



IN THE MOOD

The Olney Big Band
NEWSLETTER

JULY 2008

Volume 3, Number 3

Dear Readers:

Summer has started out with a bang as the OBB performed five concerts in 23 days (that's 1 concert for every 4.6 days). Not to worry though, the OBB has plenty of gas left in its tank as we prepare for the remainder of our record breaking Summer.

The OBB will be traveling to Europe this July for two performances at the famed Montreux Jazz Festival in Montreux, Switzerland. We promise to take plenty of pictures to share with our readers in the Fall edition of ITM.

Upon our return, we will kick off the Carl M. Freeman Company's Sounds of Summer Concert Series on Thursday July 31, 7:30-9pm at the Olney Village and Olney Town Centers in Olney, MD.

We hope to see you there!



www.olneybigband.org

Quarter Notes Musings Of A Band Leader

Dr. Rip G. Rice - Music Director, Olney Big Band

My Quarter Notes column (page 1, April 2008 issue of In The Mood – reporting the “3-Minute Interview with Charles Fishman”), brought forth the following comments by Roger Aldridge, a Friend of the Olney Big Band, and former Tenor I etc. player with the OBB:



Great newsletter! I just received a copy and the question about why rock displaced jazz caught my eye. The answer is insightful (“jazz in the 1960s ceased to be a danceable music”)....but, it seems to me that it's more complex than that.

Changing economics of the entertainment/music business need to be taken into account as do social changes after WW-II. After the war newer kinds of entertainment came into being – especially TV. People no longer went out to large dance halls. Many big bands disbanded. Even Basie was reduced to having an 8-piece group for a period of time. The name bands like Kenton, Herman, Ellington struggled to get by. Many of the large dance halls went out of business as well. I suspect that much of the decline in the big bands was driven by the entertainment business in wanting to pay for smaller groups and give more “star” status to vocalists rather than to bands. Also, there's the matter of public taste in music changing. I find it interesting to view musical styles in cycles. One can find more than a few examples of musical styles running in approximately 10 year cycles. The “golden age” of swing bands was roughly 10 years.

By its very nature, jazz is an evolving music. As often happens in jazz, there are innovators who develop newer ways of playing or arranging, there is a period of conflict between the older and newer styles, the newer style achieves wide acceptance (with various spin-offs and imitations), then it often crystallizes into what becomes prescribed formulas, and finally musicians and (importantly) jazz fans begin to look for something different.

By the end of WW-II quite a few big band musicians and arrangers had become tired of the swing band style and were looking for something new. Of course, not everyone felt that way. But there was movement from within certain big bands themselves – especially, the 2nd (Woody) Herman Herd, Stan Kenton's experiments, Boyd Raeburn, Claude Thornhill, etc – to break out of what had become big band formulas to develop new approaches to a big band. Personally, I see the late 50s as a huge turning point for jazz. Especially, 1957-59. I find it especially interesting to listen to what many big bands were doing in the early 50s versus after the 57-59 period. Take just about any band – Kenton, Herman, Ellington, etc., and we find significant innovations as big bands went into the early 60s. THIS is the jazz I grew up with.

Mr. Fishman is absolutely right about jazz changing from being a danceable music to a predominately listening music. On the downside, it contributed to jazz being less of a “popular” music. But on the positive side, jazz in the 50s and 60s exploded like gangbusters with so many wonderful innovations and great players and arrangers. Many of these innovations could not have taken place if jazz continued to be primarily a dance music. This comes down to something being lost and something else being gained.

One of the great things about jazz is that nothing is truly lost....more is added to the jazz

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cannon as the music evolves. I think of jazz as being a huge snowball rolling down a hill. It contains all of the music from every style and era as well as constantly adding new things. Thus, one can find living musicians playing New Orleans and Chicago styles, swing, bop, free jazz/fusion, and everything else over jazz's 100 year history. I find this incredibly exciting. This is one reason why I've loved jazz from childhood.

About the 10-year cycle that one can often find in American popular music – Simply put, it's a generational thing. As kids are growing up they find a music they identify with. Most often it's the music of the day being driven by the music business (I underscore the word business) and popular culture. Teenagers grow up with a particular kind of music. All of their friends listen to it. Then, by the time they are in college, starting a career and a family, a younger batch of kids starts another cycle with another kind of music that is being pushed in pop culture.

