

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

May 18, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Jonathan Singer, xylophone with Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks

Michael Ponella, trumpet; Jim Fryre, trombone; Mark Lopeman, tenor saxophone, clarinet
Dan Levinson, alto saxophone, C melody saxophone, and clarinets; Andy Stein, violin
Peter Yarin, piano; Vinny Raniolo, banjo and guitar; Paul Wells, percussion
Vince Giordano, bass, tuba, and bass saxophone

Dotty Dimples

George Hamilton Green, Jr. (1893-1970)/
Victor Arden (1893-1962)
Arr. J.S. Zamecnik

Graveyard Blues

Clarence Woods/John S. Caldwell

Russian Rag

George L. Cobb
(1886-1942)
arr. Henri Klickmann

Alabama Moon

George Hamilton Green, Jr.
Arr. J.S. Zamecnik

My Desert Love

John Cooper
Arr. Dan Levinson

Al Fresco

Victor Herbert
(1859-1924)
Arr. Frank Banta and Sammy Herman
Trans. Jonathan Singer/Carmen Staaf

Ya Va Das Ra Ga Ya Bloo

Sano Marco/Jack Erickson
As recorded by the Sammy Herman Trio

INTERMISSION

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

- Lovely Little Silhouette
Vincent Rose
(1840-1944)
As recorded by the Varsity Four
- March of the Marionettes
Domenico Savino (1882-1973)
/Peter DeRose (1900-1953)
As recorded by the Varsity Four
- Jumping Jack
Rube Bloom/Bernie Seaman/Marvin Smoley
As recorded by the Varsity Four
- In a Mist
Leon “Bix” Beiderbecke (1903-1931)
Arr. Red Norvo (1908-1999)
- On the Woodpile
Harry Breuer (1901-1989)
As recorded by Harry Breuer with the Colonial Club Orchestra
- Dance of the Raindrops
Erell Reeves/Tolchard Evans (1901-1978)
Arr. Sax Hoover
As recorded by Teddy Brown (1900-1946)
- Ida/Some of These Days Medley
Eddie Munson/Shelton Brooks
Trans. Jonathan Singer & Carmen Staaf
Arr. Pierre Thibout & Jonathan Singer
Based on an improvisation by Billy Gladstone (1893-1961)

Notes on the Program

This program is made possible by the Baisley Powell Elebash Award for dissertations related to New York City.

Tonight’s program is a selection of music that relates to my dissertation research of improvised xylophone music in New York City, between 1916 and 1942. The xylophonists represented are George Hamilton Green, Jr. (1893-1970), Sammy Herman (1903-1995), Harry Breuer (1901-1989), Billy Gladstone (1893-1961), Teddy Brown (1900-1946), and Red Norvo (1908-1999). The “Golden Age” of the xylophone (ca. 1890-1930) culminated in many recordings by virtuoso xylophonists made in New York City. By the end of World War I, a dance craze had caused a rise in the popularity of a new syncopated music, and the xylophone was an ideal instrument for its rhythmic complexities. Additionally, the xylophone was a perfect fit for the nascent recording industry, projecting in a high register with clarity, where mid-range and bass

instruments were lost. Thousands of xylophone recordings were made during the instrument's Golden Age. Beginning in 1925, as the advent of the electric microphone improved fidelity, the xylophone began to wane in popular music. Many of the pieces on tonight's program are all but forgotten, except by a select group of record collectors and enthusiasts. Most of the program consists of popular songs dating to the early twentieth century, and while their composers and lyricists are tremendously important, I will be emphasizing the instrumental arrangements performed by these outstanding xylophonists. The arrangements on tonight's program have been transcribed from recordings, or in some cases, taken from multiple recordings combined with various published ensemble arrangements.

Xylophonist, composer, recording artist, and cartoonist **George Hamilton Green** lived a life that entailed much more than the ragtime music he is most remembered for today. In 1916 Green was hailed as "the greatest xylophonist in the world," a title that arguably still holds true. Green championed the early recording industry recording in styles from classical pieces, novelty ragtime, to popular songs that topped the charts in their day.

