



IN THE MOOD

The Olney Big Band
NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2006

Volume 1, Number 2

Dear Members:

Welcome to the second edition of The Olney Big Band Newsletter. Since we're always in the mood to play great big band music, we've changed the name of our newsletter to reflect our enthusiasm about this wonderful American form of expression. We will continue to strive toward providing space where we can share ideas and information that will enhance the experience of being a member of The Olney Big Band.



Special Dates:

Gigs:

Oct 21, 26,
28, 29
Nov 4, 12

Rehearsals:

Nov 6, 20
Dec 4, 18

*See inside for full
schedule details*

Letter to the Editor

OUR BLESSINGS OF JAZZ

The members of the Olney Big Band are so lucky. We live in the hub of the universe, which has become the world center for jazz and swing music! Our own Band is fast becoming one of the local leaders in this field. We are members of the Potomac River Jazz Club. We have applied for a membership in the Big Band Society. From now on, the Washington Post will announce all of our gigs to the public. Congratulations!

Washington is also home base for the military jazz bands of fame and reknown.

For example, the US Army Band, known as "Pershing's Own," is headquartered in Brucker's Hall at Fort McNair, Virginia. It publishes a quarterly calendar of musical events to be performed by its many ensembles. Its principal annual event is "The Holiday Festival", scheduled at the DAR Constitution Hall at 8:00 pm on Friday, December 8; at 3:00 pm and 8:00 pm on Saturday, December 9; and at 3 p.m. on Sunday, December 10.

All Festival performances will feature a special musical artist, Clint Homes, the award-winning singing sensation straight from Las Vegas. His powerful voice and magnetic stage presence are said to embrace the upbeat side of life.

Jennifer Maly is our new friend at the Army Band. She has provided us with the latest calendar of events and invites us to republish it for the benefit of the OBB. She reports that tickets will be required for all Festival performances but has reserved 20 free tickets for us to attend the Saturday, 3:00 pm concert. We will receive these tickets in early November. So, make your plans now.

Within the Army Band is the Army Blues Jazz Ensemble, with vocalist Christal Rheams. Its Director is Charles H. Vollherbst. The Ensemble has five saxes, four trombones, five trumpets, and four rhythm stylists.

The Ensemble is scheduled to perform a community concert on Thursday evening, November 16, at 7:30 pm. in Brucker Hall, Fort Myer, Virginia. The event is free and no tickets are required. This will be preceded by a fall recital, called "Music of Louisiana' Dixieland Jazz." When? Tuesday evening, November 7, at 7:30 p.m. in Brucker Hall. Go for it!



The Olney Big Band Board News

Maryland has approved our tax exempt status and we will now plan to apply for state sales tax and personal property tax exemptions.

Octogenarian Jazz

Jazz music lives forever. We have proof of this fact in The Olney Big Band. Our Music Director, Rip Rice, was born in New York City on April 19th, 1924, five days before Henry Mancini, also born in NYC, and a future idol of Rip's. This makes him 82 years of age. Our fourth chair trumpeter, Bob Redding, is only five months from age 88. One of our guest trombonists, Si Greene, is 91. During his long musical life, he traveled abroad with Irving Berlin. He was also first chair trombonist in Jack Teagarden's famous Jazz Band.

Washington enjoys the monthly gathering of the Jazz Old Timers for lunch on the last Tuesday of each month. Besides pizza and beer, they share with each other the highlights of their local musical careers. These 80-90 year-olds meet at the Stained Glass Pub, 12510 Layhill Road, Silver Spring, Maryland. (301-933-4444). Some of us attend and we are always invited.

One of our favorites is 86-year-old Mervin Conn, the leading strolling accordionist in Washington history. Mervin's services included playing for Presidents Harry Truman, Richard Nixon, and Lyndon Johnson. On October 10, he and Bob Redding entertained the Bethesda Woman's Club with a dozen historic tunes, beginning with Irving Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

Jazz At The Strathmore

A news announcement for jazz lovers--a fine Christmas present.

The touring band from New Orleans' famous Preservation Hall celebrates Mardi Gras soon at the elegant new Music Center at Strathmore in North Bethesda. Jazz singer Banu Gibson will accompany the Band as a featured performer. The concert is scheduled on Thursday, February 7, 2007. For information about the Band visit, contact www.preservationhall.com. Tickets will be available for \$21, \$43, \$58, \$68, and \$80. Purchase online or by mail. Additional information is available by calling 1-877-276-1444.