Also, it's natural for teenagers to reject the music of their parents. Thus, with teenagers growing up after WW-II it made sense that they would find their own music and not follow the swing band music of their parents. This is another factor – besides the economic and social factors I mentioned before – that contributed to American popular music moving from the big bands to other kinds of music....especially Rock in the 50s.

Each new generation of jazz players and writers build their work upon what came before. Every developing arranger goes back and studies Fletcher Henderson and Don Redman, just as every developing tenor sax player studies Hawk (Coleman Hawkins) and Pres (Lester Young) and Ben (Webster). Each new jazz style takes older styles and extends them with various kinds of developments in a way so that essential aspects of the older styles can still be found in the new. In this way, every jazz arrangement regardless of its style has something of Fletcher Henderson in it. This expresses the continuum of Jazz. To be even a small part of this continuum is deeply inspiring.

Janet Blair - Vocalist - Movie Star

Courtesy
Big Band Jump Newsletter

The history of big band music includes many talented lady singers whose performances were recorded time and time again. What is unique is to discover a beautiful Big Band singer who later became a beautiful Hollywood movie star. Meet Janet Blair.

This lady is one of those whose beauty and talent opened doors to her progression into show business, and almost by accident. Her childhood was pleasant but with no hint of stardom as she grew up in Altoona, Pennsylvania while singing in a church choir.

It was a family friend who set up an audition for her to sing with the Hal Kemp Band. She won the audition and at age 18 changed her name to Janet Blair, the Blair moniker taken from the name of Pennsylvania Blair County. Fate intervened as she was singing with the Kemp Band appearing in the Cocomogrove in Los Angeles. A talent scout in the audience made her a movie offer with Columbia Pictures for \$100 a week. Just then, Hal Kemp was killed in an auto accident and the band decided to call it quits. So, she accepted.

Janet progressed rapidly as an actress, working with Rosalind Russell, George Raft, Cary Grant and Red Skelton. Her background as a band singer served her well when she was the love interest in the movie "The Fabulous Dorseys", starring Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey as themselves.

By 1948, she was ready for a change. In place of the movies, she took the Mary Martin role to the road company of "South Pacific", doing 1,200 performances in three years in theatres all over the nation! Her reliability as an actress was demonstrated when she said she "never missed a performance."

This led her to many television roles, such as "The Ford Theatre," "Lux Video



Provided by viewimages.com

Theatre," and "Philco TV Playhouse." Also, a few more movies followed and then a co-star role with the Henry Fonda series "The Smith Family."

Janet Blair's daughter summed up the personal appeal and movie presence of her mother when she said simply "They just don't make them like her anymore."

Notes added by Rip Rice

1. Janet was not the only excellent big band singer to later become a well-known movie star. Remember Doris Day (with the Les Brown Band of Renown)?, Harriet Hilliard (vocalist and wife to Ozzie Nelson, and later a TV star)?, and Ginny Simms (with the Kay Kyser Orchestra)?, and Lena Horne (sang with Artie Shaw)?, and Peggy Lee (Benny Goodman)? And there must be dozens of others who have done the same. Julie London pops into my head, although I can't recall which big band(s) she sang with.

2. Janet Blair married movie actor Tony Curtis, and their first offspring was Jamie Lee Curtis – the daughter who summed up her mother's appeal – and herself is a wonderful movie and TV star.

Contributed by Robert Redding

Jimmie Lunceford's Dazzling Orchestra

Jimmie Lunceford and his Orchestra.
Photo courtesy uv201.com

Courtesy swingmusic.net

Jimmie Lunceford is best known for his orchestra's consistently swinging and showy live performances. Their tight ensembles and colorful shows made them a major attraction during the Swing era.

Jimmie Lunceford will long be remembered as the leader of that swinging big band that rivaled on record, and exceeded in person, the orchestras of Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman and Count Basie. His band differed from many of the other Big Bands of the 1930s and 1940s in that Lunceford's group was noted less for its soloists than for its ensemble work. Furthermore, most bands of the period used a four-beat rhythm while the Lunceford Orchestra developed a distinctive two-beat swing often played at medium tempo.

The unique sound became known during the Swing era as the Lunceford two-beat.