Composed by George Hamilton Green and pianist Victor Arden, two thirds of the All Star Trio (along with saxophonist Wheel F. Wadsworth), "**Dotty Dimples**" is representative of Green's early compositional style. An up-tempo one-step dance composition, later dubbed the fox-trot, the 32-measure strains of "Dotty Dimples" are twice as long as typical compositions of the era. The only surviving recordings of Green's performances are by the All Star Trio.

Shortly after arriving from the Midwest to New York City to record for Edison Records, George Hamilton Green began performing and recording with bandleader and drummer Earl Fuller's ensembles. Fuller's various novelty and jazz groups were in residence at Rector's Restaurant of the Rector Hotel in New York City's theater district, and helped popularize the dance trends of the late 1910s. Beginning in 1917, Fuller was one of the first bandleaders to record early jazz, including "**Graveyard Blues**." Green's xylophone syncopated improvisation is at the forefront of his recording of this Texas-style barrelhouse blues, indicative of the early jazz style.

Also recorded by Green with a Fuller-led group in 1918, George Cobb's "**Russian Rag**" is a ragtime adaptation of the first three-note motif from Sergei Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C-sharp minor, Op. 3, No. 2. According to Tom Brown of the Six Brown Brother saxophone sextet, Rachmaninoff heard Cobb's version of "Russian Rag," "and liked it, considering this is a method of popularizing real music. We play such adaptations to attract attention and we find that the public takes to adaptation better because familiar melodies appeal. That's reason enough."

In 1920, Green achieved the peak of his songwriting success with "**Alabama Moon**," which sold a million copies of recordings and sheet music within its first year of publication. The All Star Trio and various other ensembles recorded the waltz, which typifies popular music with nostalgia for the American South. The arrangements of "Dotty Dimples" and "Alabama Moon" performed tonight are adaptations of arrangements by the All Star Trio and orchestration by J.S. Zamecnik, a composer and arranger for the Sam Fox Publishing Company of Cleveland, Ohio.

"**My Desert Love**," is an "oriental novelty song" transcribed from a recording that features the C melody saxophone performed by Rudy Weidoft, xylophone performed by George Hamilton Green, and an unidentified orchestra. Saxophonist Rudy Weidoft is remembered for his novelty style, rapid runs, signature wide vibrato, and popularizing the C melody saxophone in recordings from the 1910s-1920s. Weidoft and Green's approaches to their respective instruments are in many ways

complimentary. By demonstrating the virtuosic capabilities of what were then considered novelty instruments, Green and Weidoeft elevated the status of the saxophone and xylophone.

When Rudy Weidoeft left the renowned touring group Eight Popular Victor Artists in the mid 1920s, he created an opportunity for the young xylophonist Sammy Herman. Upon the recommendation of the group's pianist Frank Banta, Herman replaced Weidoeft as their instrumental soloist, along with the top Victor recording artists, including famed vocalists Billy Murray and Henry Burr. However, at the time Herman joined the group, he did not have any solo recordings on the Victor label to promote. *Al Fresco* was Herman's first recording, released in 1927, along with Frank Banta on piano.

Originally written for piano solo, **Al Fresco** is an example of light-classical intermezzo, or short piece that has a similar form to turn-of-the-century ragtime pieces. This duo arrangement involves a typical Herman device of harmonizing the melody of the A strain, first with the melody played in the right hand and harmonized with the left; then, Herman places the melody in the left hand and harmonizes with the right. As natural a decision as it may seem, to balance right and left hand, this was not common for xylophonists of the time and was a result of Herman's strong left hand. Herman and Banta's arrangement gradually gets more complex, leading to the improvised Trio strain, and then returns as before, with a single-line melody.

Known for his ability as an improviser, some of the main aspects of Sammy Herman's style are fast and fluid sextuplet phrases, an exaggerated sense of swing, playing in octaves, and dead-stroke accompaniment. These devices are all exemplified in his rendition of Sano Marco and Jack Erickson's "**Ya Vas Da-Ra-Ga-Ya-Loo-Bloo** (I Love You)." This transcription comes from a 1942 recording of the Sammy Herman Trio, with accordionist Charles Magnante and bassist Sam Shoobie. The trio allows for freedom to suddenly change tempi, adding to the drama of this pseudo-Russian tune rendered in the hot style.

