



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 in the home stretch of the 2017-18 season, as good an occasion as any to crank out a new issue.

A Letter From The President

April 2018



The 2017-18 ATJS season, while a work in progress, is shaping up to be a substantial success. The music has gone very well, and that is the whole idea. Our thanks to Silver Creek Jazz Band, the Jim Cullum Jazz Band, Thrift Set Orchestra, the 33 jammers at the Jam Session, La Grosse Tete and the New Orleans Jazz Band of Austin for offering the excellence in traditional jazz that attracts new listeners and keeps our regular fans coming back for more. Along those lines, our attendance is at an all-time high.

One of my long-held goals has been for the Society to average better than 150 attendees per concert. At present we are slightly over 180 attendees per concert with three strong concerts coming up. We have managed this despite our February concert being threatened by an ice storm, with a season-low 106 persons making it through the bad weather to hear La Grosse Tete.

We are coming up on a fun part of the season. The Mission City Hot Rhythm Cats have been a Society favorite since their first ATJS concert in 2008. It's not hard to see why. Mike Pittsley is a current member of the Jim Cullum Jazz Band. Ed Torres and Mark Hess are Cullum alumni. David Jellema is the leading jazz cornetist in the Austin area and Pierre Poree is a perennial favorite in San

Antonio. Matt Tolentino plays a plethora of instruments and leads two bands in the Dallas area.



Ron Fink and the Rowdies are from the Dallas area. Their 2017 concert was spectacular, very possibly the best of the 2016-17 season. I

urge anyone who was unable to attend to catch this year's performance. The Rowdies are all North Texas music educators, all really good musicians. They are spearheaded by three mainstays of recent All-Star concerts: Bob Krenkel on reeds, Brian Standridge on trumpet and Gene LeBeaux on trombone. Banjoist Scott Whitfield is nationally-known, and the aforementioned Matt Tolentino is a multi-instrument talent.

The slate will be completed by the ATJS All-Stars on June 10. All-Star concerts are a lot of fun because: a) they feature really good musicians, and b) the lineup is different every year. Imagine a long jam session with top players. Getting the band to jell and play a good show is always a challenge, but most of the ATJS All-Star bands have done just that. This year we welcome three new All-Stars, Kris Vargas on cornet Ben Saffer on clarinet, and Bill Troiano on tuba. Those who have heard them play know how good they are. Other All-Stars will be Larmon Maddox on cornet, Mark Hess on piano, and Bobby Black on banjo and guitar. I will play trombone with the All-Stars for the first time since 2010. Your Austin Traditional Jazz Society has done its best to bring you a solid season of traditional jazz. We hope you will continue to support this effort by turning out to the last three concerts. If a jazz band plays by itself in a forest, does it really swing?

Dave Stoddard

ARRANGED TRADITIONAL JAZZ

The heart of jazz is improvisation—the art of realizing musical lines as you go along. Improvisation is what set early jazz apart from ragtime, which is a written music form. For that matter, improvisation is what sets jazz apart from pop music. Pop musicians attempt to replicate a certain sound and form in each performance. The best jazz performances are all different because the players vary their approaches to either ensemble lines or solos.



Early jazz relied upon collective improvisation. When Lil Hardin (later Lil Hardin Armstrong) joined a 1920s jazz band, she asked about music and only got blank stares in return. This approach to jazz eventually coalesced into our current forms of traditional jazz. Traditional jazz remains the one jazz form which has successfully utilized collective improvisation.

Written arrangements never went away, however. Improvisation is an art which is beyond the reach of many musicians, especially if they have spent their musical lives reading notes.

Dance orchestras were too large for the collective improvisation approach to work—too many improvised lines result in a very muddy sound. Dance orchestras including swing bands tended to play written arrangements with instruments divided into sections—saxes, trumpets, trombones and rhythm.

There is a body of written traditional jazz arrangements. These tend to fall into two categories—entry-level and advanced. Most traditional jazz bands play from lead sheets, which have only melody lines and chord symbols. The lead player can read the melody, and everyone else improvises. As a rule, the clarinet plays an obbligato over the melody, and the trombone plays either a counter-melody or harmony.

