jazz Festivals over the years and one large one at York in WA which was nearly the finish of me! *It's in the book!*

After 25 years of terrific jazz events, mostly based in Melbourne, I decided to semi-retire to the Bellarine Peninsular where I have now been living for 15 years. I began introducing myself in the region by offering to organize fund raising jazz events for various local organizations such as The Fort in Queenscliff; Cottage by the Sea, also in Queenscliff but predominantly the Queenscliffe Historical Museum where I became a very enthusiastic member of the Committee of Management and Co-ordinator of Events and Fund Raising for the next 10 years!

I soon also began *seasonal* Jazz Australia concerts i.e. four a year, as well as fund raising events at the Queenscliff Town Hall, usually for the QHM. The Museum ladies frequently catered for Jazz Australia events and the men ran a bar. This usually yielded \$2000 plus for the QHM which has added up over the years. *I have never had the need to apply for grants or funding to present jazz events.*

Now with the 50th Anniversary of Jazz Australia looming in 2024 I have decided that it is finally time for me to "hang up my shingle" as they say and so there will only be four more Jazz Australia concerts this year on the Bellarine and they are going to be "hum dingers"!

If you are not already on the Jazz Australia mailing list and would like to be for its final year, it costs nothing and you'll be in the picture until the end of my fabulous jazz career, so please contact me on 0409 019 067. These four great concerts will make a good weekend away also!

One of my main intentions to help preserve "classic" (traditional) jazz, has been to offer promising young exponents of this genre of jazz, the opportunity to perform with excellent older exponents of this "endangered species".

Thank you to all the lovers of great classic jazz who have supported my efforts over 50 years, it has been a great pleasure to present the best of great Australian talent in this "classic" genre of the music.

My recently published book *The History of Jazz Australia* provides many stories and details of what I believe has been an unusual and fascinating vocation and it's full of pictures. It is available for \$25 at the AJM and they are beneficiaries of each sale.

Congratulations also to the AJM on their 100th publication and Anniversary of their Quarterly Magazine; and it is an honour to have been invited to contribute to this historic edition.

Thank you and every good wish for the longevity of this greatly admired organization of which I have been a member since its establishment in 1996 and also an Honorary Life Member.

**Thank you,
Diana Allen OAM**

Jazz Australia 1975–2024 ■

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"Greatest Stride Pianist in the Land"

Ragtime and Stride Pianist John Gill

By Elaine Curtis

Affectionately known as "Perth's Piano Man", John Gill mesmerised the public with his flamboyant show-stopping busking for over two decades until his sudden death in 2011.



Often to be found in Perth's Murray Street Mall, lively renditions of ragtime resonated from a brightly decorated, open-fronted upright piano which he wheeled around on a trolley. His idiosyncratic performances are remembered to this day with nostalgia. Joanne Hyland, curator of the Museum of Perth's recent exhibition on John Gill, speaks of the warmth with which this Perth icon is regarded,

"So many people have memories of John Gill from childhood all the way through. He also busked at the Royal Show and all sorts of things all over Perth, everyone over the age of 25 has a memory of John."

More than just a Perth phenomenon and acknowledged as one of the best ragtime and stride pianists of his time, his mastery of the piano was such that when unleashing his prowess on the keyboard, he could improvise and create his own variations of any genre of music. He was a specialist in ragtime and stride and the freedom and expertise with which he expressed himself through these musical forms was unforgettable for those who had heard him play. Jazz aficionado Diana Allen of Jazz Australia declared him "one of the world's leading ragtime piano players" and the late Gretel James described him as one of the "greatest ragtime and stride piano players."

John Gill was born on the 28th January 1954 in Morecambe, Lancashire, on England's east coast and grew up in Grimsby, on the west coast. John's parents, Joan and Brian Gilling, both came from families with well-established musical and entertainment credentials. Joan, formerly a dancer on the West End stage, remembers her father as a "brilliant accordionist and working musician". Brian's mother was a violinist with a London orchestra. With that background, Joan and Brian were well qualified to recognise their son's prodigious talent for the piano, evident from a very early age and provided John with an environment which encouraged and nurtured his musical ability.

Joan, from whom many recollections are gratefully drawn, describes how, aged around four, John's fascination with the piano was decidedly noticeable.

"He would want to touch any piano he could, stopping to look into any shop window wherever there was one on display. He was so drawn to them, he just could not resist the feel of one."

This was a sentiment echoed by all who knew John throughout his life, poignantly so by John Buchanan at John Gill's funeral, where he recalled John's compulsion towards every piano he came across.

"He saw a piano and it didn't matter where it was, he'd sit down and want to play it. John had that wonderful natural relationship with the piano I hadn't quite seen before."

From those early days, John's aptitude for and symbiotic relationship with the piano developed and expanded exponentially. He could reproduce any tune he heard without the need for sheet music and played for school assemblies, impressing with his ability to reproduce any hymn this way. His extraordinary musical potential gained him a scholarship as a chorister at St James School, Grimsby and provided structure for his religious faith. He gave freely of himself to help others, playing for nursing home residents and hospital patients, habitually generous with his time, especially for charity. The training he received as a chorister concluded his formal musical education. He had briefly endured several unproductive piano lessons with an unempathetic, unsympathetic teacher who discouraged any future ambitions for him as a professional pianist. Undeterred and virtually self-taught, John emerged unhindered, without the restrictions and limitations of conventional training imposed upon him. He was made for the unconfined joys of playing stride and in this form he found the purest expression of his talent.

Brian Gilling was particularly fond of Jazz and worked in a music shop in London's Charing Cross Road. As soon as he purchased a record player, he bought every Jazz record available. Joan remembers John repeatedly listening to his father's entire collection, copying all the styles he heard. John was irresistibly drawn to the great Jazz players of the day and especially admired the black musicians, with whom he felt a strong affinity. Eubie Blake stood out as John's hero. When John learnt the news that Eubie had died, Joan found him absolutely inconsolable, tears streaming down his face. His love for Eubie Blake never dimmed. Even in late February 2011, a few weeks before his own death, John posted on a piano forum about the 1977 film "Scott Joplin", stating that "the most important thing to watch out for is the cameo appearance by pianist and composer EUBIE BLAKE" (using capitals to emphasise Eubie's name!) Eubie had known Scott Joplin in his youth and was in his 90s at the time of the film.

