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September, 2019

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The ATJS Jazz Messenger is circulated mostly by e-mail, and is published as we have an important message or gather enough material to assemble a new issue. We are on the verge of the 2019-20 season, as good an occasion as any to crank out a new issue.

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## President's Message



The 2018-19 ATJS season turned out to be a substantial success. The music went very well, and that is the whole idea. Our thanks to Silver Creek Jazz Band, the Mission City Hot Rhythm Cats, Ron Fink and the Rowdies, the 36 jammers at the Jam Session, Hal Smith and On the Levee Jazz Band, the Dirty River Dixie band, the Jim Cullum Jazz Band, Rock Step Relevators and La Grosse Tete for offering the excellence in traditional jazz that attracts new listeners and keeps our regular fans coming back for more.

The metric the ATJS Board looks at most closely is concert attendance. Calendar year 2019 began with four consecutive concerts with over 200 persons in attendance. This included a new ATJS record at Cap City of 280 attendees at the Annual ATJS Jam Session. The 36 players at this year's Jam were also a record. We got lucky with the weather this winter. The January concert featured an out-of-town band heavily dependent on good flying weather. We got that plus favorable weather for the concert. The February concert also had good weather, leading to a record turnout.

Last season's schedule included two bands that once upon a time would have merited special concerts requiring ticket sales for all. The two bands, On the Levee and Jim Cullum, were instead offered as regular concerts. Guest admissions help cover the cost of these concerts, but we are heavily indebted to our contributors for helping to close the gap. Please be assured that donations to the Society are helping to bring the best traditional jazz your Program Committee can assemble.

The Board is occasionally asked if it plans to stage a jazz festival in the near future. Contingency plans for a one room, three-day festival have been on hand and periodically revised for some years. The balking point is always cost. A festival would need some notable out-of-town bands or solo artists, and these are expensive. The festival would require a venue for four sessions—Friday night, Saturday afternoon, Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. That too entails a considerable expense. Festivals require a lot of work and a lot of staffing.

There is also a lot of risk. Will our regular patrons buy festival badges in large numbers? We would be able to offer a member discount, but frankly we have gotten some push-back on special concerts. Will we be able to attract a large number of additional patrons? These days many more festivals are shutting down than starting up. The last time the Society attempted a festival it resulted in a large financial loss.

The alternate course has been to offer festival-quality jazz at the Society's monthly concerts. Most of our bands either appear at jazz festivals or should be invited because of their musical excellence. The result is that our members get to enjoy the equivalent of a festival every year, only spread across our concert schedule.

Dave Stoddard

## Thanks to our Poster Hosts!

Every month, the Society puts up posters for its concerts. Here are our current poster venues.

### Cedar Park Public Library

Music and Arts  
2541 South I-35  
Round Rock, TX

### Leander Public Library

Premier Music Academy  
1400 E. Old Settlers Blvd.  
Round Rock, TX

### Round Rock Public Library

Half-Price Books  
1601 South I-35  
Round Rock, TX  
(and occasionally in other stores)

### Strait Music Company North

13945 Research Boulevard  
Austin, TX

### Strait Music Company South

2428 W. Ben White Blvd.  
Austin, TX

### Sam Bass Music

801 Brandi Lane  
Round Rock, TX

### Capital Music Center

6101 North Burnet Road  
Austin, TX

### Austin's Musical Exchange

6015 Burnet Road  
Austin, TX

### Westbank String Shop

6301 Manchaca Road  
Austin, TX

Atria at the Arboretum, 9306 Great Hills Trail, Austin, TX

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### Dave Stoddard's Thoughts on Early Jazz: New Orleans to Chicago

Jazz is generally accepted to have begun in New Orleans, a large southern port city with many international influences including French and Spanish. Prior to the imposition of Jim Crow laws there was a stratification of the African-American population, with the mixed race Creoles occupying a somewhat higher position than the blacks. This was reflected in their respective musics. The Creoles tended toward more genteel and socially accepted dance music, while the blacks tended more toward street music for parades and other social functions.