Jimmie Lunceford recruited the nucleus of his band while an athletic instructor at Manassas High School in Memphis, Tennessee. It was here, in 1927, that he organized a student jazz band called the Chicksaw Syncopators. The personnel of this band included Moses Allen (bass) and Jimmy Crawford (drums). Later, Willie Smith (alto) and Eddie Wilcox (piano) were added. The group turned professional in 1929, waxing its first recordings for RCA in 1930. After playing for several years in Cleveland and Buffalo, in 1934, the band began a high profile engagement at the famed Cotton Club in Harlem. At first the band played flashy, stiff instrumentals in the early Casa Loma orchestra manner.

While Wilcox and Smith both contributed early arrangements, it was



the addition of ace arranger and trumpeter man Sy Oliver that gave the Lunceford band its distinguished two-beat sound. Paul Webster on trumpet, Eddie Durham and later Trummy Young on trombone, and vocalist Dan Grissom were also important mid-1930s additions to the Lunceford band. By 1935 the group, then called Jimmie Lunceford's Orchestra, had achieved a national reputation as one of the top black swing bands.

The Jimmie Lunceford big band during the Swing era was widely known and other bands often imitated its showmanship and appearance. Lunceford rehearsed his outfit endlessly. The polish of the band is evident on record by its flawless ensemble work. Further adding to the appeal of the band were the vocals by several of Lunceford's men. Jimmie's boys whispered, wheedled, cozened, rather than sang. Oliver and Smith, Joe Thomas and later Trummy Young all sang with the band often in trio unison. Unseen, is the choreography of the group's musicians in performance. Of particular delight to fans who saw the band in person was the spectacle of members of the trumpet section tossing their horns high into the air and catching them on the beat.

In 1935 a long list of superb Decca two-beat recordings associated with Lunceford's name but written by Sy Oliver included; *My Blue Heaven*, and *Organ Grinders Swing*. They are still great listens today. Unfortunately, Lunceford may never receive his just due as a leader simply because his group's superb showmanship is lost on record.

Although his orchestra-leading career nowhere near paralleled in longevity that of Basie or Ellington, for a time from 1935 until Sy Oliver left his band to work for Tommy Dorsey in 1939, the Lunceford band was one of the most popular in the land. The distinctive Lunceford style generally identified with Sy Oliver, although many other arrangers contributed to the band's vast book, influenced many bandleaders and arrangers right up to the 1950s.

Glenn Miller was influenced by the Lunceford unit's showmanship and Tommy Dorsey, after Sy Oliver joined his band, borrowed much from the Lunceford tradition. Many albums described as tributes to Lunceford have been recorded including those by Sy Oliver, George Williams, Billy May and others. □

Buddy DeFranco - Part I

Welcome to a three-part series featuring an interview with Buddy DeFranco

by STEVE VOCE - with preface by Dr. Rip Rice

After reading this story, I contacted Steve Voce and asked for permission to reprint the story for In The Mood. Mr. Voce gave his permission and blessings. Before starting the interview by Mr. Voce, it should be put into perspective who Buddy DeFranco is. In the Big Band Era, the two most well-known jazz clarinetists were Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. The next in-line for that honor was Buddy DeFranco.

Mr. Voce writes – Buddy De Franco has the melancholy distinction of sharing the title of most overlooked jazz great with such as Lucky Thompson and Oscar Pettiford. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddy_DeFranco. Persistently neglected by jazz writers, it is fortunate indeed that jazz listeners turn the same kind of deaf ear to the critics that the critics have pointed at De Franco.

The countless artists with whom he has played and recorded include Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, Art Blakey, Roy Eldridge, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Gene Krupa, Tal Farlow, Billie Holiday, Charlie Barnett, Count Basie, Stan Getz, Lennie Tristano, Herb Ellis, Nat "King" Cole and Ella Fitzgerald. In 2002, a lavishly illustrated and comprehensive biography titled *A Life in the Golden Age of Jazz* (Parkside Publications) was released and early in 2006, Buddy was honored as a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master.

Boniface Ferdinand Leonardo De Franco was born in Camden, New Jersey on February 17, 1923. His father was a piano tuner. "No one taught me to play jazz clarinet, but I was taught 'legitimate' (I hate that term, but we're stuck with it). I began studying with a teacher in

Philadelphia when I was about nine. I went to a music school that had a free programme for poor kids. We were very poor in those days, and my teacher taught me for three years and never took any money. Then, when I began to make some money, three dollars, whatever, he charged me a dollar a lesson.