After finishing school, John worked briefly in a menswear store and as a trainee nurse. Unsurprisingly, having enjoyed accompanying his grandfather and father busking in Covent Garden, John moved to London as a full-time musician. Undaunted by initially having to live rough on the streets, his skills refined from playing the piano in pubs on Friday and Saturday nights, he soon found work fulfilling his vocation.

In London, John worked as a session pianist for Kenny Ball's Jazz band. Fellow musicians he met in the band during this time helped to further his interest in ragtime and stride. He formed a two piano duo with pianist Ron Weatherburn in 1972 and met instrumentalist Keith Nichols in 1974 and in John's own words, "began studies of stride". Singer Beryl Bryden, (accredited "Britain's Queen of the Blues" by Ella Fitzgerald) became his close friend. On occasion appearing with the band, Beryl had collaborated on 'Doctor Jazz' with Kenny Ball's band in 1961. She played her signature washboard with John on the accordion in Shepherd Market in Mayfair, Covent Garden and on iconic Eel Pie Island, haunt of many famous musicians of the day – Ken Colyer, Kenny Ball and Acker Bilk from the world of British Traditional Jazz and numerous others, including the Rolling Stones, the Who, Eric Clapton and David Bowie. Beryl and John also busked together in Murray Street Mall when she visited Perth.

John was involved in diverse musical endeavours, playing all over the UK, including recording "Red Hot Jazz", John Petters' first album, in 1977. In an archived interview, Petters recalls when he first met John Gill and how they began

working together.

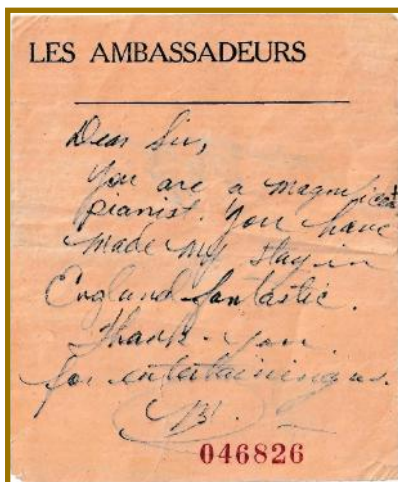
"We got a gig in Guernsey ... it was a place called White Woods, and they put Jazz bands on for a week. I'd met a young Ragtime player called John Gill who was a phenomenal technician, he wasn't particularly good in a band context, like a lot of the Ragtime players you know, they were great soloists but their actual timekeeping wasn't wonderful from an ensemble point of view. So he started working with me and we had a residency at the Wake Arms in Epping, just south of Epping."

John Gill's skills as a ragtime and stride specialist may have destined him to be a soloist, but a video recording posted on traditional-jazz.com (Petter's website), disproves Petter's comment about John's timekeeping. It shows John Gill in 2007 on the piano, in fine form 'in a band context' with the late Len Sparks (saxophone), George Wheeler (bass) and John Petters (drums).

Guernsey was where John's interest in Punch and Judy shows and puppeteering began. In his personal photograph album, John wrote, "In 1977 while working at White Woods Hotel in Guernsey, I started to take an interest in Punch and Judy after seeing the show of punchman Hugh Cecil."

Whilst at White Woods, John and fellow performer Diana Dors shared curling tongs. Joan says, "John saw the stars as ordinary people, fame and celebrity made no difference to him." John worked with many famous artists of his era, including Judith Durham, with whom he shared a warm friendship. He engendered affection and admiration in people who knew him and held a special place in their hearts as one of nature's good guys.

In 1975, he spent a week in Paris and in 1976, was resident pianist with a jazz quartet at historic jazz venue Casa Bar in Zurich. In 1976 John returned to London, performing at famous live music venue, The 100 Club and was resident pianist at the Cunard International Hotel and at fashionable Les Ambassadeurs Club (featured in the 1960s in the first James Bond film "Dr No" and The Beatles film "A Hard Day's Night".) All his life, John was comfortable with the entertainment world and those within it. As a toddler, visiting the swimming baths with his mother, John serendipitously encountered Count Basie, who was performing in town with his band, relaxing by the pool. Baby John instinctively made a beeline for Count Basie and clambered onto his knee.



At Les Ambassadeurs Club, John met Count Basie again, when "CB" sent a message complimenting the pianist on his exceptional piano skills, only to discover that he had already met John as a baby all those years ago. The note from Count Basie read, "You are a magnificent pianist - You have made my holiday in England fantastic - Thank you for entertaining me, C. B."

Whilst still in his 20s, John Gill had established himself as the leading ragtime pianist in the UK and his adroit mastery of the technically difficult demands of stride became his signature style.

In the spirit of the wandering minstrels of the Middle Ages, John travelled where musical opportunities took him, earning his living entertaining the public. Fluent in French through his father (who had been brought up in France), he worked his way along the French Riviera. This carefree time was captured by a photograph of him sitting on the modified handlebars of a bicycle playing the accordion, whilst his friend Youpi (a street artist) pedalled. When John put on Punch and Judy shows in the South of France, the redoubtable Beryl

Bryden helped out as his "bottler" (the person managing front of house and collecting donations from the people watching).

In 1980, whilst working at the Festival Bar in Juan-Les-Pins, Antibes on the Côte D'Azur for the summer season with his friend Sid Pye's band and singer Beryl Bryden, John became keenly interested in scuba diving. In his personal scrapbook, John recalls, "Beryl was directly responsible for getting me hooked on scuba diving". Beryl, an avid and experienced deep sea diver, was an enthusiast who excelled at the sport. John's mother remembers a photograph of John taken on Jacques Cousteau's boat and how John exchanged his work scraping barnacles off the bottom of the boat for scuba diving lessons from the boat's crew. "John always loved swimming in the sea". When John died and was cremated, in tribute to his love of the sea, Joan scattered half his ashes at one of John's favourite spots, Swanbourne Nudist Beach, in Perth. The other half she scattered over Tower Bridge as "that part of London meant a lot to John. He used to play at lots of pubs around there. Friday and Saturday nights were a sing-along for all the old girls with their pint of Guinness, with John, whom they loved, on the piano. That was where the entertainment was, all the old pubs, where John could go in at any time, play the piano and the Landlord would say to him, "Would you like a job on Friday?" John was always booked. This was the life he missed when he emigrated to Australia." Initially, John remembered those days wistfully but later found that things had changed beyond recognition with the rapid re-development of that part of London and re-visiting the past in this instance proved a disappointment.

