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WE WERE SURROUNDED BY GIANTS:  
THE HISTORY OF JAZZ IN BROOKLYN 1910-1980

By

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A thesis submitted to the  
Graduate School-New Brunswick  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Graduate Program in Jazz History and Research

written under the direction of

Dr. Lewis Porter

and approved by

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New Brunswick, New Jersey

*May 2013*

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

We Were Surrounded By Giants:

The History of Jazz in Brooklyn 1910-1980

by VINCENT RAMAL GARDNER

Thesis Director:

Dr. Lewis Porter

The purpose of this research is to chronicle the vastly under-documented independent jazz environment that existed within the borough of Brooklyn, the manner in which it developed, and to a lesser extent examine the related social and socio-economic conditions that brought about its development, and those which also came to be as a result of its continuation throughout the years described. This has been done by drawing upon several sources of information, including examination of historical newspapers, published books on jazz and related topics, interviews with primary figures from the Brooklyn jazz scene, and to a lesser extent the author's own personal recollections



from living and playing jazz in the borough. A common misconception when considering the Brooklyn jazz scene is that it was miniscule when compared to that of Manhattan during the years of the music's most popular, most creative, and most commercially viable period. This research has found that not only was this not the case, but that it is possible that for a number of years the overall scene in Brooklyn was as active as that in Manhattan, and in the case of a particular neighborhood, Bedford-Stuyvesant, the number of jazz venues present there may have even eclipsed that of its Manhattan counterpart, Harlem, and possibly that of the entire island. During the course of this research several items of newly discovered information have been presented, and in other instances the content of previously known information has been expanded upon and collected in this singular location for the first time. Among these are items such as the whereabouts and activity of pioneering early jazz trumpeter Freddie Keppard during the summers of 1919 and 1920, an extensive documentation of the jazz activity and programming tendencies of Brooklyn's downtown theaters during their most active periods, the

Brooklyn origins of the inspiration to Ella Fitzgerald's hit recording "A Tisket, A Tasket", the whereabouts and musical activities of many of the important sidemen which contributed to the early Bebop and Rhythm and Blues periods, and a detailed picture of the history and activity of many important Brooklyn jazz clubs, such as Tony's Grandean, The Continental, The Putnam Central, and Soldier Meyer's.

## Preface

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, Newark Campus. The research described herein was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Lewis Porter in the Jazz History and Research Department, Rutgers-Newark, between August 2009 and April 2013.

This writing contained herein is to the best of my knowledge original, except where acknowledgements and references are made to previously existing sources. Any information that is not footnoted is drawn from my own research in newspapers and other primary sources.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to a number of people, without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

The focused, informed, and considerate guidance of Dr. Lewis Porter throughout my matriculation at Rutgers, and the progression of this research proved to be invaluable to its completion. I cannot truly express with words the amount of respect and admiration that I have for him, as a scholar, musician, and as a friend.

The model for thoroughness and passion for analysis exhibited by both Dr. John Howland and Dr. Henry Martin, in their respective published works and classroom demeanors, provided an important benchmark which I used to guide me during this writing.

I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to develop a friendship with the historian and jazz lover Phil Schaap throughout my tenure in the Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra, which at the time of

this writing spans twelve years. His completely unique perspective to the music, having learned it since his own childhood from many of the primary participants of the art form, and his almost inhuman capacity to recall *everything* that they said and didn't say about all things musical and otherwise, has imparted to me invaluable knowledge and has demonstrated the immeasurable depth of love that is possible for one to have for jazz.

For a number of years before I began my matriculation at Rutgers, and then during a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to earn much needed credits during it, I was given the honor of being able to spend time with the record producer and jazz aficionado George Avakian. The information that he imparted upon me during our time together gave me a first hand look into the evolution of the development of the jazz record industry, and also the sometimes long-forgotten lesson on the depth of the connection that real jazz fans had to their favorite musicians, and the music that they made.

Time is an unforgiving force in the universe, unable to be bargained, bartered, or reasoned with. We are only given Twenty-Four hours within a particular day in which to go about our daily pursuits, and any number or portion of those hours spent on a particular task usually results in another one being sacrificed. I was a member of the Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra during my entire matriculation at Rutgers, and I must express my thanks to its leader, my friend and bandmate, the consummate musician and scholar Wynton Marsalis, for the many times that it was necessary for me to miss a scheduled event with that organization in order to pursue my studies at Rutgers, and subsequently complete the writing of this thesis.

Along those same lines, I would like to thank my family and friends for all of the support and understanding that was given to me during the many hours in which I was unavailable while working on this thesis.

The Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn is an important, blossoming cultural force located in the Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown

Heights neighborhoods. I was privileged to be given the opportunity to conduct an internship there and have access to their vast Brooklyn jazz oral history archive, while learning important information about the surrounding neighborhood. This simply would not have been possible without the guidance and encouragement of Weeksville's Director of Research, Jennifer Scott. Her enthusiasm for preserving the neighborhood's various historical elements, including those related to jazz, served as constant motivation to dig deeper within my own research.

A number of musicians and/or incredibly knowledgeable participants from the Brooklyn jazz scene were kind enough to grant me almost constant access to them over the last few years in order to gather priceless first-hand information concerning the happenings in their beloved borough.

The Griot, Randy Weston, took me much deeper into the musical environment of the Bedford-Stuyvesant of his youth than I ever

thought that I would go when I first sat down with him and jazz aficionado Donald Sangster in 2010. Even before I knew what I was trying to say with this writing, it seemed that he and Sangster knew from the start. Their words set the tone and provided the inspiration for this attempt to put into words a picture of the proud, self-contained, swinging neighborhood that they both call home to this day.

Pianist Ed Stoute, who I had the pleasure of working with while I was living in Brooklyn, was another invaluable source of information, and to this day is an example of the living spirit of the Brooklyn Bebopper. I will also always be in his gratitude for putting me in touch with Bed-Stuy drummer Morris Fant, who's enthusiasm for the music while over 75 years of age was the same as it was when he was 16.

Fred Anderson provided me with the largest amount of information of anyone that I interviewed, and it seemed that every time that I called him, he would remember something that he had forgotten during our



last conversation, and then proceed to impart a greater amount of substantive information than before. Simply put, this is a man that loves to listen to and talk about jazz, and he was a participant on almost every jazz scene, in the entirety of New York City, for a period of over fifty years. His nephew, Bedford-Stuyvesant native Wessel “Warmdaddy” Anderson III, also provided me with invaluable information during the time that we played together in the Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra, and was always at my disposal afterward to tell me how all things musical really were in his neighborhood.

Brooklyn musicians such as Terry Gibbs, Robert Trowers, Jimmy Cozier, and Charles Tolliver provided me with important pieces of information that helped to “connect the dots” on many occasions when a particular solution had eluded me. I will always be grateful for their help, and relish the opportunity to perform with them again in the future. I truly hope that they and all others who contributed to the information in this thesis would approve of my attempt to embody in writing the spirit of jazz in their borough.

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Adv. = Advertisement

BAM = Brooklyn Academy of Music

Bk. = Brooklyn

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## Introduction: Liars

My initial goal for this research, and motivation for my interest in the Brooklyn jazz scene was simply to prove that some musician-friends of mine who were either natives of the borough or long-time transplants, were flat-out liars. I have to thank people such as Curtis Fowlkes, Charles Stevens, Tony Alston, Robert Trowers and others for that.

When I moved to Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in 1996, to pursue a musical career playing jazz music in New York City, surprisingly the city didn't instantly open up to me and offer life-sustaining income or a musically satisfying existence. In my first few years I played some jazz, but the majority of my income, and musical output was playing in Club Date and wedding bands based in Brooklyn.