When I was 14, I heard my dad playing records by the Hot Club of France Quintet and by Art Tatum, and I was completely overwhelmed by the music, and from that time jazz became the most important thing to me.

Then I began to listen to Jimmy Lunceford, Chick Webb, Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw.

The first jazz clarinetist I ever worked with was Johnny Mince in the Dorsey band, and he really caught my ear.

I was enthralled with Benny (Goodman), and he really made me take the decision to be a jazz player. Then I heard Artie Shaw and over a period of years began to develop more of an appreciation for Artie. I thought he was more modern, more harmonically developed than Benny, although Benny had more swing.

My teacher worked in the pit orchestra at the Earl Theater in Philadelphia. When I was 14 there was a nation-wide Tommy Dorsey contest to find the best young amateur swing player. It was sponsored by a cigarette company and broadcast nationally and each week they would pick one player from each city. I entered and made the finals, where there were four kids left.

My teacher, who was a very clever guy, told me 'you're gonna win, because you're gonna wear short pants' (which I hated) 'and you're gonna play Honeysuckle Rose, and at the end you'll hold up the

clarinet with one hand and you'll hold out the other hand so that the people will see you're playing the clarinet with only one hand, and hang on one note, see. That'll get 'em.

Nobody'll follow that.' And I did. That's how I won. I heard a disc of that performance and it was lousy, really horrible. But I won by default. This little kid, wearing shorts and playing clarinet with one hand, the other kids never had a chance.

After my performance Tommy Dorsey said 'Stick around, you'll play in my band some day.' Years later when I joined the band he said 'I told you you would.' He was a frightening guy to work for, very strict, and allowing no room at all for error. If you displeased him too many times you just got fired.

He wanted set solos on certain songs that were hit records. For instance, Opus One was the first solo recorded with the band in California and he said 'You'll keep that solo.' Well, I didn't like it, so I changed it a couple of times. He came to me and he said 'You stale s--t-heel!' (that was his favorite phrase). 'I told you not to change that solo.' I said 'But it's not creative to play the same solo every night.' He snarled 'Well, you want to be Count Basie or Art Tatum or someone, go and be creative on someone else's time. You're finished!' I was. He fired me. But I went back later and joined again.

He had fines for everything. If you weren't there half an hour before the show it was a 10 dollar fine. If you missed the show it was a 25 dollar fine. At one time he didn't like too much giggling on the stand or smiling, so he had a 'no laughing or smiling on the stage' law for about two

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months. If you smiled on the stage you got fined five dollars. Boomie Richman and I would get giddy - it's hard to hide laughing, and the rule made you want to do it, but we didn't get caught.

When Dodo Marmarosa was pianist with the band we roomed together. There was a time when we were in Louisville and the train that the band was supposed to be catching left at 8 am. We had left a wake-up call and set an alarm for 6:30 am. I heard the alarm and shut it off and went back to sleep. We either got the wake-up call and I didn't hear it or we didn't get one, I'm not sure. We woke up about 10 or 11 and missed the train from Louisville to St. Louis, a trip of about 800 miles. So we had to try to find a way to get to St. Louis in time for the job, where we had two concerts to do. We called the Greyhound and all the different bus companies, we called all the train stations, but we couldn't get anything. We couldn't even get there by commercial air lines, and they weren't great in the forties anyhow. The only thing we could do was to call the Civil Air Patrol.

They got us a pilot, so we decided to rent this plane, which was about 350 dollars in those days. We had about a hundred dollars between us, so we talked the pilot into taking that on the basis of getting the other 250 when we got to St. Louis. We loaded the bags into the little plane, and he started at about one in the afternoon. We felt we could make it on time, so off we went, flying all afternoon. As it got to be evening he turned to us in the cab and said 'I don't know how to tell you guys this, but we're lost.' We couldn't understand that, because you just had to follow the Mississippi River right up, and there's St. Louis, but he managed it. Then he said 'And I hate to tell you this, but we're running out of fuel', adding 'I'm gonna dip down and lower the altitude and see if you can see a sign or something, anything we might

recognize, a landmark or something.' Dodo said 'Why don't you stop and I'll ask a cop?'