In 1981, John continued with residencies in Juan Les Pins and Montreux. The same year, whilst recovering from Pneumonia, he made his first trip to Australia, to visit his family in Perth. His first Australian concert was at the end of his first (2 month) holiday in Perth, held at the Octagon Theatre and promoted by and broadcast live on 6UVS FM as "jazz pianist John Gill playing jazz and ragtime music, Scott Joplin, Fats Waller & others."

After various jobs in Zermatt and Montreux in Switzerland, John returned to London and recorded his album "Finger Buster" at Pizza on the Park recording studio in Knightsbridge. In 1983, he relocated to Perth. Emigrating to Australia proved a good move for John. He immediately found his feet in a Jazz band with Lew and Pam Hird, playing the piano and piano accordion at the Fremantle Markets and regular work in venues such as Riccardo's. From 1984 to 1989, he was the resident pianist at the Hyde Park Hotel on Tuesdays and The Palace Hotel on Fridays. John describes himself as "a local artist with Perth Jazz Society, Jazz Club of WA, York Jazz Festival (I have played at every one since 1984), ABC Radio programmes and Hole in the Wall Theatre concerts." In 1988, he joined the Corner House Jazz Band at the Railway Hotel in Fremantle and toured with them to Kuala Lumpur, Kobe and Sarawak, recording the album "Sarawaki" with the band.

A chance meeting with Gretel James in 1989 launched John's career in the Eastern States and beyond. In Perth for the 44th annual Australian Jazz Convention, Gretel came across John playing in a pub called the Pig and Whistle and requested he play some Eubie Blake. She could not have chosen someone John esteemed more. Their rapport was immediate and from this encounter, flourished a friendship that enriched both their lives immeasurably. Gretel introduced John to Diana Allen, founder and principal of Jazz Australia, who recognised and promoted John's talent. He became a regular feature at Diana's many concerts and thereafter, a great many other events on the eastern states' music circuit. This led to new opportunities for John to showcase his talents, not just in Australia but abroad, particularly in the USA.

In 1993, at the Montsalvat Jazz Festival, John met Frank French, founder and director of the Rocky Mountain Ragtime Festival, who invited John to play at what would be the first of John's many international festivals. At his first guest appearance in the USA, John won over American audiences who were initially "somewhat miffed that an Australian would dare to play what is regarded as the national music of America." However, "he ended up being the only performer to receive a standing ovation." Whilst in Boulder, he met Dick

Zimmerman, director of the Scott Joplin Music Festival and was invited to perform at their next festival. 1994 was John's first appearance at the annual Scott Joplin International Ragtime Festival at Sedalia in Missouri, Joplin's home town, fondly known as "The Cradle of Ragtime" and he became a "festival favourite" in Sedalia regularly thereafter. A special paving stone in Sedalia commemorates John Gill's association with the town and has engraved upon it, "John Gill Pianist Australia". It is located in Maple Leaf Park on Main Street, the site of the Maple Leaf Club from Scott Joplin's era and dates back to 1999, the centennial of the Maple Leaf Rag, the year "which saw a larger production of the annual festival in commemoration of this event".

In 1993, John met Dave Johnson, also from the USA. Dave had come across John's CD "Carolina Shout" whilst in Perth and sought John out. This meeting resulted in John performing at Iowa City and Cedar Rapids in 1995 and 1999 and at Eddie Piccard's Club Jazz on both visits. Dave Johnson provides an anecdote about John's infallible eye for anything piano related. The flyer for John's first concert in Iowa consisted of a full 88-key piano keyboard printed across the top of the flyer. Dave had painstakingly fitted the full 88 keys and not just an incomplete series of octaves and was most impressed that "John noticed that detail and as one might expect, he was the ONLY person who noticed that detail ..."

John's understanding of pianos was legendary. He always sought to gain as much knowledge as he could about pianos, even obscure ones, seeking information on social media, on the makers of Weinberg pianos. Diana Allen describes how, just before a concert in 2010, a year before his death, John astounded her by completely dismantling the piano he was designated to play later that day, before reassembling it to his exacting standards. Not only could he tune one to perfection to perform to the demands he made of it, he knew how pianos were constructed and could improve one to bring out the best performance possible. This technical knowledge and practical ability set him in a league of his own.

Testament to how highly regarded John Gill was as a pianist came in July 1995, when Austrian company Bösendorfer, one of the oldest and most highly regarded piano manufacturers in the world, invited him to be an accredited Bösendorfer Concert Artist. John received formal confirmation of this status in February 1996. In a radio interview, Reece Harley, director of the Museum of Perth who had spearheaded a campaign for a permanent memorial to honour John Gill, explained what this honour meant,

"Bösendorfer will deliver one of their grand pianos to any location in the world for the artist to perform, a very high accolade which puts him up there with Stevie Wonder, Leonard Bernstein and Andre Previn." Jazz singers/pianists Nina Simone and Shirley Horn performed on Bösendorfers on numerous occasions throughout their careers. Franz Liszt was "the first great Bösendorfer artist of his time." For John, who liked to modify and calibrate the pianos he played, the appeal of a Bösendorfer may have been not just the prestige of its prohibitively priced Imperial Grand piano but also its extra octave and special facility to be fine-tuned to the exacting standards of his discerning ear, Bösendorfer being "the only piano manufacturer that applies a detachable and independent Capo d'Astro in the upper register" allowing for the most precise adjustment.

In 2004, John made what turned out to be the very last piano roll recordings with Mastertouch Piano Roll company, which ceased trading in 2005. Credited as "legendary ragtime pianist John Gill", John recorded several works that day on location at Old Stanmore Fire Station in Sydney. John's rendition of his own arrangement of 12th Street Rag left "few notes untouched" and is part of his lasting legacy to ragtime and music recording history in Australia. In 2010, John made a recording of compositions of Scott Joplin, Eubie Blake, Fats Waller amongst others on a Digital Disc system installed in a Mason and Hamlin model A grand piano at the home of Jere DeBacker in Denver, Colorado. The AMICA Bulletin Magazine (The American Automatic Musical Collector's Association) describes John as the "Greatest Stride Pianist in

the Land" and states, "It would be fair to say that John Gill is one of the finest Ragtime, stride and early Jazz piano players in the world."

