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**Edited by Dick Parker and Jim Torok**

*Coda* is the e-mail supplement to the Twin Cities Jazz Society *JazzNotes*. *Coda*, emailed by the first of each month, contains items too new or lengthy for the printed version of *JazzNotes*, and is available to those who choose *Jazz Notes* by email. Readers are encouraged to submit CD reviews, news items and articles to [torok001@umn.edu](mailto:torok001@umn.edu).

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## **The Story of Bill Evans**

*By Nancy Hite*

Every local fan of New Orleans jazz is familiar with the fine trombone and string bass sounds of musician Bill Evans. I recently had the opportunity to sit down with him and reflect on his decades of performing jazz.

Bill says he first became interested in traditional jazz when he was in grade school. He grew up in St. Paul and became good friends with neighbor Ron Strang, who's now the piano player and leader of the Godfrey Daniel Jazz Band. Ron's house had a player piano, and Bill and Ron would listen to it for hours, often slowing the roll down to memorize the tunes, and then trying to play them on the piano themselves. Some of their early favorites were anything recorded by Jelly Roll Morton or Louis Armstrong. They then began to seek out 78 rpm records and listened to them for hours.

By the time they were 15 and 16 years old, Bill and another friend, Al Kersten, who played trumpet, would drive out to St. Paul parks with a pint of gin and a bottle of sour. Al in the front seat and Bill in the back would practice such standards as "Side by Side," sometimes until late at night. Then St. Paul police patrolling the park would approach the car and chase the boys out, telling them, "That's enough, go home now." During their high school years they would also dress up in suits and ties and use fake IDs to get into local bars and nightclubs to listen to the bands.

Evans formed his first band, the Mississippi Counts, when he was 21, in 1957. With Bill on trombone and Ron on piano, the duo added Dick Ramberg on clarinet, George Metcalf on cornet and Gary Bernard on drums. They admired and emulated the sounds of Doc Evans, Bix Beiderbecke and Louis Armstrong. Practicing regularly in a St. Paul garage, they picked up gigs at private house parties and played for fraternity parties at the U of

M. The group broke up when Metcalf died, and Bill sadly notes today that two of those players have passed on (Bernard as well).



*The Hall Brothers band in 1962, from left: Russ Hall, Stan Hall, Butch Thompson, Charlie DeVore, Doggie Berg, Bill Evans and Mike Polad, who succeeded Ron Strang on banjo, then took up soprano sax and piano.*

In 1959, Evans and Strang heard that the Hall Brothers Jazz Band, then just getting started, needed a bassist and a banjo player. They had met Hall Brothers cornetist Charlie DeVore, probably at Jim McDonald's Dixieland Record Heaven store in Minneapolis, where jazz people gathered to find trad jazz records. The two acquired instruments and taught themselves to play - Strang became the Hall Brothers' first banjo player and Evans, because Russ Hall already held the trombone chair, was the string bass player.

Bill performed with the Hall Brothers until the early '90s, when they closed their Emporium of Jazz in Mendota. During that 30-year span, Bill and two other members of the Hall Brothers band gained national fame as the Butch Thompson Trio. The other two-thirds were Thompson, the Hall Brothers clarinetist, on piano and Red Maddock on drums. Evans said he felt very fortunate to have the opportunity to perform from 1979 to 1986 on the national MPR radio show "Prairie Home Companion" with Garrison Keillor. He traveled a lot, had a wonderful time and was treated very well by the show's directors.

After the Emporium closed, pianist Stan Hall stopped playing regularly because of illness. Russ Hall continues to play occasionally. Evans and DeVore soldiered on, using various sidemen on jobs that came along with some regularity. Bill says he switched back to trombone at that point "because it is easier to carry."



*The Bill Evans New Orleans Jazz Band. From left: Steve Pikal, Henry Blackburn, Mike Polad, Doggie Berg, Bill Evans, Charlie DeVore, Dave McCurdy.*

In 1992, he formed the Bill Evans New Orleans Jazz Band, which performed every weekend at Fabulous Fern's in St. Paul. The following year the band moved about two blocks west on Selby Avenue to Chang O'Hara's. The original regulars on the bandstand with Evans on trombone were Dave Faison, bass; Don (Doggie) Berg, drums; Henry Blackburn, reeds; Charlie DeVore, cornet; Mike Polad, piano, and Dave McCurdy, banjo. For about nine years, Sunday afternoons at Chang's were always packed with enthusiastic fans. Guest musicians often sat in with the group.