Many of the musicians in these groups were older Brooklyn jazz musicians to whom a similar fate had fallen. I had a car, so sometimes I would give them a ride to the engagement, after meeting them at their apartment or mine, or elsewhere. I kept noticing that we couldn't go a single block in the neighborhood before one of them said while

pointing to a storefront or abandoned space, "I saw Miles Davis there when I was 12", "Eric Dolphy used to live there", or "Billy Eckstine's band with Dizzy Gillespie gave a dance there, my father told me about it". By the time they finished talking, the names of 15-20 clubs and/or musicians would have been stated before we left the neighborhood borders. I would look at the decrepit old building that they would gesture toward and think "Are they for real? Why would those bands come to Brooklyn instead of just playing in Manhattan? These guys must be drunk." As far as what I thought of Brooklyn before becoming a resident, I remember thinking that once there, I would never spend an entire day in the borough...only coming back there to sleep, because what was there to do in Brooklyn? While with the musicians, if the conversation kept on the same topic, intense lamentations on the way the scene used to be in Bedford-Stuyvesant would follow, along with prideful accounts of how close and self-contained the community was, and how nice people used to treat each other...*in Bedford-Stuyvesant*. I started to reconcile this a little, thinking that maybe the people could have been nicer back then, especially during the more

socially trying times in this country's history when African-Americans were almost forced to maintain a certain closeness and self-reliance not only in the South, but also in the "Up-South" as the northern cities became known in African-American lingo. But there couldn't possibly have been that many clubs here, and all of those famous jazz musicians that I idolized couldn't have possibly lived in and/or performed in this neighborhood...these guys had to be liars. As it turned out, I was terribly wrong about them and the neighborhood, and had much to discover about the entire borough.

Brooklyn has a vast and important jazz history, and a few of its numerous neighborhoods played an integral role in the development of the New York scene. Even beyond jazz, it was destined to play a role in 20<sup>th</sup> century entertainment even before 1907, when Eugene Farrar became the first person to sing over radio waves originating from the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The presence of the Italian, Jewish, and Russian Mafias in Brooklyn are well known and documented. Italian organized crime in particular had a strong penchant for entertainment, and it had

a number of established nightclubs in or near the predominantly Italian neighborhoods of Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge, and Gravesend. The predominantly Jewish neighborhoods of Brownsville, and East New York were also a stronghold of organized crime, dubiously known as Murder Inc., and many of the second generation American sons and daughters of European Jewish immigrants that settled there went on to become many of the greatest stars of Stage and Screen. Luckily, a few of those stages had big bands on them, and were in front of dance floors. As it pertains to jazz in the borough, One neighborhood in particular, Bedford-Stuyvesant, emerges as the clear-cut winner in terms of importance through the sheer volume of musical activity there over a sustained period of time, the number of musicians produced, and the complete and total integration of jazz into the culture of the neighborhood during the most productive years of the music. Not only were there an astounding number of musicians living within its borders, but also an extraordinary amount of jazz venues were established there supporting the musicians' need to play, and the Brooklynites' need to swing. Randy Weston, in his autobiography says

it bluntly, "Brooklyn...by the 30's and 40's had way more clubs than Manhattan."<sup>1</sup>

It's not known if this 1940 statement, printed in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, contains an accurate account or not, but it would seem that they were not far off of the mark:

A black and white photograph of a newspaper clipping. The text inside the clipping reads: "There are 150 night clubs and cabarets now open in Queens—and twice that number in Brooklyn . . .". The clipping is framed by a dark border.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 10/10/40

Within the whole of New York City, Manhattan has always been the center of the jazz universe, and Brooklyn musicians often frequented the areas of activity such as Harlem, and 52<sup>nd</sup> street. While going to Manhattan and playing with musicians from other areas of the city was almost always musically stimulating and rewarding, by the accounts of Brooklyn musicians they were hardly ever *more* rewarding than playing in local Brooklyn clubs with local musicians. For this reason,

they were equally as inclined to stay in the Borough and enjoy the entertainment within its borders as they were to go to Manhattan. Manhattanites also knew the value of the Brooklyn scene, often coming to perform at the various theaters and participate in jam session in various neighborhoods across the river. Beginning around 1910 or so, Theater builders began recognizing the profitability of tapping into the Brooklyn scene, constructing neighborhood theaters, and in many instances Brooklyn counterparts to many of the primary theaters in Manhattan. They recognized that it wasn't in the Brooklynites nature to always rush to Manhattan for entertainment, that there was something prideful about the ability to stay on their side of the East River and listen to their local talent.

One thing that made a deep impression on me when I moved to Brooklyn is how self-contained and complete it was as soon as you touch down on the other side of one of the 3 Bridges that connect it to Manhattan. The residential neighborhoods begin almost at the river's edge, and with the exception of the Williamsburg Bridge, Downtown



Brooklyn with its skyscrapers and theaters are just a bit further.

Thinking about it in hindsight, since it had been 10 years since I had moved from Brooklyn when I began this writing, and combining those thoughts with the testimonies I heard and read from Brooklynites as I progressed with my research, I came to a realization. Growing up in southeastern Virginia, which is a 7-hour drive from Manhattan, the idea of travelling to Manhattan was almost non-existent except for a special occasion dedicated to that location. Brooklynites, while even living in the farthest reaches of the borough are about an hour drive or subway ride from Downtown Manhattan, thought about Manhattan in nearly the same way...as if it was somewhere to visit infrequently or for some distinct purpose. Everything else in life, including being entertained, took place in their local communities, and they were content staying put.

Brooklyn native Fred Braithwaite, known to the Hip-Hop generation as “Fab Five Freddy”, is the son Fred Braithwaite, of one of the major

non-musician progenitors of the Bedford-Stuyvesant jazz scene, and the Godson of drummer Max Roach. He explains,

“When I was coming up [in the 1970’s and 80’s], living in Brooklyn and coming into the city doing the shit that I did was literally no different, except for the living space and miles of course, than going to California, Manhattan was literally that far away. When you grow up 100% Brooklyn, you might make a couple of forays into the city, or New York – which is how people would call [Manhattan] back then – to see a movie, go to Times Square, or to the Village, was like literally a big deal, that’s how it was when I was growing up.”<sup>2</sup>

To Brooklynites, their own jazz scene had an extremely high standard. It was not looked upon as a breeding ground for Manhattan’s scene, to fill out the ranks of its bands. The Brooklyn scene was completely self-contained and it fed off of and inspired itself, producing great musicians.

That dynamic of pride is one that can be felt when talking to musicians and/or participants of the scene that are connected with Brooklyn neighborhoods with strong musical identities such as Brownsville, Crown Heights, and Bedford-Stuyvesant. It is a feeling that has its

origins in a long period of independence and separation from the rest of New York City, before it was known as "Kings County, New York". Brooklyn was founded in 1646 by the Dutch, but not annexed into the city borders until 1898. That amount of time allowed over 250 years for Brooklynites to solve their own problems, build their own transit systems, solve their own sewage debacles...become *independent*. This spirit of self worth and being self-sufficient re-occurs through the saga of the Brooklyn Jazz scene. Although the borough's government in 1878 had a different agenda, you get the feeling from contemporary Brooklynites that they would have been fine had Brooklyn's lawmakers not accepted the offer to become a part of New York city...that they would have been fine on their own.

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Weston, Willard Jenkins *African Rhythms: The Autobiography*

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Fred Brathwaite, Jr, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on October 8, 2010

## Coney Island

### **"Swingin' Sodom by the Sea"**

A similar look into the history of jazz in the various Boroughs of New York could be researched and written, and most certainly many similarities to Brooklyn's own story would present themselves, except for one Ace-In-The-Hole: Brooklyn has Coney Island, the most popular resort of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Jazz first enters into existence. In the 1820's Brooklyn (which at that time was sometimes still spelled with the original Dutch spelling, "*Breukelen*") was a patchwork of 6 independent towns and a number of independent farms. Coney Island (whose name is an Anglicization of the Dutch phrase meaning "rabbit island"; "*Conyne Eylandt*") is a peninsula on the southernmost tip of Brooklyn that was once an actual island in Jamaica Bay, separated from the mainland by a small tidal inlet known as Coney Island Creek. A small section of this shallow waterway was filled in between 1823 and 1829, attaching Coney Island to Brooklyn, as part of the construction of Shell Road, which was paved with oyster shells. Before

that, the only way to access Coney Island was by small boat or to wade through the tidal marsh at low tide. The new road ran from the nearby town of Gravesend, to which the island belonged, to Coney Island and was the beginning of the development of the area, with the first hotel being built in 1829, the same year that the road was completed. At this point, it was still a half-day trip via ferry and stagecoach from Manhattan, and still largely ignored by Manhattanites as a destination of interest. It wasn't until after 1847, when the first side-wheel steamboats established a two-hour service from Manhattan, that it began to raise the eyebrows of the city's elite.