Ferdinand LaMenthe, better known as Jelly Roll Morton, is today considered the first true composer of jazz. His musical education gave him classical piano technique and exposure to classical and semi-classical music. When the stratification crumbled under the repression of Jim Crow, blacks and Creoles were thrown into the same lot. While this was a social and economic disaster for the Creoles, mixing of the two groups was of benefit to both in a musical sense, as the blacks were exposed to reading music and the more advanced instrumental techniques of the Creoles, while the Creoles were somewhat forcibly acquainted with some very talented if unschooled black musicians.

Jazz grew out of a collection of musical styles. Some of the rhythmic aspects were drawn from African drumming, brought to the New World by African slaves and maintained as a musical tradition. Other styles included American band music (the most popular musical form of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century), dance music of the day, blues, gospel hymns and ragtime. Ragtime was the first popular music form to emphasize syncopation. Ragtime is a more formal music than jazz, and is best played as written. Early jazz has a ragtime feel to it, but expanded from ragtime's written, formal aspects to emphasize a looser, more swinging beat and improvisation by the instruments.

It should be pointed out that improvisation as a form was nothing new in the 1890s. J.S. Bach and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart were both improvisers on a grand scale in the traditions of Baroque and Classical music. However, entire ensembles improvising outside the confines of written music were unusual. I suspect that this may have begun when musicians attempted to play melodies and harmonies in a loose style, and in failing to stay within the confines of the written music found that what they were making up sounded more interesting.

New Orleans was a very musical city during this period, with many ensembles performing for a variety of functions including street playing. Many of the early jazz tunes started as melodies which were simply known to the musicians through listening and playing. Later, they were written down and given titles, or sometimes new titles. Some of these tunes became standards and are still played today.

The first jazz band came to public attention in 1895, and was led by a black trumpeter known as Buddy Bolden. Bolden was the first of four consensus kings of New Orleans jazz trumpet. He was followed by Freddie Keppard, Joe "King" Oliver and Louis Armstrong. By the time that Armstrong left New Orleans for Chicago in 1923, jazz was on the decline in New Orleans, and it lost its position as the first city in jazz. Part of the reason for this was that one of the early hotbeds of jazz in the city was a legal red-light or prostitution district known as Storyville. Brothels, clubs and dance halls in Storyville employed many of the best early jazz players.

Storyville was closed in 1917 by the Secretary of the Navy after the United States entered World War I. This caused a decline in the fortunes of New Orleans Jazz, aided and abetted by rising interest in jazz and consequent opportunities elsewhere in the United States. New Orleans never ceased to be musical, but many of the players who were left behind by the exodus of top players were semi-professional musicians who continued to play parades and dances, much as they had prior to jazz becoming a national music.

Jazz began as a black music, but its catchy rhythms attracted players of all races. White Orleanians found jazz much to their liking, and the history of white New Orleans Jazz is almost as old as that of the original jazz started by blacks. Most early jazz players were from poor or modest economic backgrounds. White and black Orleanians were often jammed into the same tenement districts segregated by economic stratum as much as race. The white players were therefore in a unique position to hear the black popular music and incorporate it into their own musical forms.

World War I triggered the first of two great migrations of African-Americans from the American South to northern cities. World War I was an industrial war, and created employment opportunities in plants manufacturing weapons and other war materials. Among other things, this ensured a ready audience for black jazz bands in northern cities. The early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the rise of two important arms of what we now call mass media. The first was the phonograph, and the second was commercial radio. The first record player was invented by Thomas Edison in 1877. Early players used wax cylinders. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century these were superseded by disc records developed by inventor Emile Berliner. By the Teens the 78 rpm record had taken hold of the phonograph market, and cylinders gradually died out.