Legends Of Jazz

By Roger Aldridge

The development of jazz has been a product of many contributors over the past 100+ years. However, some musicians have been such powerful influences upon the music that they are recognized as true innovators and musical giants. It can safely be said -- as commonly accepted among Jazz historians -- that the greatest pillar of jazz was Louis Armstrong, who will forever be remembered as a beloved entertainer who represented America and Jazz to the world. However, during a 10 year period from the late 1920s to late 30s Louis Armstrong's brilliant trumpet playing was like a fiery comet that brought many important innovations to jazz -- which be-

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Songwriters' Hall of Fame

Hoagland "Hoagy"
Howard Carmichael
was born in
Bloomington, Indiana
on November
22, 1899.

He was one of the most
inventive of the great
American songwriters.
Much of his best work
reflects his love of the
jazz of the 1920s.

Songs included
"Washboard Blues"
(1925); "Star Dust"
(1928); "Georgia On
My Mind" (1930); "Up
A Lazy River" (1931);
"Lazybones" (1931);
"Judy" (1934); "The
Nearness Of You"
(1937); "Heart and
Soul" (1938); "Blue
Orchids" (1939);
"Skylark" (1941);
"Baltimore Oriole"
(1942); "Memphis
In June" (1945); and
Academy Award winner
"In The Cool Cool Cool
of the Evening" (1951).

In 1937 he began a
secondary career as
an actor. He appeared
in *Topper*, *To Have and
Have Not*, *The Best
Years of Our Lives*,
Canyon Passage, and
*Young Man With a
Horn*. He also became
a regular on the
television western
series, *Laramie*.

Player Spotlight

When people come to an Olney Big Band concert, they see a bunch of middle to older aged adults playing old jazz favorites. As their eyes glance the band to see the makers of the melody, something catches their eye. They see somebody playing trombone in the second row who looks as if he has never fully matured and his body had stopped changing in high school. His face does not show the signs of constant facial hair growth. His hair is still all a uniform brown and his skin shows no signs of aging. Who is this character? They may wonder. What is his secret for looking so youthful? Maybe he will tell me his hair coloring secrets.

Eventually they find out that I actually am a sixteen year old high school student by the name of Alexander Leishman. They wonder why a teenager is playing with a group of musicians, some of whom are 70 years and even older. Well, here I am to tell them:

I started my music education at Forest Knolls Elementary School. In 4th grade, I began playing the Euphonium (like a smaller tuba). I liked the instrument and enjoyed playing in the school band. The summer before my 8th grade year, my family and I moved to our current house near Ashton. I then attended Farquhar Middle School before moving on to Blake High School. As a freshman at Blake, I was very involved in the music program. In fact, before my freshman year even started, I was learning how to march at band camp. This year, as a junior, I am one of the three field commanders of the marching band. The school also has a jazz ensemble, which I always aspired to be in. I found out that if I ever wanted to be a member of the jazz ensemble, I would have to learn to play the trombone. I rented a trombone and started lessons and it was only a matter of time until I had become proficient at the instrument. It was not hard for me to learn because a trombone is very similar to a euphonium. Learning to play the trombone landed me a spot in the All County Honors band and Eubie Blake Jazz Ensemble.

I started playing in the Olney Big Band my sophomore year when Mr. Dave Schumer told me that they needed a trombone player. At first, I had a bit of trouble sight-reading the charts,

but as time went on, I became a better and better jazz musician. One thing that makes my experience in the band unique is that I am at least a decade younger than every other musician. Many people may see this as a bit odd, but I think that it is a great experience, being able to learn from older musicians. The musicians in the band are not only talented, but they are kind and accepting as well. They tell me about their jobs, giving me knowledge of the working world, which will probably help me later in life. If they did not want a kid around, I would have been out of the band a while ago. One very important person in the band is Mr. Rice. He welcomed me into the band and has been a great friend ever since. He has supported me in my endeavors and encouraged me in many ways. So, basically the Olney Big Band is a great band with great people and I feel privileged to be a member of the group.

Alexander Leishman

Alexander at the 2006 Mother's Day Brunch.



Alexander and a very important person, bridging the generation gap through music of the 30s, 40s and beyond.