We finally wound up in Springfield, Illinois, which is 110 miles from St. Louis, at seven in the evening. When we discovered where we were, the pilot got tough and wouldn't let us have our bags until he got his 250 dollars, and they had two security guards at the airport who backed him up.

We had to go into this small airport at Springfield and call the band manager, Louis Zito, in St. Louis. This was at about 8.30 or 9.00 pm. They already did their first concert without us and were getting ready for the second. We finally got hold of Louis and we wanted to talk him into wiring us money. I said 'Louis, we gotta have 300 dollars to bail ourselves out.' Louis said, and I remember his words exactly,

'Get on the train going the other way, because if you come in this direction, it's death. Tommy's furious. He's so angry that he left the stage and went to his dressing room and nobody can talk to him, and Ziggy (Elman) is leading the band. So don't come.'

We pleaded and pleaded and finally talked him into wiring the money. We had to wait there an hour and a half or so, to get the wire, change it into cash and pay this guy his 250 dollars to get our bags and find a train to St. Louis.

We got into St. Louis at about one o'clock in the morning. They had some sort of transportation strike, so there was nothing available to get us to the hotel where the band was staying, so we hitched a ride with a truck driver. He took us to the hotel, and when we got there there were no rooms. There was a train the band had to catch at nine o'clock the next morning. We hadn't seen anyone in the band, so the hotel guy let us sleep in the mezzanine on a couch. We took turns sleeping because we were frightened of missing the train again. We'd wake each other up and take turns

to go to the rest room and splash cold water on our faces to stay awake another hour. Finally we headed to the station at eight o'clock and we saw Louis Zito. He said 'I don't know what's gonna happen with the Old Man, because he was beside himself. You'll probably get fired, four days in the electric chair, or whatever. But, since you're here, you might as well come along.'

We passed a little bar on the way to the station and went in and had maybe five beers in the space of five minutes. Ridiculous! And neither of us was really a drinker at all. We got on the train which, needless to say, was very crowded with soldiers and people, so we had to sit in the aisle on our luggage and try to sleep against the side of the seat. We both got sick from the beer, but then later in the afternoon we felt that we had to eat, so we made our way to the dining car where we managed to grab two seats. We ordered some food and looked across the aisle and there was Tommy sitting there. He hadn't seen us yet.

Finally he got up from his seat and suddenly he saw us. It seemed like a full two minutes we watched him, and he went through all the phases of emotion in that time. I grabbed a ketchup bottle, because 'Step outside' was one of his frequent ideas. The veins stood out on his forehead, his face got red, he was flexing his muscles, grunting and groaning, and he came over and glared at us for a long while. Then he suddenly started to laugh. 'You guys are ridiculous,' he said. 'You remind me of me when I was a kid. I can't get mad at you. You tried to get there, you hired a plane. Stick around, I'll give you both a raise.'

We never expected that in a million years, but that was Dorsey, you never knew from one hour to the next what his attitude was going to be. □

Article provided by Eric Hoffman

Big Band Music & Grinders In 1936

Courtesy Big Band Jump Newsletter - added comments by Dr. Rip Rice

In the spring of 1936 a sprightly novelty recording sung by Benny Goodman's Helen Ward was playing all over the nation. GOODY GOODY lifted the spirits of kids who grew up in the worst years of the depression, and seemed to point to a less traumatic economic future. Goodman had a great deal to do with the popularity of STOMPIN' AT THE SAVOY, introduced to the public in the summer, thence to become an all-time swing favorite. It was written by Edgar Sampson and Chick Webb with words added by Andy Razaf. At the end of the year, Jimmie Lunceford's tasteful recording of ORGAN GRINDER'S SWING (see "footnote") helped to increase the public's awareness of his brand of precise swing.

Late in 1936 radio and movie star Bob Hope was in the cast of two Broadway shows. He and Fanny Brice starred in "Ziegfeld Follies of 1936," producing the hit song I CAN'T GET STARTED, resulting in Bunny Berigan's most renowned recording. In the fall of the year, Bob Hope joined cast members Jimmy Durante and Ethel Merman to sing IT'S DELOVELY, in a show called "Red Hot & Blue."

A few months later, a highly appealing novelty called THE MUSIC GOES 'ROUND AND 'ROUND swept the nation in 1936. It was the year STEALIN' APPLES was written by Fats Waller, to become a staple of swing bands for years to come. Scouring the charts that year reveals the emergence of A FINE ROMANCE, THE WAY YOU LOOK TONIGHT, I'M AN OLD COWHAND, and THESE FOOLISH THINGS. Cole Porter alone wrote such hits as EASY TO LOVE and

I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN.