From its early days, Coney Island had a few things in common with what would become the most important pleasure-city in the story of Jazz. Jazz music, in the beginning of its existence in New Orleans, was played in a district of that city known for its immoral behavior, called Storyville. This district was named for the city Alderman Sidney Storey, who in 1898 wrote the legislation which legalized prostitution in and attempted to confine it to that area. Although it is not known

whether Alderman Story and John McKayne of Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn ever met each other and talked policy, they certainly shared some similar views in regards to leisure. McKayne, a builder by trade, single handedly ushered in Coney Island's resort era, and also its most corrupt one. He was elected Gravesend's Constable and Town Supervisor between 1866 and 1876, and after recognizing the value of this undeveloped beachfront property, acquired most the lands in and around Coney Island through legitimate and illegitimate means. He then leased them off to hotel, railroad and concession developers, receiving kickbacks in the process. In 1881, McKayne formed his own Police force and naturally proclaimed himself Chief of Police. Around 1876 he is reported to have said, "Houses of Prostitution are a necessity on Coney Island...After all, this ain't no Sunday School." A few years later, *The New York Times* gave it a nickname that was attached to the island for quite some time, dubbing it "Sodom by the Sea". McKayne would eventually be arrested and sent to jail for rigging an election, and be released the year before the annexation of Brooklyn into New York, dying of a heart attack that year.

The Island was soon divided up into neighborhoods such as Manhattan Beach, Brighton Beach, a section called Coney Island, and later Sea Gate which is still an elite, gated housing community on the westernmost tip of the island. Although in contemporary times "Coney Island" technically only comprises one section of the entire island, for the purposed of this writing I will largely refer to the entire land mass as "Coney Island", except in certain special cases where distinctions for certain neighborhoods must be made. In Coney's initial resort days (1830's-1870's), discrimination against the city's poorer classes, the cost of transportation to the island from Manhattan, and selective policies concerning hotel occupation among other factors turned Coney Island into a destination for the elite of New York wishing to escape the crowds and heat of Manhattan. Prior to 1923, nearly the entire coastline was privately owned (another example of McKayne's legacy), and beachgoers had to pay to use it, and pay another fee as well to change in a private bathhouse. As would be expected, the visitors to the island needed to be entertained. In 1882, Coney Island's first



grand theater, the Surf Theater was built, quickly followed by Henderson's Music Hall( which presented "Refined Vaudeville,") and Brighton Beach Music Hall soon after. At Henderson's, performers such as Al Jolson, Sophie Tucker, Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake, and Bert Williams graced the stage. An 8-year old George Burns performed there as a member of the Pee Wee Quartet in 1904, and in 1907 Harpo Marx first teamed up with his brothers Groucho and Gummo at Henderson's, but he was too scared to sing and reportedly wet his pants. Brighton Beach Music Hall featured performers such as W.C. Fields, Eddie Foy, Irene Franklin, and Ethel Barrymore. Later on, the "highbrow halls" such as the New Brighton Theater and the Manhattan Beach Opera House began to showcase minstrel shows and vaudeville. Coney's most well-known entities, it's large amusement parks, were built starting with Sea Lion Park in 1895, and Steeplechase, Luna Park, and Dreamland being built between 1897 and 1904, each subsequent park outdoing the previous one in lavishness and extravagance. Luna Park, when it opened was "unlike anything seen before, with more

than 250,000 electric lights..."<sup>3</sup>, and Dreamland's electric bill was reportedly four thousand dollars a week.

Fortunately for Jazz, Coney Island's 5-mile length and 1½ mile girth allowed for ample space for both the immoral and the moral to exist on one resort. Because, as in most of the country during these early days, this music was still looked upon as a lowbrow entity, and the days were still far off when it would be played in the finer halls which might present Symphonic bands or orchestras playing the classics, opera, or refined theater. In order to maximize traffic to the Surf Theater, a wide but crude plank alleyway was built which ran from the theater to the ocean, for the purpose of allowing patrons to bypass the amusement parks. Other businesses sprang up along this alleyway, and it soon developed a climate of sin and debauchery. It was named "The Bowery" after the Manhattan neighborhood with the same qualities. The Bowery was six city blocks long, and at one time there were 260 saloons, dance halls, bordellos, and other businesses along its length. In the islands elite resort days, a family traveling to the

island might stay at the Oriental or one of the other hotels, and enjoy the beach and the entertainment provided on the hotel grounds. At night, after the women and children went to sleep, the “refined gentlemen” went to the Bowery for entertainment. Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the clientele of the island began to change. In 1883, one year after the Surf Theater was built, the Brooklyn Bridge was completed. It was only then, along with the upgrade of the horse-drawn railroads to steam powered ones in 1867, that Coney Island began to be accessible destination for the city’s day-trippers, and for the first time to the city’s underprivileged classes. If you were able to walk across the Brooklyn Bridge, a family could ride the new trains to Coney Island for twenty cents. It is in this period, and on the aforementioned alleyway, that Jazz enters the picture, via vaudeville and ragtime.



**The Coney Island Bowery, circa 1912**

Coney Island, being a resort, was a hotbed for the new trends in social entertainment. In the late 1800's, America was swept up by social dance craze, and the island was not immune. The latest dances were being debuted, taught, and exhibited on the island. In the book *The American State Fair* while discussing a dance called "cooch" the author

says, "One reference says that cooch was "an early form of belly dance, "and was being performed at Coney Island in the 1890's". As ragtime and dancing to it became more popular, the media of the time began to report on the dances that were driven by these new syncopated strains that had risen from the Midwestern states. As noted in *Coney Island: The People's Playground*, "Few attractions were more popular than Coney Island's dancing pavilions, where the music seemed to play on endlessly. During the 1890's, new forms of dance such as the two-step and the syncopated rhythms of ragtime brought about enormous changes in social dancing in the United States. Coney Island, already a hotbed of motion, was soon caught up in the whirl of the dance revolution. A cakewalk contest at Steeplechase Park in 1902 was described in great detail by the Brooklyn Eagle. Every contestant was "a real negro" recruited from the "sporting element of the colored population."<sup>4</sup> At these large dances, name bands were brought in, Such as John Phillip Sousa's famous Band, featuring virtuoso soloists, such as the cornetist Herbert L. Clarke, and Arthur Pryor, the self styled "Paganini of the Trombone". Pryor also was known to have

scored Cakewalking and ragtime arrangements of popular songs for Sousa before leaving him in 1900. A few years later it was reported that that at the famous Stauch's pavilion, "three thousand couples at a time danced to the ragtime rhythms of Al Ferguson's orchestra, while others dined in the balconies overlooking the dance floor."<sup>5</sup> 1914, the biggest stars of social dance, Vernon and Irene Castle, were in residence at Luna Park with James Reese Europe accompanying them.

As the makeup of the patrons on the island changed, so did the policies of the houses that entertained the masses. Also, smaller saloons and clubs on the side streets were built that were similar to the neighborhood drinking houses in Manhattan. Coney was described in a biography of one of the first contributors to its jazz scene as "Poor Man's Eden" by the first decade of the 1900's. It was in this Eden that Jimmy Durante, the comedian and entertainer, gained his first notoriety as a ragtime piano player. In 1910, when Jimmy was 17, he and his older brother Michael were working at the American Banknote Company in Manhattan. Michael became ill and lost his job and soon

after Jimmy was also fired. Upon recommendation by the doctor treating his brother, Jimmy, on an April day “wearing a cap and a turtle-neck sweater, his favorite garb, went to Coney Island, to Diamond Tony’s, a beer hall off Surf Avenue and Fifteenth Street, near the ocean. He went to work there at a salary of twenty-five dollars a week.”<sup>6</sup> Jimmy secured the job by playing Scott Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag,” and soon developed a reputation as the best white ragtime player, prompting the manager at Diamond Tony’s to give him the nickname “Ragtime Jimmy”. During this period only the larger hotels, music/dance halls, amusement park bandshells and restaurants housed the large ensembles such as John Phillip Sousa’s famous band. Diamond Tony’s, and the other small beer halls and café’s on the Bowery and other side streets on Coney Island had very simple entertainment capabilities, such as a lone piano sitting on a platform, although all of the establishments on the island with an entertainment policy followed the vaudeville tradition consisting of multiple acts. For example, in a 1917 account of the entertainment at The College Arms on the Bowery, the lineup consisted of Billy McDonald; Baritone