Most newcomers to traditional jazz can't do that right away. Written arrangements can help them understand what their parts are supposed to sound like. When I started my first jazz band at the University of North Carolina, my high school band director lent us some charts written by Jimmy McPartland and Dick Cary. These were transcriptions of performances by a band led by McPartland. There were parts for clarinet, trumpet, trombone, piano, bass and drums. There was an accompanying LP record of the performances, but in the 1970s I had no idea where to obtain one. I later found the tracks on one of the CDs in a Mosaic boxed set of Chicago Jazz.

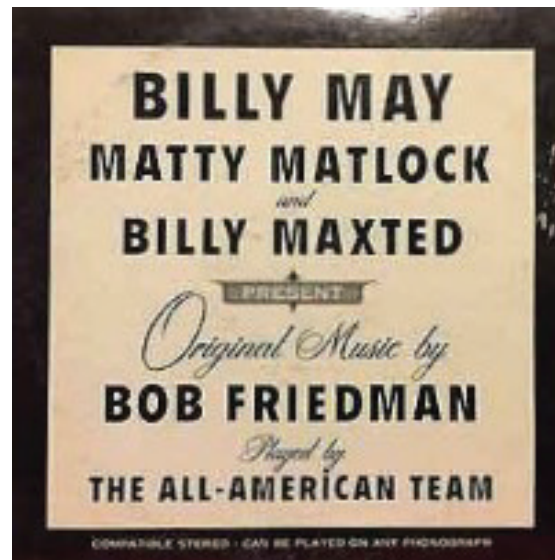
The arrangements worked well enough, and I used them again when I became instructor and mentor for the Chaparral Dixielanders in 2002. The Chapel Hill band stayed wedded to written arrangements, and some of them came from odd places. Two songs came from a set of Dixieland songs arranged for marching band. We found another set of arrangements called Dixieland Beat by Bill Howard. These also came in part books including tenor saxophone, a welcome addition because the Imperial Jazz Band had a tenor sax player. In later years I found copies of some Combo-Orks called Morris Hits Dixieland and More Morris Hits Dixieland, also arranged by Bill Howard.

I have never been able to discern if Bill Howard was a real person or just a pseudonym for a group of Morris Music staff arrangers. Internet searches on his name lead only back to the arrangements. The Howard arrangements are curiously uneven, ranging from very good to having significant departures from the original tune. I have also found Combo-Orks arranged by Johnny Warrington, who was a staff arranger for a Philadelphia TV station back when stations had their own music ensembles.

I have since picked up several more sets of entry-level arrangement books. I used some of the Combo-Orks in the 2011 Round Rock Dixieland Project, and perhaps a new entry-level group will need my assistance. You can sound pretty good pretty fast playing these charts. The players can concentrate their emerging improvising skills on their solos and learn to play riffs behind improvised solos by other players. Such a band tends to reflect the personality of its arrangers, but this is an acceptable place to start.

There is also a group of charts that were written for professional musicians.

The two leading traditional chart writers were clarinetist Matty Matlock and pianist Billy Maxted. It takes an arranger with a strong sense of what various instruments should be playing to write out complex parts that mesh together and swing. One advantage is that good arrangements can keep instruments in the same tone range from clashing with each other. Thus an arrangement can feature two trombones and a tenor sax, all tenor instruments if the arranger gives each player a well-separated line. These professional-level charts are very demanding, far beyond the reach of average traditional jazz players, but they sound great.



If you would like to sample what these professional arrangements sound like, go to [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) and listen to Bill Allred and his Classic Jazz Band. In 1997 I heard the Classic Jazz Band in Indianapolis. They had two trumpets, two trombones and a reed player doubling on clarinet and tenor sax. The arrangements were very tight and the band was wonderful, a most satisfying evening of jazz.