Legends of Jazz - - continued from p. 2

came fundamental aspects of how every jazz musician phrases, swings, and solos. Armstrong's influence extends to singers as well in how they have been deeply influenced by his phrasing. The importance of Louis Armstrong in these respects cannot be overstated. In addition, Armstrong was a "sound innovator" in that generations of trumpet players have a trumpet sound that is rooted in Louis Armstrong. Some of Armstrong's best work was on his Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings: West End Blues, Struttin' With Some Barbecue, Heebie Jeebies, Cornet Chop Suey, and many more. Louis Armstrong went on to star status in films (including Pennies From Heaven, Cabin In The Sky, High Society, and Hello Dolly), TV, popular recordings, and All-Stars jazz tours. One of the greatest tributes to Louis Armstrong was expressed by the composer-arranger Gil Evans, an expert on Louis Armstrong. Evans described how in every Louis Armstrong recording there is a "moment of magic". That there surely is!

The Olney Big Band

The OBB, is an 18 piece orchestra with two vocalists that plays music from a time when dance bands enjoyed enormous popularity. A time of Tea Dances and Lawn Parties--a time of wonderful uplifting music. The band was initially formed in 2002 as an ensemble of the Olney Community Band and was incorporated in Maryland in 2006 as the Olney Jazz Troupe, Inc. (t/a The Olney Big Band) It is recognized by the IRS and the State of Maryland as an independent non-profit organization. The band supports the performance of primarily American big band dance and swing music; music of toe-tapping rhythms and memorable melodies of the "Jazz Age" with vocals, both melodic and novelty. The band's objective is to play music reminiscent of Miller, Dorsey, Basie, Kenton, Ellington, and the like. Vocalists entertain audiences by crooning, bouncing, and jumping the words to many of the classic numbers. And, the band provides the opportunity for experienced musicians to participate in a well organized music ensemble, supported by an ever-growing library of swing and traditional dance music. Players are all volunteers and many performances are free to our audiences, but sponsors usually charge a nominal fee for admission in order to raise funds for supporting charities. Revenues to support the band are provided via donations, honoraria, grants and fees from our guests and sponsors. The range of venues we play includes civic and charitable events and dances, retirement communities, assisted living and nursing homes, and private affairs.

The Sunday Jazz Brunch

The Olney Big Band performs the second Sunday of each month at the Country Breakfast and Brunch sponsored by B.J. Pumpnickel's Restaurant of Olney, Maryland. The brunch is held at the Ballroom at Sandy Spring in the firehouse on Brooke Road in Sandy Spring, MD and raises funds for the Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department. The brunch begins at 9:00 A.M. and runs until 1:00 P.M. The Band plays from 10:00 until 12:30. Dancers are welcome and encouraged. Free swing dance instruction is often provided during the band's break.

The Big Band Era

By Jeff Parker

The Big Band Era is generally regarded as having occurred between the years 1935 and 1945. It was the only time in history that the popularity of jazz music eclipsed all other forms of music in the U.S. Rightly or wrongly, the appearance of Benny Goodman and his big band at the Palomar in Los Angeles in August of 1935 is often referred to as the official start of the swing era. While Benny Goodman undoubtedly had a great big band, it should be clear by now that his may not have been the "best" or even most original big band playing hot jazz music at the time.

With the headlines talking about the success of the Benny Goodman big band in California, magazines like Down Beat and Metronome began to print more articles about the music. John Hammond, while known to most for his savvy in discovering artists like Count Basie and Billie Holiday, was writing about big bands in Down Beat as early as 1935. By 1936, articles about the Benny Goodman big band filled its issues. Jazz in the form of big band swing was now beginning to sweep the nation.

Martin Block and the Make Believe Ballroom

Announcer Martin Block was the first radio disc jockey to become a star in his own right.

Born in Los Angeles, Block began his career reading commercials on a station in Tijuana, Mexico. He later returned to Los Angeles and became a junior assistant at KFWB, where a disc jockey named Al Jarvis hosted a popular local show called Make Believe Ballroom.

Late in 1934, Block was hired by WNEW/New York, where he played music while the station awaited developments in the trial of accused kidnapper Bruno Richard Hauptmann. Block created the illusion that he was broadcasting from a ballroom with the nation's top dance bands performing live. Block appropriated the name Make Believe Ballroom and the show was an instant hit.

Make Believe Ballroom became so popular that when WNEW moved to a new studio on Fifth Avenue, they constructed a simulated ballroom—complete with chandelier and black linoleum—for Block's broadcasts.