Singer, Florence Grey and the Sherwood Trio; "which includes Nemo Rothe, whose Jazz band plays there, Helen Marvin, Joe Egan, and "some other singers"<sup>7</sup>. The pianist employed by these establishments was expected to play for the various acts hired by the establishment, for the patrons who had imbibed enough alcohol to believe themselves to be gifted vocally, and the singing waiters. These waiters seemed to have had one of the most lucrative and prized jobs on Coney Island, because not only could they amass a good amount nightly in tips, but many of them also doubled as pimps, or as Durante would say, they had women "in harness". He also said, "It was one of the wildest jernts down dere, and ya woiked from eight inna evenin' till unconscious!"<sup>8</sup>

The Coney Island season only went from Decoration Day (Memorial Day) until the annual fall Mardi Gras parade there, roughly the end of May until mid-September. This means that the work for musicians there was mostly seasonal, with dwindling activity in the fall months before the cold New York winter set in. A few of the larger hotels such as the Brighton Beach Hotel, The Oriental, and the Manhattan Beach



Hotel did have year round entertainment. For a number of young New Yorkers that would go on to play important roles in different facets of 20<sup>th</sup> century American music, the music on Coney Island would become a significant source of inspiration and/or work. Young Brooklynite George Gershwin used to spend as much time there as he was allowed to, personally knew most of the musicians there, and fondly remembered hearing the ragtime playing of pianist Les Copeland while standing outside of a café. Also Irving Berlin, a young Russian Jew whose name at the time was Isreal Baline, worked on the island as both a “straight” waiter at Stauch’s (which was a massive dance hall and restaurant located on the Bowery), and a singing waiter at Perry’s. Where Jimmy played, the owner Diamond Tony constantly stood outside the club on the Bowery, drumming up business. On slow nights Jimmy and the others would loaf around until customers approached outside. At that time Tony would come running in, clapping his hands and ordering everyone to get to work, signaling Jimmy to start playing until the customer either came in or passed by. Some of Durante’s repertoire during this time were tunes such as “My

Gal Sal" , "Will You Love Me in December as You Did In May?(which was then NYC Mayor Walker's favorite)" "All Aboard for Blanket Bay," "The Ace in the Hole," "I wish I Had My Old Gal Back Again" and "If I had a Voice Like Scanlon." Durante eventually learned every customer's favorite song, and as soon as they strolled in, he would play it for them and be rewarded with extensive tipping. He even recounted one night where a "butter and egg man" came in and requested that he and one of the waiters perform "Somebody Stole My Gal" repeatedly. Durante said " It wore on my nerves a little, but since he handed between a hundred and fifty and two hundred dollars out each time he visited us we managed to stand it."<sup>9</sup>

For the 1911 season, Durante returned to Coney Island, this time at Carey (or Kerry) Walsh's place, which was further down on the Bowery. It was here that he met another teenager working as a singing waiter who was destined to make a mark on the entertainment industry, Eddie Cantor. They worked together only that one season at Carey Walsh's, and were so in tune with each other musically that it

wasn't long before they worked out a routine that helped them to milk customers for greater tips. When a customer requested a song that neither of them knew, they would make one up on the spot. Durante says, "If a guy wanted 'The Hills of Kentucky,' which I didn't know or ever heard of, I'd fake a melody and Eddie would sing, 'The Hills of Kentucky are far, far away, and when you're from them hills, you're away from them hills, yes, away from them hills of Kentucky.'" <sup>10</sup> When the big tipper who had requested the song came back after hearing an unfamiliar tune, Eddie Cantor would say, "What, are there *two* of them (songs named 'The Hills of Kentucky')?" while rapidly walking away with the customer's money in his shoe, sometimes even crying tears while making his exit. It was Cantor that encouraged Jimmy to pursue more than being a ragtime piano player, even though Durante was happy doing so. Carrey Walsh's would be the last café that Cantor would work in, as he joined a successful vaudeville act called "Kid Kabaret" in 1912. It also seems that Eddie and Jimmy would also make a lasting impression on Coney Island in other ways, at least in part. Eddie and Jimmy supposedly had some part in convincing their

friend Nathan Handwerker to take an old family recipe and open a Hot Dog stand in a building next to Carey Walsh's place, resulting in the famous Nathan's Hot Dogs.

During this time, Coney Island was the center of ragtime activity in Brooklyn. Aside from occasional isolated appearances by a ragtime pianist in a neighborhood saloon or private home, and the occasional jazz component a vaudeville acts at one of Brooklyn's theaters, you had to come to the island to hear ragtime regularly before 1915 or so. Vaudeville provided the most widespread exposure for the newly-emerging style, and for this reason you will find many intersections between artists that became known as Vaudeville (and later Radio and Television) entertainers and artists that became the important jazz contributors to the early development of the music. Indeed vaudeville performers/musicians such as clarinetist Ted Lewis led a very successful jazz band for many years. Although limited himself on the instrument, he hired many great jazz musicians such as Benny Goodman and Jimmy Dorsey to play clarinet in his bands. Another

very important development, the dissipation of New Orleans ensemble jazz was also beginning to occur, with the first example being The Original Creole Band which was formed in California in 1914, and began it's tours on the west coast for the Pantages Theater Vaudeville circuit later that same year, and continued to tour during the Vaudeville season via a complicated network of theater circuits and regional promoters until the final break up in 1918. Their act, although concretely plastered with racial stereotypes of the time (they carried around a plantation set and did a spoof on "Old Black Joe" as a finale), gave theatergoers their first taste of jazz played by musicians from New Orleans, in the manner that it was played there.

According to Lawrence Gushee's superb research in *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of the Creole Band*, in 1915 the Original Creole Ragtime Band (one of the many variations on the band's name that was used throughout it's existence) was advertised in *Variety* magazine in advance of its first New York appearances at the Bushwick Theater in Brooklyn. Either during this time, or possibly in 1916, during the time

that band was making its Manhattan debut at the Winter Garden, the band was seen appearing on a number of Sundays at Coney Island. At this time the competitive spirit that still prevails with New Orleans musicians today, and especially prevalent in its trumpeters, was on display in its pioneering cornetist Freddie Keppard. An event that took place on one of the Coney Island piers and told by the clarinetist of the Creole band at the time, Nelson Louis "Big Eye" Delille to Rudi Blesh is recounted in Gushee's book. He writes:

"Keppard was losing his cafe crowds every Sunday, when an Italian cornet virtuoso played outside with his brass band. This triple tonguing virtuoso held everyone spellbound by blowing opera airs in the florid style of a coloratura soprano. "Keppard was King—New Orleans, anywhere," Nelson said. "He didn't like this. So one day he stood at the edge of the crowd and waited for him to finish. Then put his cornet up and played every note the guy had played, clearer, and sweeter, and twice as loud. I'll never forget the tune: it was "Carnival of Venice."<sup>11</sup>

By the mid-teens, New York City was dance crazy, and the summers at Coney Island were a prime environment. On the Bowery, most of the saloons that lined the street began to add some sort of ragtime band to their revues. In 1916, the aforementioned Ted Lewis organized his first group, "Ted Lewis and His Nut Band," at the College Arms. It was

here that he was heard by drummer Earl Fuller and was recruited for Fuller's band, with which he made his first recordings in 1918. The point must be made that, while in contemporary times there is some controversy in calling Ted Lewis a "Jazz Artist", in 1918 he would have been considered so, and his importance in popularizing the word "Jazz" through his widespread fame, and his giving many important young jazz artists some of their earliest work in New York more than justifies his inclusion. Also, after leaving the Original Creole Band in mid-1916, George Baquet, the band's original clarinetist and Sidney Bechet's first teacher in New Orleans, settled in New York and played for many years at the College Inn, before moving to Philadelphia in 1923. By 1917, the Bowery was inundated with ragtime. That same year *Variety* reported, in an article which lamented the replacing of the singing waiters on the Bowery with jazz groups, "every place down there has its band of the jazzing type"----Nemo Rothe's band at the College Arms, Frank Ross and his Jazz Band at the Harvard Inn, Roy King and his Jazz Band at Gallagher's, and more." In 1919, two years before he would begin his popular radio career, pianist/bandleader Vincent Lopez

was playing with a 5-piece jazz band as part of a revue at Perry's Cabaret on the Bowery.