John Gill's effervescent, highly original interpretations of ragtime and intense enthusiasm for Scott Joplin, impressed wherever he played. John's mother remembers the connection John felt spiritually with Scott Joplin. "John's



father was born the same day Scott Joplin died (1st April 1917). John always hoped that some bit of Scott Joplin might have been reincarnated in his father and passed down to him." She remembers John as a natural who played with freedom and abandon, who willingly shared his knowledge and expertise with anyone interested in pianos, believing his gift did not belong to him alone. "John always said, anyone can do it (play the piano), it's not me playing, it's someone else."

John Gill was only just 57 years of age when he died on April 15th 2011, from a sudden heart attack in North Perth shopping centre. His death came as a great shock and tributes and eulogies flowed from all who knew him worldwide. Having been scheduled to perform in Sedalia in June, which would have been his 17th visit to the USA, John was instead honoured at the festival, on the evening of June 1st, with a tribute organised by The Scott Joplin International Ragtime Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation "dedicated to preserving the importance of Ragtime music, Scott Joplin's contribution to it and Sedalia's role in its history". His obituary in the Sedalia Democrat quoted John's friend and fellow Perth musician Garry Lee, describing John as "a consummate artist who played with, obviously, incredible technique and virtuosity but was also able to engage the audience ... very few pianists in the world can play like John and as far as Australia is concerned, I don't think there'd be any."

Those who had admired his work felt their lives diminished by the loss of one of the greats of their time. Those who knew him personally, grieved for the loss of someone extraordinarily special who had touched their lives with his music and enormous capacity for friendship. Beloved for his endearingly uncomplicated view of life,

likeable and idiosyncratic personality, modest attitude to his own musical talent, he also had a propensity to collect quirky items such as telephones, models of the Eiffel tower and anything that piqued his eccentric interests. His great affection for animals, as Gretel James recounts in her obituary for John, led him to compose "Kitten on the Keys" for Gretel's cat who "liked to pad the keys whilst John played", and composing "Little Dog Blues" for her dog.

John Gill's funeral was a celebration of his life. His coffin was a bespoke creation decorated with a border of piano keys and musical notations. The cortège was led by a band which included members from Jazz Fremantle. During the service, footage of John playing the piano was provided by the Victorian Jazz Archive. Among people who shared their memories and experiences of John were Diana Allen and John Buchanan, director of the Classic Jazz and Ragtime Springtime Festival in the Southern Highlands. John Buchanan lauded John's piano playing as

"Unbelievable, John played the piano the way he wanted to with almost four hands. It was a great pleasure dealing with John, he reminded me so much of those itinerant pianists of 1890's America, around Sedalia and St Louis who went around and played the piano all the time. John was like that ... He was so easy to deal with, his generosity of spirit and easy-going nature was an absolute delight."

Joan says, "I met so many wonderful people through John, he was so liked by everyone." Friends, fellow music lovers and fans rallied around his parents, in their outpouring of grief, sending tributes, condolences and letters of sympathy sharing fond memories from around the world. After John's death, Judith Durham continued to keep in touch with Joan Gilling up until Judith's own death in 2022. Joan says, "I had no idea how much he was loved by so many people until his death and they got in touch with me."

Messages people wrote in his memory showed not just appreciation for his music but gratitude for someone kind, generous and altruistic, who would put himself out for anyone he could help. Comments flooded in to support the campaign for Perth Council to honour John with a permanent memorial, testifying to the deep impression he had made with his life and the generosity with which it had been lived. They spoke of a man who always had time to speak to the public who thronged around his piano and who obligingly played the favourites they requested.

"Really miss hearing you down under the arcade John. Forever in my heart." "He is sorely missed. I used to watch him play for hours on end. What a great talent!" "He was a wonderful man and incredible on the piano. Knew him well when I worked in the city. Hired him for a party once. He did it for nothing. Just loved playing."

He was a man who gave of himself to make other people happy. A month before he died, John played for the wedding of a couple who had been his fans since their backpacker days. They requested John play for their special day because, "His jazz music always felt like one of the joys of life". John was definitely one of life's 'givers'. For their wedding, he wheeled his piano, two km from Murray Street Mall to Queens Gardens and after playing all day in the heat, back again uphill to Murray Street Mall.

Joan recalls meeting people in a music shop who remember her son and that he was the reason they had taken up the piano. Online comments voice similar sentiments,

"He was the reason I wanted to play the piano when I was a kid. I would stand there with my dad and (we would) watch him with the biggest smile on our faces."

People from near and afar mourned John. The owner of a ragtime cafe visiting from Holland, writes,

"A visit to Australia will never be the same." Another (from Malaysia) attributed much of the vibrant street atmosphere in Perth to John Gill's street busking, "the reason for that was him".

Closer to home, humour belies a sense of collective loss, "Still missing you John. You brought so much into the world, and took so much with you when you left. But you left us with some special memories that will never be taken from us. I hope Scott Jop and yourself are composing and performing a fantastic great gig in the sky. Miss ya mate. Xo" (sic).

Much has been written about John Gill, including an insightful obituary by Gretel James. The Museum of Perth's comprehensive website on John Gill complemented their

exhibition honouring him. It ran longer than the originally expected 3 months, from December 2021 until mid- October 2023 owing to the COVID pandemic and was based on memories, documents, photographs and footage of family life provided by John's mother.

Curator Joanne Hyland explains the aim of the Museum of Perth was to create a tribute to John Gill, "When Perth Council did not approve the permanent memorial to John that the public and his supporters wanted, we staged this exhibition to celebrate John's life".

John Gill lived his life to the full, doing what he loved until the day he died. For those left behind, "grief is the price we pay for love." Joan Gilling keeps the memory of John alive with a beautiful display of framed photographs of him throughout his career on one wall of her home. "I no longer weep for his loss but am now just glad that he was..." Knowing him so well, she also observed that John would not have coped well with old age if a problem like arthritis were to afflict his fingers. "John would not have wanted to grow old if health meant that he could no longer play the piano." What was left unsaid was that he still had so much to offer, so much to give, so many tremendous performances left in him when he died so young. The innumerable flyers, photographs and programmes of his shows from his personal collection attest to the immense amount he put into his life before it was cruelly curtailed.