Ron Fink and the Rowdies, the band appearing in the ATJS May concert, favors the professional-level written arrangements. This band consists of professional-level players, most of them music educators. They have the classical training to read these intricate charts, and the innate jazz sense to make them swing. It's

a great combination and one which is difficult to bring off. The Rowdies played an excellent show in May, 2017 and their 2018 opus should be a memorable



Lauryn Gould and Dave Stoddard playing in the La Grosse Tete concert on February 16.

A SHORT HISTORY OF AUSTIN TRADITIONAL JAZZ SOCIETY

Beverly Wisdom, one of the founders of the Austin Traditional Jazz Society, passed away on February 23 at the age of 94. Like many Austonians, she moved here from somewhere else. Beverly was born in Hutchinson, Kansas but grew up in Houston. She married Gene Wisdom in 1947 and the couple moved to Austin in 1952. Gene was an actuarial accountant and Professor of Actuarial Science at the University of Texas. He was not a notable jazz player but played clarinet and banjo with some enthusiasm.

In 1976 the Wisdoms were part of a group of jazz fans who were attending weekly traditional jazz performances by the John Roberts Jazz Band at the Capitol Oyster Company. At one point the group began asking itself why they didn't form a jazz club, and the Austin Traditional Jazz Society began to take shape. The first concert was held on May 13, 1977 at the Rathskeller of the Municipal Auditorium. It should come as no surprise that the first featured ensemble was the John Roberts Jazz Band.

Gene Wisdom was the first Society president and was joined on the Steering Committee by Linalice Carey, Kitty Clark, Jim Foster, Tommy Griffith, John and Audrey Huntsberger, Jim Lark, Larmon and Becky Maddox, Jim Moore, Colleen Nelson, Walt Scheffer and Beverly Wisdom. Another early Society contributor was trombonist Frank Mesich, who went on to a notable tenure with the Washington, DC-area Buck Creek Jazz Band. By late 1978 the Society had grown to 141 members and was holding monthly concerts at the Elks Lodge at 700 Dawson Road.

Gene Wisdom made frequent business trips to California, where he attended performances of prominent San Francisco jazz bands whenever possible. See his account of a visit with San Francisco jazz pioneer Lu Watters in the November, 2017 ATJS Jazz Messenger. Gene was particularly fond of trombonist Turk Murphy. He and Beverly also attended California jazz festivals. Gene got to know many of the musicians and offered them a place to play if their travels brought them into or near Austin. In its early years, The Society featured out-of-town musicians including Jim Maihack, Tom Bartlett, Norma Teagarden, Connie Jones, Herb Hall, Chet Jager, Jimmy Armstrong and Gene Ramey.



In those days the Society was strictly a Dixieland club. Front lines hewed to the traditional clarinet-trumpet/cornet-trombone pattern, and rhythm instruments were limited to piano, banjo/guitar, and string bass/tuba. Outlier jazz instruments such as saxophones

and violins were frowned upon.

The rules set forth by the initial contributors stated that the Mouldy Figs of Austin (as they were known initially) would exclude Western Swing from performances, as well as any electrically-amplified instruments. These were strongly-held tenets. During the 2004 ATJS Jam Session, Beverly Wisdom reacted to the appearance of violinist Erik Hokkanen (a first-rate jazz player, by the way) by remarking that during Gene's tenure as president a violinist would not have been allowed.

Gene Wisdom's tenure as Society president lasted until his death in 1994. His successors included Ben Conroy, Budge Mabry, Becky Maddox, Jeff Van Horn, Malcolm Rodman, Tom Straus and yours truly, Dave Stoddard. Perhaps the most notable of these was Malcolm Rodman, a retired small business owner who took over the Society when it had fallen on lean times and helped revive its fortunes through his love of traditional jazz and his business acumen.

Over the years, the Society has had many homes, fifteen in all. The longest tenures have been 18 years at Donn's Depot and nearly twelve seasons at Cap City Comedy Club. In the 1990s the ATJS All-Star concerts got started when a Dallas band was hired to play and only reed player Bob Krenkel showed up. The band was filled out around him and a tradition was born. Bob played clarinet and soprano and bass saxophones in most of the All-Star concerts until he began appearing with Ron Fink and the Rowdies in May, 2017.