Jimmy Durante continued playing the summer sessions at Coney Island, but a few years before Variety made it's observation, Jimmy got a job that would be instrumental to his career, and have great importance to jazz. In 1914, during the off-season, he began working at a club at 253 West 125<sup>th</sup> street in Manhattan called the Alamo Club. After a year or so working there the owners of the Alamo Club acquired a second club on Coney Island, called the College Inn, and Durante began working the summer season at the College Inn and the rest of the year at the Alamo. In January 1917, he went to hear a new band from out of town, The Original Dixieland Jazz Band (or ODJB), at one of the Reisenwebers restaurants on Columbus circle. He was so impressed that he invited them to play one night at the Alamo. They were such a hit there, that they also were invited to play at the Coney Island club, the College Inn. It was this band that lit the fire under Jimmy to have his own New Orleans jazz ensemble patterned after the



ODJB. He was a friend of New Orleans drummer Johnny Stein, who had been the original drummer with the ODJB in New Orleans and in Chicago, and inquired with him about bringing New Orleans musicians to New York to form a band at the Alamo. Through Stein he formed the Durante Jazz & Novelty Band with Frank Christian, cornet; Frank Lhotak, trombone; Stien on drums and Achille Baquet, Clarinet.

Supposedly unknown to them, Achille Baquet was a light-skinned Creole who was the brother of the aforementioned George Baquet (who was slightly darker-skinned). The band began following Durante's old schedule, working at the Alamo during the winter of 1917, and at the College Inn on Coney Island during the summer season. In November 1918 they made their first recordings for the Okeh label in New York, "Ole-Miss," and "Ja-Da." Historically, this becomes extremely significant, because during this time it was unheard of for Blacks and Whites to share the stage. Of course, there had been interaction between the races at informal jam sessions, rehearsals and such, but not in a deliberate performing environment. Defining "Band" or "Group" as a number of musicians of fixed personnel, formed for the

purpose of performing professionally in public, as far as my research is able to determine, Durante's band was the first integrated band in Jazz, albeit by "interesting" circumstances, and the first integrated band on record.

It soon became apparent that the idea to copy the model of the ODJB was by no means solely that of Durante. In the months after their January 1917 appearance at Riesenwebers, The Alamo, and at the College Inn on Coney Island, bands patterned after them formed and began to sprout up at clubs, on record, and later on Vaudeville stages all over the city. Indeed, bandleaders, club owners, Vaudeville booking agents, and record companies all began to realize the commercial possibilities if an act carried the correct name. During these first years of marketing this new music anything that contained the name "Blue", "Jazz (Or Jass)", "Southern", "Hot", "Five", the name of a southern city (with "New Orleans" obviously being especially important), any of the words that were associated with America's slavery era such as "Plantation" or "Cotton", or any of the countless words meaning black

such as "Sepia", "Chocolate", "Nubian" and many others, were all desirable as the name of a group, composition or description. By no means does this short list compile all of the adjectives that were used to sell records and sheet music during this time, and some of them lasted well beyond this initial period. It should also be noted that in these early days of jazz in New York City, many of these early ODJB imitators thought of a jazz band as a comedy act, meant to imitate animal noises such as in the ODJB recording of "Livery Stable Blues" from their second record. Any type of gimmick that could be used to garner applause was used, from copying ODJB trombonist Eddie Edwards technique of the player using their feet to play the instrument, to exaggerated shimmying and jumping up and down while playing, to antics such as Earl Fuller's sixty-four square feet of drums as a part of his kit, which allowed him to make just about every imaginable percussion sound for comedic effect. The image of these musicians represented the opposite side of the spectrum from the "Modern Jazz" musicians of the late 1950's or the image portrayed by the character "Bleek Gilliam" from Spike Lee's 1990 film *Mo' Better*

*Blues*. To these musicians, using “jass” to get a laugh was as important as playing the music. If some good ragtime was made in the process, then it was an added bonus. Luckily, in performance and on many of those recordings, some of these bands actually stumbled onto some good jazz music in the process.

An enterprising bandleader, Sam Lanin, began to record groups for different record companies with roughly the same personnel using different names for each band. One such group under Lanin’s initial control was the Original Memphis Five, led by trumpeter Phil Napoleon and pianist Frank Signorelli. Coincidentally Miff Mole, the original trombonist with the group, was given his first professional work around 1914 at The College Arms on the Bowery with Gus Sharp’s Orchestra. Following a trend that was common with many immigrant families during this period, Phil and his brothers Americanized their names from Napoli to Napoleon (which has a certain amount of humor to it because Napoleon is French in origin). Phil lived with his family in Brooklyn’s Bensonhurst neighborhood, which to this day still has a

large population of Italians living there, although it is now beginning to diversify. Gene DiNovi (b. 1928), is a pianist/composer who grew up on 76<sup>th</sup> Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Bensonhurst and cut his teeth during the Bebop era. He remembers from his childhood that Phil, who was older, had left the family home, but the rest of the Napoleon family lived in the neighborhood and that most of the children were musically inclined. Many of them went on to have distinguished careers, among them Teddy Napoleon, a pianist who played many years with Gene Krupa's orchestra and many others, and his younger brother Marty Napoleon, who replaced Earl Hines with Louis Armstrong's All-Stars in the 1950's. The Original Memphis Five was named after W.C. Handy's popular tune at the time "Memphis Blues". They had originally formed on Coney Island as a group playing at a Bowery club called Harvard Inn, owned by known Italian Mafia boss Frankie Yale. To ensure security at his establishment, he hired a 18-year-old ambitious gang member named Alphonse Capone (who was living in Park Slope, Brooklyn) as the bouncer and bartender at the Harvard Inn. Miff Mole remembered that the Original Memphis five was playing at the Harvard

Inn on the evening when Capone insulted the sister of known gangster Frank Gallucio at the club, and received the slashes on his face that resulted in his famous nickname "Scarface". It is said that Gallucio only missed Capone's throat because he was drunk.



**The Original Memphis Five**

White fans of the new music in its early days, sometimes openly and sometimes not, recognized that there was something different and desirable about the music when played by African-Americans, and whenever possible enjoyed dancing to music played by them. Vernon and Irene Castle, the famous dancers, were the earliest important champions of this ideal, hiring James Reese Europe and His Society orchestra to accompany them with their syncopated sounds. By 1915, the Castles were among the most popular entertainers in America, and to the extent that social mores of the day would allow, Europe's success paralleled his employers. Five years earlier, he had helped to found an organization called the Clef Club, which was initially meant to provide a centralized location to help African-American musicians in Harlem to find work. Aside from its primary function, in actuality it also became a place that African-American musicians could get together and discuss ways of overcoming the challenges facing them in their profession. Europe was the organization's first president, and soon came to direct the Clef Club Orchestra. The Club became a huge success during Europe's tenure, and its model was copied in African-

American neighborhoods in other parts of the city, including Brooklyn.