Speaking with his mother, it was clear that John was uninterested in the trappings of material success and completely unmotivated by money or financial considerations. The recognition he gained did not translate into the financial security he deserved but did not seek. He was content that his piano playing took him wherever he wanted to go, from Europe to Asia, Australia and America. All he wanted was to be able to play wherever he happened to be and to travel where the musical urge took him. He was authentic, honest and straightforward in his approach to his music and to life. What makes his early death all the more poignant was that his extraordinary talent emanated from a thoroughly decent human being who just wanted his audiences to share the joy and enjoyment he derived from the piano. The knowledge that such a talent had existed in our lifetime, the joy of having heard him play is a privilege afforded to so many because of his generosity of spirit. The golden thread woven through the tapestry of John's life, linking every facet of it, is his passionate love for music and its life-enhancing magic.

In an interview, when asked what was next, John mused, "Music is an endless journey, who knows?" and to quote one of his multitude of fans, "RIP John, you will be missed! But ...



you're probably up in heaven jamming with Scott Joplin" ■

JOHN BUCHANAN: A WARRIOR FOR TRADITIONAL & SWING JAZZ

Part 1:

by Eric Myers



John Buchanan is probably best-known today as the presenter of the popular radio program “Swing Sessions” on Sydney’s 2MBS-FM Fine Music station, on Mondays at 12 noon. It’s a program I hate to miss, as John invariably plays music that I, as a modernist, have tended to miss out on, despite a lifetime of listening to jazz. In a nutshell Buchanan has prompted me to completely revalue the various pre-bebop jazz styles which were played in the 1920s and 30s.

I was of course well aware of New Orleans giants Sidney Bechet and Louis Armstrong. No jazz enthusiast goes through life without hearing their music. But no matter how important such icons are, there are other amazing and interesting jazz musicians whose work John regularly highlights on his programs. These have been an eye opener for me. There are too many to mention here, but some whose names quickly come to mind which now have a special meaning for me, are drummer Chick Webb, trumpeter Bunny Berigan, and clarinetist Artie Shaw.

Listening closely to their music I’ve found it much more sophisticated and hip than most modernists suppose, so much so that the conventional view that so-called “art music” or “creative jazz” begins only in the early 1940s with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker should seriously be questioned. Listen carefully to other pre-bebop giants such as say, Coleman Hawkins or Roy Eldridge. Their creativity is overwhelming; you cannot tell me they are not playing “art music”.

John Buchanan was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in the 2016 Australia Day Honours for, “services to jazz music, and to the broadcast media”. That phraseology somewhat disguises the lifetime of entrepreneurial activity which John was to undertake, following the memorable day, in 1952 when, as an impressionable teenager of 17, he heard the Graeme Bell band at the Sydney Town Hall. This was Tuesday April 19, 1952, a seminal anniversary in Buchanan’s memory. The Bell band, being presented by the ABC, had shortly before arrived back from a world tour.

“I remember that they played ‘High Society’,” John recalls. “I’d never heard anything like it in my life. And then for the rest of the night they just played all the classics, all the great jazz tunes that we all know about. And that was it. My life was laid out in front of me there and then. After that I was sold - I had a new interest.”

1952 was in fact a key year in the history of Australian jazz. In March of that year the jazz pioneer Clem Semmler at the ABC facilitated the first serious jazz radio program on the network: a Saturday morning coast-to-coast program called Rhythm Unlimited compered by Eric Child. That great broadcaster never looked back; his program was to run for over 30 years - an ABC record - and have a profound influence in bringing jazz to the notice of radio listeners,

Buchanan was a regular listener, and was later to acquire pirate recordings of many of Child’s programs, given to him by a keen listener to the ABC who was in the practice of taping Child’s programs. Those tapes are now a valued regular feature of John’s own programs on Fine Music FM.

In 1964 Buchanan married his wife Jill Palmer. He was then an accountant but, bored with that line of work, decided he needed a change. So, he and Jill sold up at Greenwich where they were living and, in the early 70s, bought a five-acre property in Dural. There, he decided he’d become a publisher and work from home. He published magazines on whatever interested him: project homes, wine and spirits, cricket, golf, a series of books on the Australian cartoonist Emile Mercier, and of course jazz. It was a small publishing business, but lucrative enough for a reasonable living.

“I did it from home, Jill worked with me”, says John. “I decided this was the best way to spend your time in Australia at that time. It was a great country then, it was so free and easy, you could get a job doing almost anything. If you wanted to be a doctor and just scrape through the Leaving Certificate you could become one. I just loved it when we went to Dural in the 1970s.”

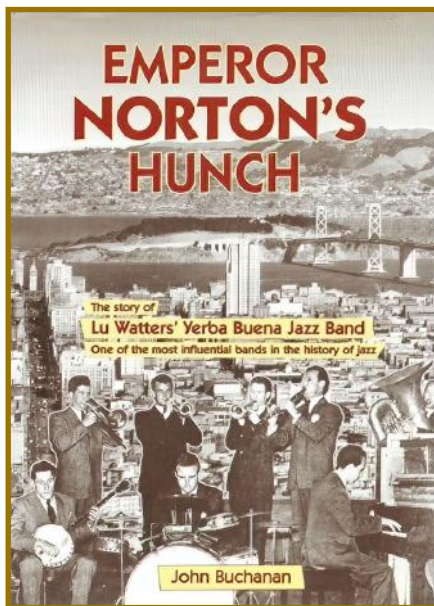
With the advent of rock and roll in the 50s, and its ubiquity in the 60s, John felt keenly the declining interest in jazz. The rock and roll era “basically knocked jazz for six” according to Buchanan. With the

advent of Tom Baker's San Francisco Jazz Band in the mid-1970s however Buchanan's enthusiasm was reawakened. "Tom had top Sydney musicians like Eric Holroyd, Paul Furniss and John Bates in his band", says Buchanan, "Traditional jazz was alive again in Sydney."

John and Tom shared a liking for the two-trumpet style of Lu Watters and his Yerba Buena Jazz Band, which in the 1940s in San Francisco revived the spirit of King Oliver & his Creole Jazz Band and other bands active during the early days of jazz in New Orleans.

It was typical of John Buchanan that he took his interest in Lu Watters to the nth degree. A normal jazz fan might well have restricted his interest to simply collecting the available LPs. This was not good enough for Buchanan. He decided that he needed to know more about the Watters phenomenon and, in line with his experience as a publisher, thought he would research the subject and write a book. The result was his book *Emperor Norton's Hunch: The*

Story of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band, published in 1996.