Also in 1936, A new picture magazine called "Life" made its debut, charging a top price of ten cents per issue, while "The Saturday Evening Post" sold for five cents (and in Schenectady, New York, this magazine was sold house-to-house by a then 12-year old Rip Rice, future musician and eventually, Director of the Olney Big Band).

The Olney Big Band still plays many of these 1936 hits.

Footnote: The term "Organ Grinder" may require some explanation, especially for our younger readers.

The organ grinder was a musical novelty street performer of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, and operated a street organ.

Exceptionally, the grinder could be a woman, or small child, cranking away on a smaller organ or on a large organ mounted on a pushcart that was sometimes pulled by a donkey. More often than not the grinder was a man, bearing a medium sized barrel organ held in front of him and supported by a hinged or removable wooden stick or leg that was strapped to the back of the organ. A tin cup on top of the organ or in the hand of a companion (or an animal) was used to solicit payments for his performance.

The grinder would crank his organ in a public area, moving from place to place after collecting a few coins or in order to avoid being arrested for loitering or chased by persons who would not appreciate hearing his single tune over and over again. The grinder would often have as a companion a white-headed Capuchin monkey to do tricks and attract attention. The monkey would collect the money from the audience. Other attractions might include parrots, dogs, dancing bears or members of the organ grinder's family who would dance and sing.



An Organ Grinder and His Monkey
Provided by flickr.com

In New York City (USA), there were as many as 1500 organ grinders on the streets at a time - one on almost every block. During the Great Depression that followed the Wall street stock market crash of 1929, Rip Rice was a 5-year old living in a New York City apartment. He recalls that he was not allowed to play the radio when he came home after school, because of the effect on his father's electric bill. With no air conditioning at the time, on summer days the windows were raised, thus allowing the sounds of the organ grinder to waft into the apartment.

Street organs were banned in New York City in 1936 by (Mayor) Fiorello LaGuardia. An unfortunate consequence was the destruction of hundreds of organs, whose barrels contained a record of the popular music of the day. Before the invention of the cylinder record player, this was the only permanent recording of these tunes.

Organ grinders were not restricted to New York City, but were found all over the developed world. Winston Churchill once commented, "Never hold discussions with the monkey when the organ grinder is in the room", thus advising care in choosing the right audience for a discussion or an argument. □

Contributed by Robert Redding

THE ARRANGERS

- Sy Oliver

Courtesy of Big Band Data Base Plus - nfo.net

Much of the music we recall from the Big Band era, is remembered not because of the melody of the music, or the interest of the lyric, but rather for the beauty of the arrangements used by the Big Bands. Yet, curiously, the names of most all the great arrangers remain in relative obscurity.

In the early days of the 20th Century (the 'teens and early 1920s), arrangers mostly learned what they could on their own by experimenting and talking to other musicians, since there really were no books on "big-band" arranging at the time (there were no "Big Bands").

During the height of the big band era, orchestras would often hire arrangers to adapt a previously written song to accommodate the talent level and style of that band.

At no other time in Jazz history was arranging such a major part of the music scene.

Not all of the "dance" and "society" bands of this era played Jazz, but it has been argued that those bands' arrangers may have taken on the role of the Jazz musicians, by creating a form of improvisation, even if the performers were reading the charts. One such prolific arranger was Sy Oliver.

Sy Oliver (né: Melvin James Oliver) was born on Dec. 17, 1910 in Battle Creek, MI. He died May 28, 1988 in New York, NY. Sy Oliver's sophisticated and melodic arrangements greatly helped to define Jimmy Lunceford's band in the 1930s, and Tommy Dorsey's band in the 1940s.

Both Sy's father (a concert singer) and his mother taught music in Zanesville, Ohio. Sy studied trumpet with his father. Upon graduating

from High School in June 1928, he found work playing with Zach Whyte's Chocolate Beau Brummels in Cincinnati, OH. Also in the late 1920s, he worked with the Alphonse Trent band. Late in 1933, he joined Jimmy Lunceford's band, remaining with Jimmy until Oct. '39, when he joined Tommy Dorsey as an arranger. Leonard Feather in his "Encyclopedia of Jazz" has said of Oliver:

"His orchestrations, more than any other contributor to the Lunceford library, gave the Lunceford band its' distinctive sound. Oliver's writing made use of many simple, swinging effects, frequent staccato phrases that often had a climax. In addition, he was the band's outstanding trumpet soloist and a vocalist of exceptional charm."