Randy Weston, the esteemed Brooklyn pianist, in one of his earliest musical memories [from the 1930's], speaks of the "Black Musicians Clubs" in Bedford-Stuyvesant that were modeled after the Clef Club. In his autobiography *African Rhythms: The Autobiography of Randy Weston*, he explains,

"There were black musicians' clubs, or hangout spots at that time. There was one in Harlem and there was one in Brooklyn on Schenectady Avenue near Fulton Street. These were wonderful places; they were like clubhouses where the elder musicians hung out back in the days before black musicians could join the regular musicians' union. These were guys who didn't necessarily have big names per se; they had played with the big orchestras years ago-Fess Williams, Buddy Johnson, Andy Kirk, and those kinds of bands. A few of the bandleaders hung out at the Brooklyn clubhouse, guys like Buddy Riser, the older generation of musicians. These clubs were a combination of things. I would almost call them cultural centers, places of black culture, where black youth who were aspiring to be musicians could hang out with experienced black musicians."<sup>12</sup>

Throughout Europe's tenure in the Clef Club, there were members who were his supporters and his rivals at different times. One such rival was James "Tim" Brymn, a talented, ambitious young composer and conductor from North Carolina. In 1913, James Reese Europe left the



Clef Club and founded a new organization, the Tempo Club. This club essentially functioned the same as the Clef Club, but was born with a proverbial "silver spoon in its mouth" because of Europe's association with the Castles. In his place at the Clef Club, Tim Brymn took over as conductor of the Clef Club Orchestra, with Will Marion Cook as his assistant. He led the orchestra in a number of ambitious and successful concerts, but by this time Europe's star was nearly impossible to eclipse because of his association with the Castles. When America's inevitable entry in World War I came in 1917, Europe quickly enlisted, and was put in charge of an all-black band attached to the first all-black 369<sup>th</sup> regiment. The American government, not overjoyed about having African-Americans serving in the army in any capacity, figured that they could placate the cries of equality at home, and not upset the white power base by placing Europe's band with the *French* army instead of its own. Tim Brymn also enlisted soon after, and rose to the rank of Lieutenant, conducting another all-black band attached to the 350<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment, also in France. James Reese Europe's Hellfighter's band is credited for being the first group

to expose Europe to the new, syncopated sounds of Ragtime, but his only band-leading rival in France, just as he had been in the Clef Club a few years earlier, was Tim Brymn's "70 Black Devils" Band. Brymn's organization drew praise from General Pershing, King Albert of Belgium, and President Woodrow Wilson, who while riding in a car as part of a victory parade in France, was so moved by the playing of the band that he got out, telling his aids, "I simply *must* march to this music!"<sup>13</sup>

In the few months between the end of the war and the deployment of troops home, victory parades and other occasions allowed opportunities for the band to play for French and American soldiers, and also civilians in the recently liberated towns of France and Germany. As Phil Schaap says, "At the beginning of 1919 [with Europe's departure] jazz left Europe...by the middle of 1919 the Europeans were screaming "Send It Back!" When Brymn came back from Europe in early 1919, the Clef Club was still functioning, but it was playing an obvious second fiddle to Europe and his Tempo Club,

still fueled by his reputations with the Castles and now his reputation for service in the war. Although he continued to be associated with the Clef Club, Brymn's own accomplishments, from leading its Orchestra after Europe's departure, to his own service during the war, and a little bit of piggybacking onto Europe's post-war fame, gave him the opportunity to lead his own orchestra, without being under the auspices of the Clef Club. This time, he secured an engagement on Coney Island, at Reisenweber's Hotel Shelburne on Brighton Beach.

The Shelburne, which was located on the Beach at the end of Ocean Parkway, and positioned so that the Brighton Beach "L" (Elevated) train went "Direct to Door", had an established music policy. What makes it unique is that it was the only large hotel on the island that leaned toward featuring syncopated music, with ragtime usually being featured in the smaller places such as those in which Durante worked. In 1917, an orchestra led by Dan Caslar was playing at the Shelburne. Caslar was also an Italian immigrant from Naples, born Donato Casolaro in 1888, changed his name upon settling in America in 1905.

He was also an accomplished vaudeville composer and pianist, who led bands on Coney Island as far back as 1914 at the Brighton Beach Casino. Both the Shelburne and the Brighton Beach casino were owned by the Reisenwebers, an association that would later prove to be beneficial for Caslar and Brymn. On a related note, clarification should be given concerning the word "Casino". While the contemporary definition conjures up images connected to gambling in places such as Las Vegas or Atlantic City, during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the word was also used to describe arena-type buildings that were used for dancing, theatrical events, sporting events, etc., and *sometimes* gambling became a part of the activities there. For example, an advertisement in a 1903 periodical describing a Connecticut hotel states, "A casino has been built which affords opportunity for dancing, bowling, shuffleboard, etc." The Coney Island casinos described in this chapter fall under this definition. They were theaters where dancing took place, and could also be used for sporting events and such.

James Reese Europe's pre-WWI influence with his large syncopated orchestra was still felt while he was overseas during the war years. It is recognizable in the changes in the descriptions of bands in the periodicals before and after the war. In 1914 articles for the Shelburne, Caslar's group is simply named "Dan Caslar's Orchestra" and "Dancing Nightly" is printed below, seemingly unconnected to the orchestra providing the music. In a change in marketing that reflects Europe's popularity, by 1917 it is referred to as "Dan Caslar's Syncopated and "Jazz" Orchestra playing melodies that are just dance-compelling". In other establishments on the Island, "Jazz" was becoming fashionable also. At Somers Garden, on Twentieth Street and Surf Avenue, three bands were advertised: "Jazz, String, and Military". At Johnson's Dreamland Restaurant and Cabaret on Surf Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street, two jazz acts were advertised" Jack Ford; "The best Jazz Fiddler in the country", and "Prof. Nicoll's Jazz Band". The Reisenweber owned Brighton Beach Casino advertised the presence of year-round dancing to an unnamed jazz band in 1918. Caslar would also conduct his orchestra at Reisenwebers Manhattan location on

Columbus Circle in 1914, and continue doing so for the next few years.

Just as with Jimmy Durante and the Alamo and College Inn, rotating the entertainment between Manhattan and Coney Island during the summer season was a common practice with restaurant/club owners that had businesses in both locations. This rotating policy will also become important to Brooklyn's theater industry in the upcoming Jazz Age and during the Swing Era. Caslar also became an enlisted man in 1917, and *Sgt.* Caslar led the 152<sup>nd</sup> Depot Brigade Regimental Band, stationed on Long Island at Yaphank, New York. Upon leaving the army he personally witnessed this new trend of having black musicians play the syncopated music that they created, with Tim Brymn having taken over at the Shelburne beginning in June of 1919. His old connections with Reisenweber came through once again though, with Caslar being made musical director of the Brighton Beach Casino in that same year.

With Tim Brymn's rising fame, having long been affiliated with the Clef Club and even more closely with Europe during the war because of his

band leading, he was an obvious choice for such a high-profile engagement. Another factor that cannot be ignored was the dreadful murder of James Reese Europe on May 9, 1919 in Boston, following an argument with Herbert Wright, one of the drummers in his band, less than three months after returning home from the war. As tragic as it was, the second most famous black bandleader now had no competition from King Europe to keep his own star from rising. Looking at the entire scenario in hindsight, the reason that Brymn never achieved Europe's success or notoriety was not for lack of talent or ambition, he was a brilliant composer and bandleader. Stated simply, Brymn just didn't have a bonafide star such as the Castles endorsing his career. Billed as "Lieutenant Tim Brymn and His Black Devil Jazz Band," they were a forty-piece band patterned after the model of Europe's Clef Club Orchestra, which was now common with black bandleaders. Will Marion Cook, Ford Dabney, J. Rosemand Johnson and Tempo and Clef Club associates took advantage of the surplus of military trained African-American musicians after the war and formed orchestras of this nature. The Black Devils engagement at

the Shelburne started in June 1919 at the beginning of the summer season, and at first they were only contracted for a month, but it soon became clear to the Reisenwebers management that they may need to hold onto their new performers for a while longer. In the tradition of the routine set by Europe's Clef Club Orchestra, the Black Devils played standard orchestral repertoire as part of their offerings along with ragtime music. They wore military uniforms and at times began playing in the dining room of the Shelburne apart from their outdoor concerts, offering familiar orchestral themes. A set list from a May 14, 1919 concert in Amsterdam, New York, just before the Shelburne engagement was to begin, offers such varied selections such as *Infamus* from Gioachino Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, to Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever*, to Brymn's own *Philadelphia Sunday Blues* and Nick Larocca's *Barnyard Blues* made famous by the ODJB. The band was heavily advertised in advertisements and articles for the Shelburne hotel, and one thing that strikes me is the *language* of the articles advertising the band as their engagement continues. The first descriptions of the band in print in its second week on the job mention



the band "attracting thousands weekly,"<sup>14</sup> and the remainder of the article speaks of the hotel, and the beach, etc. Another newspaper from the same week confirms the earlier statement, that Lt. Brymn is drawing "record crowds" and "surprising them with new specialties and novelties". The next line in this article says "real genius runs rampant throughout the Black Devil Band"<sup>15</sup>. "Genius" is not a term that was applied to African-Americans much during this time, in any field. By July he has a new nickname, "Mr. Jazz"<sup>16</sup>, the band is described as "justly famous"<sup>17</sup>, and his compositional prowess is praised by stating that he "introduces fifteen to twenty-five new jazz numbers each week"<sup>18</sup>. By August it is advertised that he has been held over for August and September. He is obviously a hit.