Early record companies would record almost anything, and several approached top bandleaders and asked them to record. One of these was a black Chicago band led by Orleanian Freddie Keppard. He declined to be recorded, reportedly because he feared other musicians would imitate him and steal his style. The first commercially-released jazz recordings were made in New York in 1917 by a white New Orleans group, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. The ODJB was already a major hit in New York, and their early records sold in unprecedented numbers. King Oliver, Keppard's main competitor among Chicago black bands, made some successful recordings with the Creole Jazz Band, and other black artists such as Jelly Roll Morton soon followed suit.

Commercial AM radio got started in the very early 1920s. Station KDKA broadcast the results of the 1920 presidential election. Many early radio stations were very powerful and unregulated (the Federal Communications Commission did not come along until 1934). Especially at night they could be heard over wide areas of the United States. Radio stations tended to offer broadcast opportunities to white ensembles, and some, such as the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks, became famous. A generous proportion of broadcast music was the dance band music of the day, and this helped to spread the notion of jazz to obscure corners of the country.

A few black artists got on the air. The Broadway show *Shuffle Along* by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle was broadcast live in Boston in 1922. Duke Ellington got his first air time in 1923.

During the 1920s (a period often referred to as the Jazz Age), jazz was often associated with efforts to evade Prohibition, the national outlawing of the sale of alcoholic beverages. Jazz is often performed in clubs. During Prohibition clubs stayed open and served alcohol furnished in many instances by organized crime, which saw a heyday in the 1920s. In some cases, gangsters owned the clubs and controlled the musicians. Louis Armstrong, the single most important figure in jazz, became financially successful through the efforts of his longtime manager Joe Glaser. After Glaser's death it became apparent that he had sold his soul to the mob in return for a free hand in managing Armstrong's career.

In the early 1920s the center of the jazz world was Chicago. King Oliver moved from New Orleans to Chicago and led a very successful group called the Creole Jazz Band. Nightly performances were packed. The audiences often included emerging white jazz players. In those days black jazz bands were the trend-setters and many white players were still learning the style. Oliver decided he needed a second cornet player for the band, and sent back to New Orleans for Louis Armstrong. Armstrong started off as a street musician, but received a useful musical education playing on riverboats under the tutelage of mellophone player David Jones. On the boats Armstrong learned to read music and play written arrangements.

The jazz of the Teens and early Twenties was dominated by ensemble playing. There was considerable improvisation in the ensemble playing. Early jazz is freer, looser and more swinging than the ragtime from which it had emerged. The next major development was the increasing importance of improvised solos. Armstrong's solos broke new ground in jazz, and influenced players on a variety of instruments. Although the 1920s were known as the Jazz Age, much of the public rarely heard jazz performed by top jazz musicians. Instead they mostly listened to dance bands (precursors of the Swing Bands of the 30s and 40s) playing syncopated dance music, sometimes with a few improvised solos thrown in.

During the early days of jazz, New Orleans and Chicago were not the only cities being exposed to the new music. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band was a sensation in New York, and spawned competing groups such as the Original Memphis Five. Kid Ory and Jelly Roll Morton led jazz bands in California in the early 1920s. Jazz was played along the navigable length of the Mississippi River on riverboats.

One of the river ports was Davenport, Iowa. It is believed that Davenport native Bix Beiderbecke, destined to become a jazz cornet legend, was greatly influenced by a young Orleanian cornetist named Emmitt Hardy, who died young and whose privately recorded records seemingly have all been lost. Beiderbecke attended prep school at Lake Forest Academy, but was expelled for sneaking off-campus to listen to Chicago jazz bands. He became the mainstay of a touring jazz band called the Wolverines which made an interesting group of records for Gennett in 1924.

For the time being, Chicago and environs were the center of the jazz universe. Oliver's Creole Jazz Band continued at the top of the heap, greatly aided by the sensational playing of second cornet Louis Armstrong. A white band called the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, made up of New Orleans and Chicago players, was a popular club band and made a series of influential records. One of the NORK recording sessions featured Jelly Roll Morton on piano. The Rhythm Kings told the Gennett studio technicians that Morton was Cuban.