A group that recorded under the name The Varsity Four made six sides in 1928, including "**Lovely Little Sillhouette**," "**March of the Marionettes**," and "**Jumping Jack**." Discographer Brian Rust credits the sides to Andy Sannella, saxophone, clarinet, and slide guitar; Bill Werges, piano; Harry Reser, banjo; and possibly Joe Green, xylophone (George Hamilton Green's older brother). The hot xylophone style recorded by the group, consisting of fluid noodling and obbligato lines, are characteristic of Sammy Herman's performance, and likely to be Herman. It is not possible to be certain, as Sammy Herman and Joe Green both collaborated with these musicians in various groups throughout the 1920s. In either case, the performance on these sides is a display of virtuosity by the whole group.

The music of xylophonist and vibraphonist Red Norvo developed through several distinct periods in jazz history. Having started out in the vaudeville houses in Chicago, Norvo eventually joined Paul Whiteman's group. Through his association with Paul Whiteman he met his wife-to-be, singer Mildred Bailey. The couple would come to be known as "Mr. and Mrs. Swing," and gain great recognition in the Swing era. Norvo kept developing though, always slightly ahead of his time, venturing into new directions. He switched from the xylophone to the vibraphone in 1943, continuing to evolve through the Bebop era.

Bix Beiderbecke, jazz cornetist, pianist, and composer was one of the most influential jazz soloists of the 1920s. Having recorded "In a Mist" in 1927 on the piano, the piece was transcribed and published by arranger Bill Challis, and subsequently arranged by numerous musicians, becoming a

jazz standard. This arrangement, from Norvo's early period, capitalizes on Beiderbecke's new harmonic language heavily influenced by modern European composers of the time (notably Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy).

Norvo's recording of "**In a Mist**," along with his own "Dance of the Octopus" (two sides of the 78 rpm record) was reason for Norvo's Brunswick recording contract to be terminated. Norvo had written and arranged several other compositions in this style, with four-mallet contrapuntal writing decades ahead of other performers, but distraught by losing his Brunswick contract, he discarded them. Eventually, following the success of the recording, Norvo was offered his contract back, but by then Norvo's style had developed in other directions, leading some of the most outstanding bands of the Swing era.

Harry Breuer was one of the first radio xylophonists, broadcasting from Ridgewood, Queens, as early as 1921. In addition to performing regularly on the airwaves, Breuer held positions in many of New York's largest theater orchestras. As a specialist on xylophone, marimba, vibraphone and sound effects, Breuer's recording career lasted into the 1980s. According to Breuer, as compared with his early xylophone showpieces, "**On the Woodpile** is intentionally less flashy, not overloaded with notes, putting emphasis on rhythmic patterns rather than runs and embellishments." This arrangement features breaks and an improvised chorus from a 1929 Brunswick Brevities radio broadcast.

Teddy Brown (born Abraham Himmelbrand), a xylophonist and multi-instrumentalist renowned for his career in England, was a highly successful entertainer. A native New Yorker, Brown first established himself as a soloist with society orchestras, as well as symphonic orchestras around New York. After a move to England in the 1920s, the British Pathé captured many of his performances on film. This transcription of "**Dance of the Raindrops**" is from a scene in *Elstree Calling*, a "cine-radio revue" film, co-directed by a young Alfred Hitchcock. Along with Brown's rotund appearance (weighing nearly 400 pounds) and stage-antics, including playing behind his back while spinning around, his xylophone performance continues to be spellbinding to the viewers of his films from the 1930s.

A recording of Billy Gladstone's performance of "**Ida/Some of These Days Medley**" surfaced on a Myspace page paying homage to the life and legacy of Gladstone as a great musician, inventor, and educator. Remembered mostly for his abilities as a snare drummer and tenure with the Radio City Hall Orchestra, Gladstone's xylophone playing had an astonishing impact on me. This recording dates from 1928-1931, the years Gladstone performed at the Capitol Theater with Major Bowes, the announcer on the recording (a live radio broadcast). Gladstone's performance features highly refined use of techniques employed by xylophonist of the era. To hear the original recording, visit: <http://www.myspace.com/williamdgladstone>.