Another early recruit to the All-Stars was trumpeter Tommy Loy, a great Dallas talent who played the National Anthem as a trumpet solo before Dallas

Cowboys football games between 1966 and 1988. Gene Wisdom met him on a Dallas business trip. Other notable All-Stars have included Connie Jones, Jim Maihack, Frank Mesich, Dave Sager, Ed Stoddard, Brian Holland, John Gill, Tom McDermott and a host of fine Austin and San Antonio players, including Erik Hokkanen!

The original emphasis on Dixieland to the exclusion of all else has given way to a more relaxed approach to traditional jazz. I assembled a made-for-ATJS group called the Swinging Strings, and they played several memorable concerts. Thrift Set Orchestra, a small big band playing jazz of the 1920s and 30s, has also been a conspicuous success.

The Austin area underwent a renaissance in traditional jazz starting in about 2002. This has led to a much fuller array of talented local bands. This and the spectacular rise in travel costs have curtailed the Society's enthusiasm for special concerts featuring top-name bands from out of town. Since 2000, however, the Society has welcomed some top talent to Austin: the Jim Cullum Jazz Band, Ed Polcer and his New York All-Stars, Connie Jones and his Crescent City Jazz Band, Banu Gibson, Tim Laughlin and his New Orleans All-Stars and the piano-flute duo Ivory and Gold.

The Society has managed to survive, and in a modest way even prosper, at a time when traditional jazz societies and festivals are going out of business. Traditional jazz is not mainstream music and may never be that ever again, but as long as it has persistent friends in the Austin Traditional Jazz Society, it will remain alive and well in Austin. I am proud to have been a part of the 41 years of the Austin Traditional Jazz Society.

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

Leander Public Library

Round Rock Public Library

Music and Arts

Strait Music Company North

Westbank String

2541 South I-35

13945 Research Blvd.

6301 Manchaca Road

Round Rock, TX

Austin, TX

Austin, TX

Premier Music Academy

Strait Music Company South

Kneaded Pleasures

1400 E. Old Settlers Blvd.
Round Rock, TX

2428 W. Ben White Blvd.
Austin, TX

3573 Far West Blvd.
Austin, TX

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

Sam Bass Music
801 Brandi Lane
Round Rock, TX

Go Dance Studio
2525 W. Anderson Ln.
Austin TX

Austin's Musical Exchange
6015 Burnet Road
Austin, TX

Capital Music Center
6101 North Burnet Road
Austin, TX

Austin Uptown Dance
8868 Research Blvd. #706
Austin, TX

Austin Swing Syndicate
2312 San Gabriel St.
Austin, TX

ADDITIONAL JAZZ EVENTS IN APRIL

These events did not make it on our recent email so mark your calendars for these great shows.

Silver Creek Jazz Band

Friday, April 20 at Jazz & Art on Main, 1435 Main Street, Cedar Park
7:30 – 8:45 pm

New Orleans Jazz Band of Austin

Sat., April 7, Wells Branch Homestead Pioneer Festival, 2106 Klattenhoff Dr. in
Wells Branch

2:00-3:00 pm

Sat., April 21, Jazz & Art on Main, 1435 Main St., Cedar Park

3:00 pm

Sun., April 29, Texas Community Music Festival, Central Market North

12:15-1:15 pm

VOLUNTEERS

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.

The Austin Traditional Jazz Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Please consider making a [tax-deductible donation](#).

Current ATJS Board of Directors

Dave Stoddard	President
Tom Straus	President Emeritus
Wes Lokken	Treasurer
Martha Stoddard	Financial Secretary
Nancy-Jane Griffith	Recording Secretary
Becky Maddox	Director
Janine Moore	Director
Johnny Serrano	Director
Bill Troiano	Director
Dave Bedrich	Director

Remaining 2017-18 Schedule

April 8	Mission City Hot Rhythm Cats
May 6	Ron Fink and the Rowdies
June 10	ATJS All Stars

All concerts will be from 2 to 5 p.m. at Cap City Comedy Club, 8120 Research Boulevard, Austin, TX (US 183 at Anderson Square).



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ATJS Website