Bill has recorded frequently in the Twin Cities and in New Orleans, which he considers his other home. He has spent time in New Orleans every year since the 1960s, and has made many musician friends there. His recordings include stints with the British reed player Brian Carrick (three albums), work with drummer Barry Martyn, and sets with Mike Owen, the noted British trombonist. He recorded with vocalist Topsy Chapman in a church in New Orleans, and another album with Jamie Wight from New Orleans via Ohio. For information on availability of CDs by Evans' own band and his guest performances, call Evans at 651-905-1378.

Like almost all local traditional jazz musicians, Bill Evans had a successful professional career in addition to music. He spent a number of years at West Publishing in St. Paul as a manager, juggling his time to accommodate both careers. He retired early in 1996, and was happy to devote full time to his music.

Fans can see and hear Bill Evans currently performing at:

**The Roseville VFW** with the Godfrey Daniel Jazz Band on the third Tuesday of each month from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. The VFW is on Woodhill Avenue just west of Lexington Avenue, north of County Rd. C.

**Mitch's** on West Seventh Street and Victoria Avenue in St. Paul, with the Bill Evans Jazz Band on the last Tuesday of every month.

**Club Underground** in the Spring Street Tavern, 355 NE. Monroe Street, in northeast Minneapolis, one Sunday a month with the Silver Derby Syncopators.

He also can be seen occasionally in New Orleans with the Ponchartrain Owls. This international group includes Dave McCurdy, Doggie Berg, bassist Pete Clancy from the UK, pianist Marcello Bona from Switzerland and Ron Going from California.

## **Narvin Kimball, Preservation Hall banjoist, dies at 97**

*By Dick Parker*

New Orleans banjoist Narvin Kimball died March 17 at age 97. He was the last of the founding musicians of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band.

“He was really our last connection to a bygone time in the history of New Orleans,” said Ben Jaffe, director of Preservation Hall, in an Associated Press interview. Jaffe’s parents founded the hall in 1961. Kimball made several trips to the Twin Cities to play with the Preservation Hall band in the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s, thanks to the local musicians who owned the Emporium of Jazz in Mendota.



Kimball’s father, Henry Kimball, was a bass player. As a boy, Narvin made a cigar-box ukulele. His parents encouraged his interest in the four-string sound and saw to it that he had banjo lessons. He began playing on Mississippi riverboats in the 1920s with the Fate Marable Band, which also employed Louis Armstrong, and made his first records in 1928, with Papa Celestin’s Original Tuxedo Orchestra on the Columbia label. It was on the boats that he met clarinetist Willie Humphrey

to begin a musical association that lasted, on and off, for about 60 years until Humphrey's death in 1996.

In the 1930s Kimball switched to string bass. His own band, Narvin Kimball's Gentlemen of Jazz, played in the New Orleans area for about 40 years, and he played bass with swing bands from 1935 to 1960. But like many musicians, he had a "day job" -- he worked as a mail carrier for 37 years. In 1960 he switched back to banjo, and his mailman rounds put him in contact with the new Preservation Hall. He joined the original band as its youngest member -- at age 57 -- when it came together officially in 1966.

The left-handed Kimball's banjo style was distinctive and a little more elaborate than that of most players. He varied chord sounds to lead into the changes, supporting the melody the way a "walking" bass line does. As a soloist he was a virtuoso, and he also supplied vocals that were warmly received by audiences. He was especially known for his rendition of "Georgia On My Mind."

His last performance with the Preservation Hall band was in 1999, at age 90, on a PBS television special. Not long afterward, Jaffe said, he suffered a series of strokes that ended his banjo playing.

Kimball died at his daughter's home in Charleston, S.C., where he had been staying since Hurricane Katrina. He was buried in New Orleans on March 23. He is survived by his wife, Lillian; two daughters, four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

*Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.*

## **Hundreds of Jazz Radio Stations Now Available to You**

*By Jim Torok*



It is a problem, finding good jazz to listen to on ordinary radio. Most radio stations play junk, and, to make matters worse, spew obnoxious commercials frequently. They're sometimes even worse than the music. There is, thankfully, a modern alternative way to listen to jazz programs in your home or at work without putting up with commercials or inferior music.