About the Artists

Included among the Village Voice's "Best of New York," percussionist **Jonathan Singer** has been praised for his "superb four-mallet technique" (New York Times) and described as an "artistic assault on the sensory order of nitrous oxide." His solo appearances include performances with the Detroit Symphony and Grammy-winning Nighthawks. As the leader of the Brooklyn-based novelty band, Xylopholks, Mr. Singer has performed across the United States, India, Japan, Brazil, and Canada and on the stages of Alice Tully Hall, City Center, 92nd Y, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He has been heard on WNYC, Air America, and made on-screen appearances in Boardwalk Empire, Royal Pains, and David Grubin's Downtown Express. Mr. Singer is the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship and Queens College grant to study in India. Singer is presently an adjunct lecturer at Queensborough Community College, and has had previous appointments at Brooklyn College, and Queens College. Since 2013, Singer has taught xylophone performance and improvisation at the University of Delaware Xylophone Institute. Mr. Singer is a graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy, Berklee College of Music, and Queens College and is currently a doctoral candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center, where he continues his studies with Morris Lang.

Mr. Singer is currently in the dissertation process as a doctoral candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center, where he is the recipient of the Baisley Powell Elebash Dissertation Award for his work on xylophone improvisation from the early twentieth century. Jonathan Singer endorses the Mallettech company, where he helped design the Jon Singer signature xylophone mallet. His instruments are tuned and maintained by Fall Creek Marimbas.

Grammy-winner, New York native and multi-instrumentalist **Vince Giordano** has played in New York nightclubs, appeared in films such as The Cotton Club, The Aviator, Finding Forrester, Revolutionary Road, HBO's Boardwalk Empire and for concerts at the Town Hall, Jazz At Lincoln Center, the Newport Jazz Festival and the 92nd St Y for the past four decades. Most recently Giordano was inducted into the Long Island Music Hall of Fame. Recording projects include soundtracks for the award-winning Boardwalk Empire with vocalist like Elvis Costello, Regina Spektor, Liza Minnelli, Catherine Russell and David Johansen. Vince and his band have also recorded for Terry Zwigoff's Ghost World, Tamara Jenkins' The Savages, Robert DeNiro's The Good Shepherd, Sam Mendes' Away We Go, Michael Mann's film Public Enemies, and John Krokidas' debut feature, Kill Your Darlings, along with HBO's Grey Gardens and the miniseries Mildred Pierce. Other projects include Todd Haynes' film Carol; HBO's Bessie starring Queen Latifah; and Cinemax's The Knick starring Clive Owen. Recently released projects include Woody Allen's Café Society starring Jesse Eisenberg and Kristen Stewart and a Maggie Greenwald film called Sophie and the Rising Sun that debuted at the Sundance Film Festival. Upcoming projects include a Barry Levinson film for HBO called Wizard of Lies, starring Robert DeNiro and Michelle Pfeiffer; and an upcoming historical drama called The Promise, directed by Terry George, starring Christian Bale and Oscar Isaac.

Hudson West Productions' feature documentary Vince Giordano – There's a Future in the Past opened theatrically in NYC on January 13th to rave reviews and was held over by popular demand. A New York Times "Critics Pick", Stephen Holden pronounced it "The next best thing to dancing on air." Other accolades include The Hollywood Reporter: "It swings!" The Village Voice: "showcases both the recreations — persuasive revivals of tunes and arrangements and solos from the 1920s and '30 — and the great present-tense effort it takes to pull them off." And Film Journal International summed it all up: "One of the best music docs ever." Directed by Dave Davidson and Amber Edwards, the film is continuing to be shown throughout the country.

Giordano's passion for this music and the people that made it began at age 5. He has amassed an amazing collection of over 60,000 band arrangements, 1920's and 30's films, 78 recordings and jazz-age memorabilia. Giordano sought out and studied with important survivors from the period; Whiteman's hot arranger Bill Challis and drummer Chauncey Morehouse, and bassist Joe Tarto. Giordano's passion, commitment to authenticity, and knowledge led him to create a sensational band of like-minded players the Nighthawks. This year, they will appear at Bard College and Central Park – SummerStage. Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks can be heard every Monday and Tuesday night at Iguana NYC. www.vincegiordano.com