Among the songs Oliver arranged for Lunceford are:

1934 - STOMP OFF, and DREAM OF YOU

1936 - FOUR OR FIVE TIMES, SWANEE RIVER, MY BLUE HEAVEN, ORGAN GRINDER'S SWING, ON THE BEACH AT BALI BALI, ME AND THE MOON, and MY LAST AFFAIR

1937 - LINGER AWHILE, FOR DANCERS ONLY, RAGGIN' THE SCALE, POSIN', and ANNIE LAURIE

1938 - MARGIE, SWEET SUE, and BY THE RIVER ST. MARIE

1939 - TAIN'T WHATCHA DO, CHEATIN' ON ME, LE JAZZ HOT, and AIN'T SHE SWEET

In Oct. 1939, Oliver jumped at the chance to make a lot more money arranging when he joined the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. Sy was a major player in bringing fame, as well as drummer Buddy Rich, to the Dorsey band. (It was



Courtesy of Frank Driggs Collection

quite a blow to Lunceford when he left.) For the Tommy Dorsey Orch., (in which he also sang occasionally), he arranged such originals as **EASY DOES IT, WELL GIT IT, SWING HIGH, and OPUS 1.**

During '43-'45, Sy led his own band while in the U. S. Army. After discharge he worked on and off again for Dorsey. He also led his own band on a radio show named "Endorsed By Dorsey". From 1946 on, Oliver worked mainly as a freelance arranger and producer. In 1944, he won the Met Poll as arranger while in 1941 and 1945, he won the Downbeat Poll.

From the late 1940s, he worked on and off as Music Director, Staff Arranger and Recording Supervisor for Decca Records. From 1947 on he occasionally led a band.

1954-'55 he worked for Bethlehem records.

1958 he worked for Jubilee Records in New York, NY.

1959-'60 he operated his own Arranging Service in New York, NY.

While he was regularly leading a band as late as 1975-1980, Sy will always be remembered for his great Lunceford and Dorsey Charts, and as an excellent trumpeter, and a likable vocalist. □

Contributed by Brad Bawek

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Friends of the OBB

The Friends of the Olney Big Band are people who love to listen and dance to big band music and are dedicated to keeping alive the spirit of American swing, dance, and jazz music. Friends support the efforts of the Band by encouraging volunteerism and by donating and soliciting and receiving gifts, bequests and endowments for the Band. Your contributions and volunteer efforts will support the following activities:

- Promoting performances of American Big Band Music for Charitable Educational and Entertainment Purposes;
- Providing Young People with the Opportunity to Hear Live Concerts in a Family-Friendly Atmosphere;
- Providing Educational and Playing Opportunities for Young and Older Musicians alike to experience and enjoy Big Band Music; and
- Promoting the Teaching and Enjoyment of Ballroom Dancing.

If you are interested in becoming a *Friend of the Olney Big Band* go to the OBB website and click *Friends of the OBB* for details.

OBB Events Schedule

Friday, July 18, - Montreux Jazz Festival, Montreux, Switzerland, Parc Vernex – Under The Sky Festival Stage, 1-2:15 pm

Saturday, July 19, - Montreux Jazz Festival, Montreux, Switzerland, Parc Vernex – Under The Sky Festival Stage, 4:30-5:15 pm

Thursday, July 31 - Sounds of Summer Concert Series, Olney Village Center/Olney Town Center - Olney, MD 7:30-9 pm

Saturday, August 16 - A Mid-Summer Night Swing, Brooke Grove Retirement Village, Sandy Spring, MD 7:00-8:30 pm

Sunday, August 31 - Riderwood Retirement Community Concert, Silver Spring, MD – Private Party, 3-4 pm

Rehearsals

Mondays 8-10 pm

Jul 7, 14 -- Aug 4, 18 -- Sep 8, 22

All full band rehearsals

Check OBB Players page on website for further details and updates



For Band Information Contact

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For Booking Information Check our Website or Contact

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