Book Buchanan travelled to San Francisco on two occasions to seek out and interview the remaining members of the Yerba Buena Jazz band and its followers. Ironically, Watters himself died on November 5, 1989, the very day Buchanan first arrived in the US.

According to Peter J F Newton, who wrote the book's Foreword "John has also followed the path that all putative historians must take if their work is to be believed. He has checked contemporary reviews and articles, spoken briefly to a few authors of 'San Francisco' oriented books and articles and selected suitable quotations to reinforce his story. He has consulted with collectors, historians and discographers in Australia too. I'm pleased to say that John has also attempted to place the band within its proper historic and social contexts."

Reviewing the book favourably in the magazine of the Allegheny Jazz Society in October, 1996, Larry L Quilligan described Buchanan's effort as "the first book to have specifically done Watters and the YBJB in such a studious manner. There have been many previous written stories and commentaries on Watters and his disciples, mostly in jazz publications, liner notes from recordings and other audio and video sources, but nothing quite like this labour of love by Buchanan, an Australian magazine



**Tom Baker's original San Francisco Jazz Band, which was formed in August 1975 and debuted at the 20th Australian Jazz Convention in December 1975.
Standing, L-R, Len Barnard, Eric Holroyd, Baker.
Seated, L-R, John Bates, Hans Karssemeyer, Paul Furniss, Chris Qua, Dave Robison**

publisher and jazz cornetist. This is a valuable book. It can be used as a primer for anyone interested in the so-called 'traditional' forms of jazz music, and especially for those interested in the genesis of what is now often called the San Francisco 'jazz revival'. It is an excellent reference source."

Meanwhile, back in Australia Buchanan had already flexed his muscles as a jazz presenter. In Buchanan's exceedingly well-organised memorabilia the first evidence of the sort of concerts that would take place under Buchanan's stewardship over the next 30 years is the "Evening with the Bob Barnard Jazz Band" on April 27, 1984, presented at the Dural Country Club. Other intermittent concerts over the next four years in Dural featured Paul Furniss' San Francisco Jazz Band (1986 & 1987); and in 1988, Roger and Graeme Bell.

It's important to note that we are not talking about jazz as it was presented normally in pubs and clubs. From the outset Buchanan had a particular vision: that the jazz he loved should be presented in the formal surroundings of the concert hall, and he was to spend much of his life making that vision a reality.

John gives much credit to his wife Jill who supported him in his quest to indulge his passion for jazz. "It was just a wonderful time for music, I just discovered this thing, my wife allowed me to indulge myself in whatever I wanted to do. Amongst all her credits was that, and so there I was on a property having a wonderful time, publishing magazines, and I published the book on Lou Watters Emperor Norton's Hunch in 1996."

The first practical manifestation of Buchanan's preoccupation with the Watters oeuvre was his presentation on November 12, 1990 of a concert at the Sydney Town Hall entitled "1948 Memorial Jazz Concert" subtitled "A Tribute to the music of Lu Watters and Turk Murphy". With proceeds going to the Sir David Martin Foundation, the evening was hosted by Graeme Bell OA, MBE. Shortly before the concert Sir David, Governor of New South Wales, and a close friend of John and his wife

Jill, had died on 10 August 1990 of pleural mesothelioma, a rare form of lung cancer caused by asbestos, to which Martin was exposed during his naval career.

This concert was reviewed in the December, 1990 edition of The Sydney Review by journalist and jazz pianist Dick Hughes. Referring to Tom Baker's trumpet work, Hughes described it as "rocking, socking revivalist jazz at its best." In the case of Steve Grant, the young pianist whom Buchanan had brought up from Melbourne, Hughes was glowing, describing him as "one of the most extraordinary young musicians I have ever heard... His touch is sure and confident, his rhythm impeccable, his technique staggering."



Melbourne's Steve Grant: his touch is sure and confident, his rhythm impeccable, his technique staggering...

One of Buchanan's typical promotional strategies was demonstrated in the case of this concert: if such a concert was worth doing in one venue, there was no harm in repeating it at another venue. Therefore the "1948 Memorial Concert", tweaked around the edges with the participation of the Melbourne band Steve Waddell's Creole Bells, was repeated on November 8, 1991, at Willoughby Town Hall, and again the following night, November 9, at Randwick Town Hall. Old faithfuls such as Tom Baker and Graeme Bell were of course involved with drummer Len Barnard and singer Carol Ralph added to the Willoughby Town Hall line-up. These

concerts were once again in support of the Sir David Martin Foundation.

Why 1948? As Hughes explained in his review, 1948 was a seminal year for enthusiasts like Buchanan. It was a high point in the revivalist movement of New Orleans jazz internationally. Not only was there Lu Watters in San Francisco and Graeme Bell in Australia, but also in England Humphrey Lyttelton and pianist George Webb, often said to be the father of the traditional jazz movement in the UK. There was Claude Luter in France, and the Dutch Swing College Band in Holland – all playing music in the spirit of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers and Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven bands.

During the 1990s Buchanan embarked on a series of concerts at a new venue for him, the North Sydney Leagues Club. They began on November 10, 1995 featuring from Melbourne Steve Waddell's Creole Bells plus Sydney favourites singer Carol Ralph, and this time Tom Baker with a newly-named ensemble, his Hambone Kelly Eight. Inspecting Buchanan's memorabilia one is constantly struck by the attention to detail in his programmes. Invariably the compositions which each group played would be listed in the promotional material which speaks to the meticulous planning which Buchan put into such concerts. In the case of this concert Waddell's band, after interval, was to play the following tunes in a tribute to "Turk Murphy and the San Francisco Legacy": "Minstrels of Annie Street", "Chicago Breakdown", "My Honey's Lovin' Arms", "Something for Annie", "This Way Out", "San Francisco Bay Blues", "King Porter Stomp", "Trombone Rag", "Bay City", and "Royal Terminus Rag".

Similar concerts followed in November 1996 (this time two nights in a row at North Sydney Leagues and in 1997 Buchanan inaugurated what was described as "Tom Baker's San Francisco Jazz Club", with an invitation to patrons to "dance, dine or just come and listen to Tom Baker's 8-piece Barbary Coast Jazz Band"...