Another important occurrence takes place in Tim Brymn's band during his first month at the Shelburne...The great (and historically elusive) cornetist Freddie Keppard joined Tim Brymn for a time. After the breakup of the Original Creole Band in 1918, the members of the group went their separate ways. Freddie Keppard ended up in Chicago,

but In 1919 Keppard decided to make a trip to the east coast. Many speculations have risen as to why he would leave Chicago when he was clearly the most in demand hot cornet soloist in that city, at least until Joe "King" Oliver arrived from New Orleans in 1918. Author Mark Berresford, in his book *That's Got 'Em!: The Life and Music of Wilbur C. Sweatman*, comes up with the conclusion that Keppard likely had "received sufficient exposure in the music business around New York to have work opportunities thrust at him on a regular basis." This is a likely scenario, because at this early time in Jazz's development, the hot soloists all came from New Orleans, and they were teaching everybody else how to play the music. New Orleans musicians that could spice up an orchestra's repertoire with hot jazz solos were in demand, so much that they usually didn't stay with any particular group for an extended period of time. Near the end of June 1919, a short mention in an article advertising Brymn at the Shelburne states, "Sgt. Keppard, the peer of all jazz cornetists, has completed his leave of absence and returned to the big organization."<sup>19</sup> The wording of the article implies that Keppard may have been with Brymn's band at or

near the beginning of the engagement, and left for some period of time before returning sometime near the end of June. All of this would have taken place in a short span of time, since Brymn would not have even completed his first full month at the Shelburne at the time of the article. How long he stayed is not known, but it would seem that Tim Brymn was giving Keppard a reason to stick around, because there are also indications that he was seen playing with Brymn at the Cocoanut Grove in Times Square that same year. One exceptional development that stands out is his mention in the article. Keppard must have garnered quite a reputation during his earlier visits with the Original Creole Band to be the only member of a 40-piece band to be mentioned by name in the article, with the exception of the leader. Coney Island was not done with him either, because he was also reported to have worked with multi-reedist Wilbur Sweatman at the Brighton Beach Hotel also during the summer of 1919. Sweatman, during an interview years later conducted by jazz historian and author Leonard Kunstadt, produced a canceled check that he used to pay Keppard for that engagement.

Having only one hot soloist with the Black Devils wasn't enough for Brymn. In 1919, his old friend Will Marion Cook was planning to take a band to Europe, answering those cries for syncopated music brought on by Jim Europe's departure. He realized the importance of having a jazz soloist in his group, and went looking for a certain one while in Chicago. He stumbled upon the great New Orleans Clarinetist Sidney Bechet on a Chicago street one day, recognizing him from descriptions given to him by other musicians. This colorful story is now famous in Jazz lore. Bechet confirmed his identity to Cook, and was then asked if he would like to audition to go to Europe with Cook's band, and when he would be available to do so. Bechet supposedly replied with "Well, how about now?", and began to pull the different pieces of his clarinet out of different pockets in his overcoat. After putting it together, he "auditioned" for Cook right there on the street! Cook was so impressed that he hired him on the spot, and asked him if he would like to come to New York with him to perform there before the European trip.

Sidney agreed, arriving in New York early in 1919. According to Bechet in his autobiography *Treat It Gentle*,

"...[Will Marion Cook] had some kind of trouble over contracts and things, and we all broke up for a while till he could get it all straightened out. So to fill in time I went and played with Tim Bryen [Brymn] on Coney Island. We all wore very fancy uniforms and the pay was good. Tim had a regular clarinet player, named Kincaid; and this Kincaid, he had a curved soprano saxophone. I liked the tone of this saxophone very much, so full and rich. I'd tried one in Chicago when I was playing at the Pekin but I hadn't liked it, and I think there must have been something wrong with it. Well, I liked this one Kincaid had, and from that time I got more and more interested in the soprano saxophone."<sup>20</sup>

The pay *was* pretty good for the time, because according to Bechet biographer John Chilton, Sidney made \$80 a week to play with Brymn. Since a definite date for Bechet's tenure with Brymn has not been confirmed, it is not known whether Freddie Keppard and Sidney Bechet might have played in Brymn's Black Devils at the same time at the Shelburne. Either one of them could "attract thousands" with the majesty of their playing, save if both were possibly playing together. It can be said, though, that as a result of this experience playing with

Tim Brymn at the Shelburne, his interest in seriously exploring the Soprano Saxophone originated in Coney Island, not during the upcoming tour of London with Will Marion Cook, as is widely believed.

By the end of June 1919, Brymn's orchestra had turned the Shelburne into a "Dancing Paradise"<sup>21</sup>, and had received endorsements from celebrities Sophie Tucker, Belle Baker, and Irving Berlin. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* describes it as the "Most rollicking, intoxicating and novel collection of wild jazzers ever seen"<sup>22</sup> In a recognizable change from earlier that year, there is little description of the lovely features on the island (on the most popular resort in America at the height of the summer season, nonetheless!), and descriptions of the experience of listening and dancing to the orchestra dominate all advertisements for the Shelburne. In comparison, at Henderson's Music Hall an organization called "Professor Smith and his Jazz Orchestra" are given the last line in an advertisement as offering "different novelties nightly." Tim Brymn's success in the month of July was so great that by August, he was asked by Reisenwebers to place a second band in

their Columbus Circle restaurant, the same location where the Original Dixieland Jazz band had started New York's jazz craze in 1917. The band was called the "Black Devil Junior Jazz Band" and they held court in midtown while Brymn finished the season on Coney Island. Brymn surely called upon Clef Club musicians not playing in his Shelburne orchestra to fill out the ranks of this second band. The Junior Black Devils was reported to be "almost equal the ragtime efforts the original band at the Shelburne." And as in the reports from Coney Island a couple of months earlier "large crowds" were beginning to show up on Columbus Circle. By September, the cold weather must have set in, and Brymn was leading his regular Black Devils at Reisenweber's to a somewhat "sporting" business crowd, or as the NY Mirror stated, "to the edification and entertainment of all the weary, weary business men with (preferably) their own wives."<sup>23</sup>

Brymn was now entrenched under the Reisenweber's fold, and began following the common practice which previously kept Jimmy Durante and Dan Caslar employed year round of rotating between different

clubs with the same owner; playing at the Columbus Circle restaurant during the cold months, and the Shelburne during the summer. His star had definitely risen, because the next April, before the season started it was already advertised that he would be engaged for the entire season. To commemorate the beginning of the season, Brymn and his Black Devil Jazz Band played a special Decoration Day concert on May 30, 1920. Freddie Keppard must have enjoyed his experience playing with the Black Devils the previous summer because he makes another appearance with the band during this season. The advertisement for this event states, "Fred Keppard, a jazz cornet player, is a recent addition to this big band."<sup>24</sup> Again, it is not known how long that Keppard stayed in the Brymn fold, but again, he must have made quite the impression with his horn the following summer to be mentioned by name in print for a second time. Capitalizing (albeit in pretty bad taste) on the unfortunate death of James Europe a year earlier, his band is now being billed as "The Men Who Introduced Jazz to France!"<sup>25</sup> The praise for Brymn continued, but was much stronger this year. In a flattering article from *Billboard*, Brymn is said "to be



likened to the most dignified, dandified bandmaster of anywhere and everywhere, for he is there with the goods, personally, artistically, realistically, and musically..."<sup>26</sup>. Again, these are not descriptive words that were used to describe African-Americans much during these times, even in New York. Brymn's engagement at the Shelburne would only continue for one more year, to the 1921 season, and although he did begin the season in May, he did not continue on through the season for some unknown reason. By the end of June of that year, "Arthur Lange's Santa Monica Dance Orchestra" was in place at the hotel. With Sidney Bechet in Europe, Freddie Keppard back in Chicago, and Louis Armstrong not yet on the New York scene, he might have been hard pressed to find a soloist able to fit in the shoes of those early titans from New Orleans.