New York - Martin Block encourages musicians (from L to R;) Coleman Hawkins, Jack Jenney, Tommy Dorsey, Gene Krupa, Harry James, Bunny Berigan and Count Basie during a live broadcast of The Make Believe Ballroom.

- courtesy Radio Hall of Fame

Swinging At The Savoy

Whitey's Lindy Hoppers was a Swing dance troupe employed by one Herbert White, who exploited for financial gain the dance created at the Savoy in the late 20s known as the Lindy Hop. He also exploited the swing dancers he employed and exerted his control and dominance over his troupe (and anyone else in Harlem who tried to perform the dance for money) for as long as he could.

In her book "Swingin' At The Savoy; The Memoir Of A Jazz Dancer" Norma Miller recalls a rift between Whitey and drummer Chick Webb at the time of this famous big band music Battle of the Bands. The rift occurred when a conversation between dancers discussing the incoming Basie band was miscommunicated to Webb. Quoting from her book, Temple University Press; Copyright 1996;

"When he heard it, it sounded like the kids were saying he didn't have it anymore, and that the sound the Basie band was bringing would run him off the bandstand. Of course when Chick heard this he responded in typical Chick Webb fashion

"I don't give a good Goddam what those raggedy Lindy Hoppers think or say. Who needs 'em? As far as I'm concerned they can all go to Hell. And their Mammies too."

"The surprise came later that night. As we entered the ballroom, Whitey met us and told us when Chick got on the bandstand, all dancers were to leave the floor."

Whitey's Lindy Hoppers may have been a fairly small group of swing dancers compared to the masses (especially on this night) at the Savoy. However, when one corner of the room housing some of the most experienced, colorful, and acrobatic Lindy Hoppers kept taking their seats when the Chick Webb big band began playing; writers sent to cover this event, unaware of the "behind the scenes" rift, would have undoubtedly taken note. Understandable how the Basie big band would have been perceived as a favorite of the Swing dancers at the Savoy Ballroom on this night.

Webb patched things up with Whitey soon thereafter and Whitey's Lindy Hoppers were again soon performing to the sounds of the swinging Chick Webb big band.



A promotional photo of Whitey's Lindy Hoppers at the Savoy.

- excerpts provided by www.swingmusic.net

Key Personnel

Music Director: Rip G. Rice
Asst. Music Director: Roger Aldridge
Business Manager: David B. Schumer

Officers

Rip G. Rice, PhD President
Brad Bawek, VP for Sound Equipment
Robert Redding, VP for Public Relations
David B. Schumer, Secretary/Treasurer

Board of Directors

Rip G. Rice, Chairman
Brad Bawek
Merle Biggin
Thomas Harwick
Robert Redding
David B. Schumer
Richard Sonnenschein



**THE OLNEY
BIG BAND**

IN THE MOOD
Editor: Brad Bawek
Contributing Editor: Bob Redding
Send newsletter submissions to: bbawek@comcast.net

OBB Concert Schedule

Saturday, Oct. 21 -- 7:30-8:30 pm
Pumpkin Patch Festival Concert,
Faith United Methodist Church,
Rockville.

Thursday, Oct. 26 -- 7-9 pm -- Harvest
Moon Ball, Rockville Senior Center
in conjunction with the Gaithersburg
Senior Center.

Saturday, Oct. 28 -- 7-10 pm - **
Leisure World Ballroom Dance Club.

Sunday, Oct. 29 -- Tea Dance at the
Ballroom* -- 2-5 pm -- with Super
Smorgasbord.

Saturday, Nov. 4 -- 4-5 pm - Tea
Dance at the Miller Center, Friends
House, Sandy Spring

Sunday, Nov. 12 -- brunch at the
Ballroom* -- we play 10-11 am and
11:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Sunday, Dec. 10 -- brunch at the
Ballroom* -- we play 10-11 am and
11:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Our Band Calendar is available at:
<http://freecal.brownbearsw.com/TOBB>

REHEARSALS

Mondays
Nov 6, 20 -- full band
Dec 4, 18 -- full band

* Ballroom at Sandy Spring:
<http://www.ballroomatsandyspring.com/index.html>

** Closed to Public

For Band Information Contact

Rip Rice - Director:
301-774-9133
RGRice4ozone@aol.com

For Booking Information Contact

Dave Schumer - Manager:
202-498-8973
olneyjazz@hotmail.com