Part 2 continued in AJazz 101, May 2024

THE JAZZ CENTRE UK



In *Ajazz* 98 we published an article highlighting the existence of a dozen or so similar institutions to own around the world. From out of the blue we received an email from one jazz museum which we had missed:

Email (in part) to the AJM:

Centrepiece [the magazine of The Jazz Centre UK] is currently planning a series about jazz museums around the world. I note that the AJM's own magazine, *Ajazz*, carried an article in issue 98 listing a selection of such museums. Interestingly you have identified some museums whose existence we were unaware, and conversely, our list has some that are not included in yours. Indeed, TJCUK is omitted from the *Ajazz* article, although it does include Britain's National Jazz Archive, which is a sort of older cousin of ours.

Melvyn Westlake,
Editorial staff at TJCUK

Melvyn Westlake then requested permission to produce an article for *Centrepiece* with information and illustrations from our own museum. This was attended to by David Canterford, Mel Blachford, and Ralph Powell from AJM Management. As a result:

Thanks for your warm response to my request to produce an article about the AJM. ... I thought you might be interested in seeing the latest issue of our quarterly magazine *Centrepiece*, which includes a three-page feature about



the Australian Jazz Museum. It has benefited from your answers, Mel and David, to several questions about the AJM's functions and operations. I'm grateful for your assistance, and hope that the article is accurate and fair.

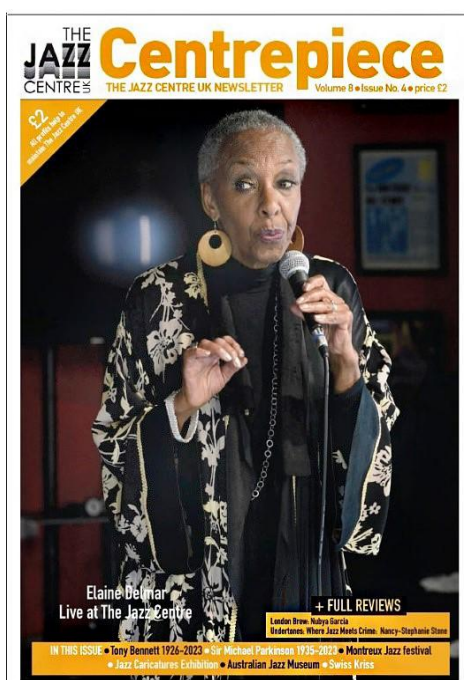
... The Jazz Centre UK would welcome a continuing close relationship with the AJM, so please feel free to use any articles or information from any edition of *Centrepiece* (although it would be helpful to know which of our articles you deem of interest to your readers). In summary, we would be very happy to share resources.

All the best
Melvyn Westlake

So Who are The Jazz Centre UK?

Jazz has had a strong presence in Britain for over 100 years, so TJCUK located in Southend-on-Sea, Essex, feels it is important that this part of British culture and its history is protected and ensures that its memorabilia is properly preserved. Its volunteers make sure the extensive collections are well presented and maintained.

One of their core aims is to promote the art form of jazz across Music, Dance, Art and the surrounding culture. Jazz is actively promoted via a regular stream of live events, the publication of a quarterly newsletter, supporting networking channels, and educational and display activities. ■



MARK GINSBURG & RYAN GROGAN: OCEANS TOGETHER

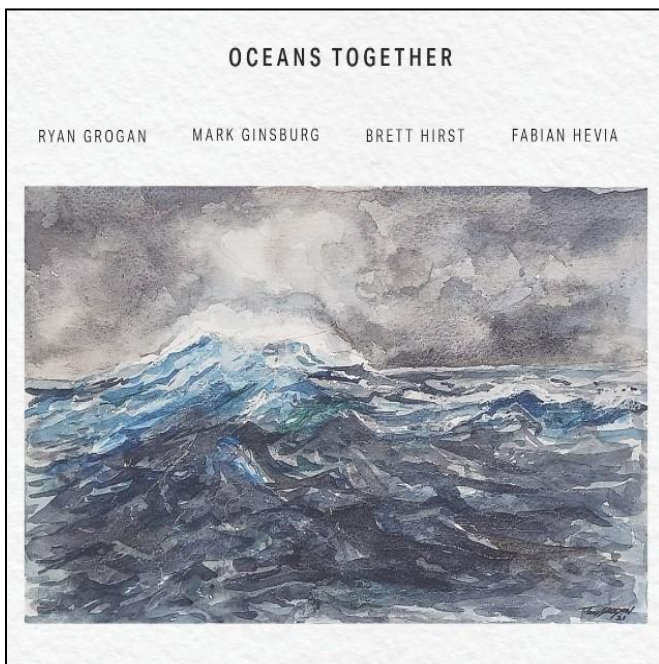
Album review by Eric Myers

Label:

Earshift Music

Personnel:

Ryan Gogan (piano); Mark Ginsburg (saxophones); Brett Hirst (double bass); Fabian Hevia (percussion). Additional musicians: Hannah Grogan, Ryan Grogan and Mark Ginsburg (background vocals); Davi Mello (guitar, in track 6)



The first thing to notice about this album is that visually it's an immaculate product. The graphic design and artwork are highly attractive, with excellent black-and-white photographs, including a great shot of the four principal musicians which dominates a handsome ten-page CD sleeve. This suggests a level of professionalism and attention to detail in the area of production values, which is somewhat unusual in the jazz albums which come my way for review. It's not surprising to discover that the pianist/composer Ryan Gogan, a South African who arrived in Australia in 2006, is a partner at Klang Studios in Sydney, which facilitates music for TV series, television commercials, documentaries, short films and games.

The sort of expertise available through such music industry activity has no doubt been brought to bear on *Oceans Together*. Saxophonist Mark Ginsburg, the quartet's co-leader, is also a South African who, based in

Australia since 1982, has subsequently forged a career which has taken him into several international arenas.

In the past *Oceans Together* might have been considered a "concept album", in the sense that a certain mood is sought, and is intended to prevail throughout the album. That mood here is laid-back, gentle and not too frenetic, in keeping with the album's expressed inspirations, which are highly personal. The 12 compositions on the album – eight by Grogan and four by Ginsburg – are sweet, carefully written, thoughtful and melodic throughout, featuring warm harmonic changes. Solos by all four musicians are well-paced and ruminative, underlining what is ultimately a restful mood. Fabian Hevia's role as a percussionist, replacing the normal drum kit, is the key to the album's overall ambience.