There are literally hundreds of stations that you can access that play only jazz. No matter which kind of jazz you like, there are many stations available to you on the Internet that play the kind of jazz you like. Many of them are available 24 hours per day. On-line streaming is available to anyone with access to the Internet. The music is free on most of the Internet stations. One can choose a station, and then, while the music is playing, open another window containing the work one wishes to do on the computer. One can then do word processing, spreadsheets, or whatever, while listening to the type of music one loves. Alternatively, one can feed the signal to the home stereo system.

**What does one need to play these stations?** You need a computer equipped with speakers and an Internet connection. You also need one or more programs called Media Players. There are five that are most common:

**Real Player** (PC/Mac)

<http://www.real.com>

**Windows Media Player** (PC recommended)

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/default.msp>

**WinAmp** (PC/Mac)

<http://www.winamp.com>

**iTunes** (PC/Mac)

<http://www.apple.com/itunes>

**QuickTime** (Mac recommended)

<http://www.apple.com/itunes>

The top three are most commonly used. They are easily downloaded from the Web and are either free or at a small cost.

**How does one find jazz stations on the Internet?** You can do a search using as keywords, jazz, on-line streaming, Internet radio. Perhaps the easiest way to get started, however is to go to <http://www.shoutcast.com/> (or simply do a search on shoutcast). This will give you 638 pages of stations with 20 stations per page. Most of those stations are not jazz stations, however. The next step is to choose a genre. At present, that will be 11 pages of 20 jazz stations per page. The name of the piece being played and the artist playing it is displayed on the computer screen. Each station lists the type of jazz that they play, and the artist currently being played. One simply chooses the station one wants to hear, clicks with the mouse, and the music begins.

The list includes stations from all around the world. One might listen to a station in Poland playing Duke Ellington, or listen to a station in France, or Hungary, or England or Australia. While each station is different, there is generally a complete absence of commercials or even announcements.

**Another set of stations** is found by using the keyword Live 365. Again, one has to choose a genre. This produces a list of 343 jazz stations.

There is amazing variety available. For example, there is jazz banjo radio (playing music of the four string banjo), trad.jazz radio playing traditional jazz 24 hours per day. There is hard bop, cool jazz, straight ahead jazz, klezmer, guitar jazz, trumpet jazz, gypsy jazz, big band swing, etc. In short, no matter what sort of jazz you prefer, it is now available whenever you want. Speaking personally, it is wonderful to hear Bix Biederbecke, Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet, Adrian Rollini, Eddie Lang, Kid Ory and the other jazz greats coming over the Internet radio.

# EVENTS

## April Jazz Dates at the Club Underground

*By Peggy Dunnette*

Here is our April line-up for Club Underground (under the Spring Street Tavern in Northeast Minneapolis.). All shows are Sundays from 4 to 7:30. Service with a smile from our full menu and bar. \$5 cover (goes to the musicians).

**April 2** The Brass Messengers. This is a rare opportunity to see this full ensemble.

**April 9** The Pig's Eye Jass Band. Jim Torok, Nancy Hite and the crew of true believers.

**April 16** Easter (No show.)

**April 23** The Pig's Eye Jass Band returns, pig's eye and all!

**April 30** The Silver Derby Syncopators. Chuck DeVore (tenor sax), Charlie DeVore (cornet), Dave Wilkening (guitar) and Bill Evans (bass).

We're located at 355 NE. Monroe St, which is two blocks south of Broadway and a few blocks west of Central, on the corner of Spring and Monroe.

Our aim is to offer traditional jazz every Sunday. Our food is great and very reasonably priced. Our parking is vast and FREE! Call for further details: 612 627 9123.

## Mouldy Figs Take Geoff Bull By the Horns April 30

Australian trumpeter Geoff Bull, regarded internationally as a master of the New Orleans style, is scheduled to spend a Sunday afternoon with the Mouldy Figs at the Mainstreet Bar & Grill in Hopkins on April 30. Bull has performed in the Twin Cities during U.S. visits since the Emporium of Jazz days, collaborating on the bandstand with Bill Evans and his sidemen. (This writer recalls playing banjo behind Bull and Evans at Fabulous Fern's in 1992.)