A whole generation of white Chicago jazz musicians took shape. These included Jimmy McPartland, Muggsy Spanier, Gene Krupa, Eddie Condon, Frank Teschemacher and Benny Goodman. Black jazz stars working in Chicago included Johnny Dodds, Jimmie Noone, Tommy Ladnier and Bill Johnson. Jazz giants roamed Chicago. The recordings of the day captured some of the skill and fire of the Chicago jazz players. Chicago's reign as jazz capital was brief, however, as the center of jazz gravity soon moved to New York.

## A Texas Jazz Legend: Jim Cullum, Jr.



Jim Cullum, Jr., who left us on August 11 at the age of 77, was a jazz cornetist and the leader of the Jim Cullum Jazz Band. His childhood was spent in the Dallas area. He was the son of Jim Cullum, Sr., a respected jazz reed player who performed with Jack Teagarden and Jimmy Dorsey. Because of the influence of jazz on the household, Jim, Jr. grew up listening to jazz records and jazz bands, and developed a love for early jazz. He formed a traditional jazz quartet while in high school.

Jim Cullum, Sr. was interested in running a jazz club, and opened the Hollywood Club on a desolate stretch of commercial highway near Dallas. Traffic was sparse, the club roof leaked and eventually the enterprise collapsed. However, it was an interesting experience, and the groundwork was laid for much better things to come.

Jim, Jr. attended Trinity University, and San Antonio became his home. He and Jim, Sr. founded the Happy Jazz Band, with Jim, Sr. on clarinet and Jim, Jr. on cornet. In 1963 a group of San Antonio business investors founded The Landing, a new jazz club on the Riverwalk. This venture was a success. A year later the Happy Jazz Band began broadcasting on a San Antonio radio station.

The Happy Jazz Band was also a great success, playing an average of three nights a week, appearing in jazz festivals and releasing several 33 rpm records. It continued until the death of Jim, Sr. in 1973. In 1974 Jim, Jr. unveiled the Jim Cullum Jazz Band, a full-time traditional jazz ensemble with the best players Jim, Jr. could attract. Over the years they included Allan Vaché, Evan Christopher, Ron Hockett, Brian Ogilvie, Randy Reinhart, Mike Pittsley, Don Mopsick, John Sheridan, Hal Smith, Howard Elkins, Jim Turner, Buddy Apfel, Cliff Gillette, Bobby Black, Mark Hess and Ed Torres. Many had long tenures.

The Jim Cullum Jazz Band released 23 jazz CDs, played at jazz festivals and other venues all over the United States, and had several notable foreign tours. When not on the road, the band played six nights a week at The Landing. The club itself moved several times and wound up in the Hyatt Hotel. The band hosted the National Public Radio Show Riverwalk Jazz for many years. In 2012 Jim Cullum donated the show's materials to Stanford University.

In 2010 Jim Cullum, Jr. sold The Landing to a new owner, hoping to continue playing there without the responsibilities of running the club itself. Ultimately this was not a success. By the end of 2011 the club was headed in a different direction and the Jim Cullum Jazz Band sought new local playing venues after 37 years. The band performed at several San Antonio establishments after that, playing mostly as a quartet.

In October, 2016 the City of San Antonio issued a Distinction in the Arts award to Jim Cullum, Jr. for his lifetime achievements in jazz. Readers of jazz history will be hard-pressed to find a longer or more successful career as a player, a bandleader or as a club owner. One is reminded of the glory days of Pete Fountain and his long run in the French Quarter of New Orleans. Jim and Pete were friends, and Jim played for Pete's funeral in August, 2016.

On a more local basis, the Jim Cullum Jazz Band's run in San Antonio afforded Austin jazz fans the opportunity to hear a world-class traditional jazz ensemble any time they wanted to make the trek down I-35. The band made a series of notable appearances for the Austin Traditional Jazz Society, and for 12 years held the ATJS record for the largest audience at a Cap City Comedy Club concert with 263 attendees.