Personally I welcome this innovation, as some contemporary drummers, even when playing softly, cannot resist the conversational approach which has crept into drumming styles over many years, and can be intrusive in the sound-mix. With a variety of percussive sound sources to choose from, Hevia expertly gives the music great variety track by track, and leaves the music very open throughout, in accordance with the minimalism which is now increasingly finding its way into Australian jazz, no doubt through the subliminal influence of *The Necks*. Hevia is perhaps primarily responsible for the fact that all instruments, beautifully recorded, can be heard as clear as a bell. I get the feeling that each musician is playing with heartfelt understatement, that is to say, within themselves. Trying to impress the listener with technical feats would defeat the purpose of this contemplative album.

Two aspects of the music are notable: firstly, there are background vocals on some tracks, provided by Grogan, Ginsburg and Hannah Grogan, which may involve a doubling of the melody in unison, or perhaps a written connecting section in harmony. Used sparingly these passages add a lovely element of warmth to the music whenever they occur. Secondly, while all solos are beautifully played, I found those from Brett Hirst, a great double bass player, especially resonated with me. While Grogan and Ginsburg are the nominal co-leaders, I feel all four musicians are equally responsible for the way the music hangs together throughout. It's comforting to know that there's room in Australian jazz for such an exquisite album. ■

BEN WINKELMAN: HEARTBEAT

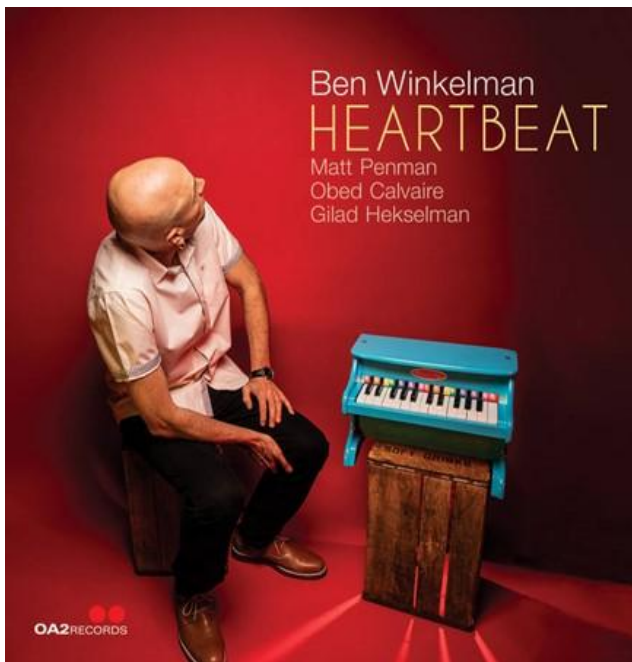
Album review by Eric Myers

Label:

OA2 Records

Personnel:

Ben Winkelman (piano, rhodes), **Gilad Hekselman** (guitar), **Matt Penman** (bass), **Obed Calvaire** (drums).



Reviewed Ben Winkelman's fifth album *Balance* for *The Australian* in May, 2019, and drew attention to the challenge which his music presents to the listener. It has been a pleasure to return to that album, and compare it to Winkelman's sixth album *Heartbeat*. Even if the latest album in many ways offers us more of the same, I feel it has given me a more sophisticated understanding of how to listen to Winkelman's music.

To illustrate the way in which that music can be heard I refer to a review of *Heartbeat*, published in a recent edition of the Music Trust's *Loudmouth*, by Chris Cody, an Australian jazz pianist and composer who spent many years in Paris, and is now based in Sydney. He described elements of the music in *Praise*, the opening track on *Heartbeat*, as follows: "African syncopated rhythms, odd time signatures or meter, uneven phrase lengths, different beat groupings in 9/4, tempo changes, and harmonic shifts up a step ..." In other words, a challenge. Nonetheless, I hasten to add, I still found that track attractive and satisfying. There is an overweening complexity at the heart of Winkelman's music based on, for example, the absence often of straight-ahead time-feels; a liking for odd time signatures; inner rhythmic structures within the compositions which are articulated by all musicians with breathtaking virtuosity; and the

approach of double bassist Matt Penman, a virtuosic proponent of the "broken time" approach of many contemporary double bassists.

Still, the listener's task I feel is not to be overawed but to come to the music – to look past such complexity, and allow oneself to connect with the music's inner beauty, which is substantial. In a sense Winkelman's music is beyond analysis – I feel it's best to allow it to sink into one's soul. A reviewer who wishes the music to be other than what it is, is in the wrong business.

While *Balance* was somewhat dark, I feel that *Heartbeat* has a more melodic, optimistic feel about it. Winkelman wrote the nine compositions on *Heartbeat* during the first months of the Covid pandemic when New York was notoriously the worst affected city in the United States. No doubt this was an anxious time, but it was also simultaneously a period of hope and optimism for Winkelman, as he and his wife were awaiting the arrival of their first child.

Winkelman is accompanied once again by the two excellent musicians who played so well on *Balance*: New Zealand expatriate bassist Matt Penman, and US drummer Obed Calvaire. On *Heartbeat* they are joined by Israeli guitarist Gilad Hekselman. Needless to say all musicians on this album play with typical New York brilliance and intensity. The album includes nine of Winkelman's splendid compositions, with Hekselman playing on only the first three tracks and the last two, so that the four tracks which contain Winkelman's ongoing explorations of the trio format – they provide for me most of the album's interest – are grouped together, giving the album a strong symmetry. The four trio numbers are: "Wandering", a lovely treatment of the slow ballad in 3/4; "Isolation", perhaps the most abstract piece on the album, with a pulse which is exceedingly difficult to decipher, even if it is in 4/4, given that this is the most extreme example of Penman's "broken time" approach on the bass; "The Wonky Waltz", the outcome of the pianist's quirky sense of humour but expedited in 5/4 courtesy of his extraordinary virtuosity at the keyboard; and "The Plague", another moody ballad, this time in slow 4/4. Needless to say, the strong time in Winkelman's playing effectively ameliorates those passages where the pulse appears to be ambiguous.

Winkelman, born in Oregon but raised in Melbourne, moved to New York in 2010. I have no idea of how he now rates in the pecking order of brilliant jazz pianists that no doubt are everywhere in New York. But I would be surprised if there is any pianist active in the Big Apple who is more accomplished than Winkelman, nor more interesting in the ways he is redefining the art of the jazz piano trio.

I can vouch for the fact that each time you listen to Winkelman he unerringly takes you to another place where you haven't been before. What more do we ask of jazz improvisation? ■

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