Bull formed his Olympia Jazz Band in the early 1960s. "Geoff Bull's Olympia Jazz Band is one of the glories of Australian jazz and it's the hottest band in the land," said Dick Hughes, a fellow Australian musician, quoted on the Web at <http://www.shsobu.org.au/bulletin/articles0301.htm> . For more Figs info: <http://www.mouldyfigs.com> .



All Figs Sunday performances are from 4 to 7 p.m. with no cover charge.

*-- Dick Parker*

**Figs dates in April** (no show on Easter Sunday, the 16<sup>th</sup>):

**2 and 30** – Mainstreet Bar & Grill, 814 Mainstreet, Hopkins; 952-938-2400.

**9 and 23** – Big City Tavern, 2801 North Snelling, Roseville. 651-287-9100.

## **Lila Ammons to appear at Lula's Coffee and Jazz**

Vocalist Lila Ammons, granddaughter of the great boogie-woogie pianist Albert Ammons, will perform at Lula's Coffee and Jazz from 7:30 to 9 p.m. on April 7, April 14, April 21 and April 28. Lula's is at 3400 Nicollet Av., Mpls. – 612-221-6284.

## **U of M, Edina High to Play Free Jazz Concert**

The University of Minnesota Jazz Ensemble and Edina High School Jazz Band will perform together in a free joint concert on Monday, April 17, 6 p.m. at Edinborough Park Amphitheater, 7700 York Av. S., Edina.

The concert will feature sets by Edina High School Jazz Ensemble I, directed by Doug Haining and Bill Webb; Edina High School's Jazz II director and by Paul Kile, and the U of M Jazz Ensemble I directed by Dean Sorenson. The concert will close with a tune or two with both Edina's Jazz I and the University of Minnesota Jazz I together.

### **CD Review:**

## **Paula Lammers: Wrap Yourself in "A Blanket of Blue"**

*By Andrea Canter*

Twin Cities vocalist Paula Lammers has spent five years aboard the Minnesota Zephyr in Stillwater, singing standards, growing an audience, and wondering where her musical journey would take her. With the recent release of *A Blanket of Blue* (Nightingale Jazz), the destination seems clearly focused on the presentation of great songs reflecting a personal "longing for connection," sung with clear conviction and exemplary musicianship.

Attracted to the songs she heard on her parents' records as child, Paula found music to be her connection to school and community, ultimately majoring in music at Gustavus Adolphus College and earning a master's in vocal performance (opera) at the University of Minnesota. After concentrating on teaching at the high school and college level, Paula found herself pulled back into performing as part of the Zephyr Cabaret.

For her CD debut, Paula organized a playlist that ranges from standards such as "I Thought About You" and "Honeysuckle Rose" to Brazilian classics ("Gentle Rain," "Meditation") to the seldom heard "Moon and I" and her own composition, "Goodbye...Again." But she says it was "dumb luck" that she was able to merge her talents with some of the best instrumentalists of the Twin Cities.

Working with audio producer Darren Rust, Paula was connected to bassist/arranger/producer Billy Peterson, and soon she had a dream team to support her



music—keyboardist Peter Schimke, guitarist Clay Moore, sax/harmonica veteran Gary Berg, drummer Kenny Horst.

Lammer's easy-to-listen-to soprano has a warm tone, crisp articulation, true pitch, and not a hint of shrill in her top notes. If any comparison is valid, perhaps it's with Jane Monheit, less theatrical but in the same vein of gentle persuasion, warmly charming, lighting the tracks less with fire and more with glowing embers. The sound quality from Winterland Studios (engineered by Brian Johnson and Darren Rust, mixed by Rust), is clean, every instrument so well articulated with the intimacy of live performance that at times I started to applaud a solo.

Lammers notes that "Goodbye....Again," her one original composition, "is the kind of piece that requires a real connection of mood and feeling between the pianist and the singer to work, and to do it justice, I felt it had to be recorded... It is a metaphor in many ways for the process of letting go, of accepting how things are and being okay with the reality of one's life at any given moment." Finalizing the piece for the recording was in part due to the arrangements by Peter Schimke and Peterson's mother, pianist/composer Jeanne Arland Peterson. The most interesting track on the recording, it makes one hope that Paula will focus more on songwriting for the next go-round.