When many people think of traditional jazz, they tend to think of cities like New Orleans, New York, Chicago and San Francisco. Jim Cullum, Jr. proved it could be done just as well in San Antonio.

### Important Outreach for the Austin Traditional Jazz Society



One of many ATJS tasks is outreach—finding new audiences and encouraging emerging traditional jazz talent in the area. Colin Hancock is a unique and engaging young musician from Buda, TX. At an early age he developed a deep and abiding passion for traditional jazz. While in high school Colin learned to play all of the instruments in a traditional jazz band so he could make his own band recordings by playing all of the instruments and combining multiple tracks.

Next, Colin assembled a complete antique wax cylinder recording apparatus and began recording acoustical wax cylinders. One of his projects concerned recreating possible cylinder recordings now lost by the first acknowledged jazz musician, New Orleans trumpeter Buddy Bolden. Colin assembled a band with the same instrumentation as the late 1890s Bolden ensemble, and recorded a series of cylinders.

Colin chose to major in music at Cornell University. He played trumpet in the Cornell big jazz band and some smaller jazz ensembles, but found the experience not altogether satisfying. It was jazz but not his style of jazz. Colin convinced a Cornell jazz professor to let him form an early jazz big band, the Original Cornell Syncopators. He recruited a number of like-minded Cornell musicians and formed the band.

The Original Cornell Syncopators have recorded a CD for Rivermont Records which honors collegiate jazz bands and musicians from 1916-1930. The band studied groups from Ivy League, Historically African-American, and Middle-American schools, and featured the stories of such notable artists as Rudy Vallee, Jimmy Lunceford, Spiegle Willcox, and Hoagy Carmichael, as well as the untold sagas of Gus Haenschen (aka Carl Fenton), the Barbary Coast Orchestra of Dartmouth (one of the longest-lasting jazz bands in the world), the Cornell Collegians and many more through an extensive liner notes essay. The band worked extensively to unearth rare and lost recordings, facts, photos and interviews.

The Society made a contribution to help fund the recording project. ATJS will be listed as a contributor in the publicity material for the CD along with such luminaries as Wynton Marsalis, Phil Schaap, Andy Schumm, Hal Smith, Dave Bock and Mark Berresford.

## Internet Jazz Radio, now available on FM in Austin

An excellent source of 1920s and 1930s dance band music is Radio Dismuke. You can access this on the Internet at [www.radiodismuke.com](http://www.radiodismuke.com). Many dance bands of this period were not jazz ensembles as such. They played syncopated dance music, often enlivened by improvised solos. The amount of hot jazz played varied a great deal from band to band. Numbers of jazz stars augmented their income by playing in or recording with dance orchestras. The results are pleasant, if not always red hot.

Radio Dismuke is broadcast over the air in Austin on KXPE, 89.9 on the FM dial. KXPE is the brainchild of Lloyd Ewing, who attends ATJS events from time to time. Lloyd broadcasts from his house in North Austin. Radio Dismuke is the mainstay of the broadcasts, with occasional breaks for station identification. Mr. Ewing plans to build a studio and do some local programming in the future.

KXPE is most easily reached near the intersection of North Lamar Boulevard and Braker Lane. If you are driving north on I-35, the station can be picked up at Research Boulevard, though with a lot of static. The broadcast becomes quite clear between Braker Lane and Howard Lane, then fades into static once again.

### Current ATJS Board of Directors

Dave Stoddard	President
Tom Straus	President Emeritus
Wes Lokken	Treasurer
Caryn Cluiss	Financial Secretary
Don Denzin	Recording Secretary
Nancy-Jane Griffith	Director
Becky Maddox	Director
Johnny Serrano	Director
Bill Troiano	Director
Glynda Eschle	Director

Nominations were opened during a Society business meeting at the June 9 concert. Nominations will close and the election will be held at a business meeting at the September 15 concert.



### 2019-20 Schedule

September 15	Dirty River Dixie Band
October 20	Rock Step Relevators
November 17	Ron Fink and the Rowdies
January 19	Annual ATJS Jam Session
February 16	New Orleans Jazz Band of Austin
March 15	To Be Announced
April 19	Silver Creek Jazz Band
May 17	La Grosse Tete
June 14	Shake 'Em Up Jazz Band of New Orleans

All concerts will be from 1 to 3:45 p.m. at Cap City Comedy Club, 8120 Research Boulevard, Austin, TX (US 183 at Anderson Square).

## Bob Alexius, 1934 – 2019



Robert Martin Alexius hailed from New Orleans, but lived much of his adult life in the Austin area. His undergraduate degree was in music at Louisiana State University, but he received BA and MA degrees in education from Memphis State University, followed by a PhD at the University of Texas. After a stint as a working musician, Bob was a longtime division director for the Texas Education Agency in Austin.

Bob made important contributions to the Austin music scene. He played string bass for many years for Tommy Griffith in the Old Waterloo Jazz Band. He was the original bass player with Silver Creek Jazz Band before the group went with the tuba-banjo sound. Bob was primarily a string bass player, but became a solid rhythm tuba player and for many years played it with the Austin Banjo Club. He was a board member for the American Banjo Museum in Oklahoma City.

Bob told many stories about his life in traditional jazz. In the 1950s he played with a “kid band” at the Parisian Room on Royal Street in New Orleans. The headliner was trumpeter Tony Almerico, who had a stable of top jazz musicians which included Pete Fountain, George Girard, Santo Pecora and Harry Shields. The kid band occupied a gallery at the back of the hall which had balconies overlooking Royal Street and the main Parisian Room floor. During main band sets the kid band played to Royal Street to attract customers. During intermissions they came indoors and played on the indoor balcony.

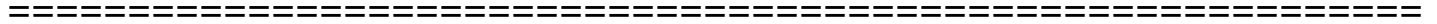
One of Bob’s fellow New Orleans musicians was cornetist Connie Jones. In 1994 Connie tabbed Bob to play bass on the maiden voyage of the excursion riverboat American Queen from New Orleans to Pittsburgh. The Queen was built by hoteliers, not river people, and while spacious was not well-suited to river travel. The pilot house and smokestacks were higher than some of the low bridges on the Mississippi River. The smokestacks were hinged to fold down, and the pilot house retracted into the main superstructure after steering had been switched to an alternate steering wheel.

One day the Queen approached a low bridge, and the pilot house was retracted before the steering had been switched over. There was no way of steering the boat, and it ran aground at the next bend of the river, delaying the trip for a day. The band scrambled to shore across a mudbank and had some unexpected time off ashore while the Queen was re-floated.

Bob Alexius and his wife Patsy were avid travelers. After Patsy’s passing, Bob remained very active. When Connie Jones died in February, 2019, Bob drove alone from Austin to New Orleans for the funeral, then turned around and drove home. We will always remember him as a talented and warm-hearted jazz musician.



**HELP WANTED:** Your Austin Traditional Jazz Society is in need of volunteers. Help in staging concerts is always welcome (front desk folks), and we could use some people to help with marketing, particularly to put up posters.



**Volunteer Form**

ATJS Member's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Please put \* beside e-mail or telephone number if you prefer a certain way to be contacted. Thank you!

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate task(s) for which you would like to volunteer:**

Distributing flyers and promotional materials

Locating contacts and providing information to Board of Directors for education outreach

Assisting staff at ATJS concerts

Notifying staff about potential grant or funding opportunities

Other \_\_\_\_\_

We greatly appreciate your support of the **Austin Traditional Jazz Society!** You will be contacted about assignments. Thank you!

**Date submitted** \_\_\_\_\_