*Paula Lammers can be heard aboard the Minnesota Zephyr in Stillwater*  
([www.minnesotazephyr.com](http://www.minnesotazephyr.com)).

"A Blanket of Blue" is available from CD Baby ([www.cdbaby.com](http://www.cdbaby.com)) or from the artist's website at [www.paulalammers.com](http://www.paulalammers.com).

*(This review condensed and reprinted with permission from [www.jazzpolice.com](http://www.jazzpolice.com))*

## **Jazz Music Education**

*Vicci Johnson, in an earlier article for Coda, said that playing jazz was a huge motivator for her students. Students enjoyed it and consequently practiced more. Parents also became more motivated. In this article she discusses the problem many other schools have: The instruments the students play do not fit the commercial arrangements. Her solution requires a lot of work, and it's an interesting glimpse inside the mind of a music educator.*

### **Alternative Instrumentation for Junior High Jazz Bands**

*By Vicci Johnson, Murray Junior High School, St. Paul*

Instructors in urban school music programs encounter a disadvantage not found in their suburban counterparts. I refer to the lack of full instrumentation. In 25 years of teaching in St. Paul Public Schools, I have never entered my band room with the luxury of balanced instrumentation. Nevertheless, teachers should know that our "digital age" offers opportunity for meeting this special challenge.

An instructor's creative reassignment of parts, in combination with opportunistic use of today's technology, can compensate for missing instruments. Computer programs such as

Finale, Sibelius and Encore help teachers and their students produce “good sound” by creating jazz band arrangements for non-traditional instrumentation.

Murray Junior High School’s 2005-06 8th grade jazz band includes one tuba, one bass clarinet, one trombone, four trumpets, five flutes, six alto saxophones, two tenor saxophones, one baritone saxophone, and three percussionists. Normally, we could not effectively play the three pieces assigned for our spring concert. These include two selections with written solos: *Embraceable You* (by George and Ira Gershwin, arranged by Mike Lewis) and *Sing, Sing, Sing* (by Louis Prima, arranged by Victor Lopez). Also assigned is *King of the Timbales*, a tribute to Tito Puente (arranged by Victor Lopez). All are from the Warner Brothers Jazz Series books. The last is a formidable challenge to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and their teacher because of the Afro-Cuban rhythms (master class with Phil Hey) and improvised solos.

For starters, the Murray jazz band is lacking three trombones. To attain balance, I keep the most independent sax readers on alto one and two and put the extra four altos on trombone parts two, three, and four. If the first trombone is a strong independent reader, consider using the next-strongest reader to double a weak reader on a lower part. With easier arrangements the trombone parts have the same rhythm, so even with different voicing the section can be solid.

The tuba takes the electric bass part (rhythm), and the bass clarinet can strengthen (double) any weak lower part as needed.

Always amplify the flute section, and concentrate on getting good intonation in the upper register when playing in unison. Another must is after-school flute sectional practice with 30 minutes of playing long, unison notes. I find that short and long solos are most satisfying to jazz flute students.

Both *Embraceable You* and *Sing* include flute parts. For *King of the Timbales*, we added flute parts to double trumpets one and two, which are at and above high C. A week before the performance, I may lower the first and second trumpet parts to the third and fourth parts, leaving the flutes to take the high notes. Naturally, all this takes great time and effort beyond a traditional teaching day!

It is natural for professional musicians-at-large and suburban educators to wonder why urban public school teachers don't simply recruit for instrumental balance. To do so would certainly allow more time to concentrate on the musicianship of the individual student. The simple answer is that each urban elementary school would need to offer a suburban-style full sequential music program. Such programs are past tense, since continuing deep budget cuts for urban public schools prevent implementation of such an ideal.

For now, as a secondary band director lucky to work in an urban school that offers music education, I deal with “balance” in the ways described above. I have necessarily become a perennial student of how to improve my teaching skills, given the opportunities and challenges I face. Along the way, I have also become a marketing strategist for my program.