For the sheer sake of profit, the other large hotels and dance halls on Coney Island could not turn a blind eye to the success that the Shelburne had with Tim Brymn's orchestra in residence. Aside from the jazz-friendly Reisenweber establishments which caught the fever

from the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, beginning in the summer of 1919 establishments that had previously not featured jazz bands suddenly had a change of heart, and made a point of advertising their new policy. At Stauch's, "Sidney Springer's Famous Orchestra and Jazz Band" began as the resident orchestra in 1920, and continued through the 1923 season. Springer was an older, well-established bandleader who jumped on the jazz bandwagon, having led orchestras in the New York area as far back as 1897. In 1922, a new, appropriately named hall, Danceland, opened up on Surf Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Street, 2 blocks away from Steeplechase amusement park. The Original Memphis five was installed as the hot dance orchestra from its opening, with another resident orchestra called "Busoni's Society Syncopators" that bore the name of the manager of Danceland and many other establishments in Manhattan, Sixte Busoni. In August of 1922, the ODJB replaced the Original Memphis Five at Danceland. It seems to be a short lived establishment, with no further activity in the periodicals after this year. Also, in 1923, another of the owners of a popular Manhattan ballroom decided to expand into Coney Island with

the opening of the Rosebud Ballroom, which was owned by the same family as the Roseland in Manhattan. The venture must have been profitable, because they would also open a third theater near downtown Brooklyn, the Brooklyn Roseland, around the same time.

Going forward, we must remember that above all, Coney Island was a resort. The jazz activity highlighted here was a very small part of the overall entertainment scene through the years mentioned, and in the future. Coney Island would by no means become an area dominated by jazz, but the music did continue to have a presence, even past the decline of the island in the 1950's. Because of its two longstanding components, the first being its larger venues (hotels, amusement parks, dance halls and theaters), and the second being its smaller clubs/saloons on the Bowery and other side streets, it would develop into a place where both famous bands would play, and the next generation of young, budding musicians would also receive some of their earliest professional jobs. The Bowery began its demise much earlier than the rest of the island, beginning in 1925 when 175

businesses were torn down during a widening project to provide better fire fighting access. Other smaller streets on the island would develop the small cabaret scene as a result, but never again would there be a centralized area where a concentration of establishments of that similar size would all exist together. On the rest of the island, new halls for dancing continued to be built, providing more working opportunities for jazz musicians there. During the 1920's, as jazz bands and soloists became more numerous and more adept at playing the music, the island became a regular destination for many of them during their tour routes during the summer season. This activity was escalated significantly after the completion of the four-mile Coney Island boardwalk that ran parallel to the shore in 1923. In 1925 the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported that campaigning New York Senator James J. Walker went to the Cameo Dance Palace at Surf and Stillwell Avenues, and while trying to give his speech outside, a nearby jazz band almost made his words inaudible. The sounds from that band almost certainly came from the boardwalk. In 1927, the Half Moon Hotel opened its doors on the Boardwalk and West 29<sup>th</sup> Street. At the

time it was Coney Island's grandest hotel, and its Ocean Terrace ballroom featured local dance bands year-round until it closed in the late 1940's. The bands that played in that room throughout its existence were the "sweet" type of dance band, modeled after organizations such as Glen Grey's Casa Loma Orchestra. The hotel would play a central role in the music scene of Coney Island, the surrounding neighborhoods, and in one of the earliest musical memories of pianist Gene DiNovi. The writing must have been on the wall for Gene to become a musician even at an early age because in 1933 at the age of 5, Gene was dressed up in a tuxedo, given a baton, and photographed conducting Red Hafley's orchestra at the hotel's Ocean Terrace ballroom.

By the 1930's, the popularity of the larger jazz-age dance band, and the burgeoning swing era, brought new elements to Coney's jazz scene. Following a trend that will be discussed in the next chapter, a second short-lived Savoy Ballroom was built on Coney Island in the early 1930's. In 1932, after touring New England with a musical

comedy called "Headin' For Harlem," Jelly Roll Morton played the Savoy Ballroom on Coney Island with female African-American cornetist Laura Prampin's Orchestra. It would seem that by this time it was difficult to find prime real estate in which to build on the island, because Coney's Savoy was located over a trolley car depot barn. Supposedly the noise from the trolley bells and wheels gave Morton and the drummer with the orchestra "the fits" while trying to keep time during the performance<sup>27</sup>. In 1936, Eddie Condon and Joe Marsala brought their group from the Hickory House in midtown Manhattan where they were in residence, to Brighton Beach. Pianist Joe Bushkin was with them. Marsala would come back to Coney Island himself that same year with a group with comb-and-tissue paper player Red McKenzie and Trumpeter Chelsea Quealy.

Manhattan Beach, Coney Island's smallest neighborhood with public access , had long contained an establishments for Dancing. The Manhattan Beach Casino first opened its doors in the 1880's, and operated until 1906. An open-air pavilion called the Manhattan Beach

Dancing Palace opened for the 1920 season. In the early 1930's a the second incarnation of the Manhattan Beach Casino opened for business. In 1937, with the commercial possibilities of the newly emerged Swing-Era dance bands beginning to come into focus, Manhattan Beach began to get its jazz priorities in order. For that year's summer season, a new series featuring "big name bands" was added to the Manhattan Beach schedule of activities. Among them was Tommy Dorsey's band, along with the bands of Ben Bernie, Shep Fields, Russ Morgan, Harold Stern, Benny Meroff, and Abe Lyman. All of the bands were initially engaged for a week at a time. The bands presented daily afternoon concerts at one of the temporary stages or bandshells on the beach, and were also contracted to perform for dancing at the Manhattan Beach Casino on some or all of the nights during their engagement. The Brooklyn Edison Club, one of the many Brooklyn social clubs that existed during that time, took advantage of the presence of these bands in scheduling their fifth annual outing at Manhattan Beach. On Monday, July 26<sup>th</sup> they engaged Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra to play for their event which included swimming

races, baseball, horseshoe pitching, and tug-of-war. These types of social clubs were numerous throughout the country at this time, and as in other places they would play an important role in cultivating a sustained jazz presence in Brooklyn in years to come.

For the 1938 season at Manhattan Beach, the line up consisted of the bands of Kay Kysor, Hal Kemp, Harold Stern, Vincent Lopez and Benny Goodman. Lopez was a proven star by 1938, far from the days as a cabaret pianist at Perry's on the Bowery. Goodman and his orchestra performed afternoon concerts from Thursday, July 7<sup>th</sup> through the next Wednesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>. They also performed for dancing at the Manhattan Beach Casino on 5 nights, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup>. The prices for admission were \$.50 for the afternoon concerts, and a whopping \$1.10 for night dancing. It is probably safe to say, given the company that they were in, both Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman both utilized their "sweeter" arrangements for their Manhattan Beach engagements.



By the 1940's the musical identity of Coney Island was well defined. The musical presentations at the more prestigious hotels and stages on the island consisted of the most commercially viable bands, most often the most popular sweet/society bands, with a few of the hot swing bands favored by the younger generation thrown into the season's programming. The smaller clubs on the Bowery and near the boardwalk continued to provide work for the less well known performers, giving many of the next generation of jazz musicians early work opportunities. In 1941, while Gene Krupa was playing on the boardwalk, a small club called Indian Village, which located on 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Surf Avenue, hoped to cash in on the jazz fans that still wanted to be entertained after Krupa was finished for the day. They installed a vaudeville revue in the club, and the drummer-leader of the band hired 16-year-old Earl "Bud" Powell to play piano. He, like Durante over 30 years before, was playing for singers, shake and soft-shoe dancers, and for comedians as part of a vaudeville act. Luckily for jazz, his career after his Coney Island experience took a much different turn.

Beginning in the 1920's, with the rise of the Jazz age and it's unique dance orchestra, the center of Jazz activity in Brooklyn begins to switch from the Coney Island resort, and spread out to the neighborhood hotels, saloons, and most importantly in terms of exposure, the theaters. As Air Conditioning begins to become available in the 1920's, the possibilities for indoor entertainment are not subject to seasonal constraints and gains the ability to be presented year round, instead of only during the cooler months.

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- <sup>3</sup> Jim Lillefors, *America's Boardwalks: From Coney Island to California* (James Lillefors, 2006), 29
- <sup>4</sup> From the Article "A Plantation Cake Walk Makes Much Merriment", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 7/20/02
- <sup>5</sup> Michael Immerso, *Coney Island: The People's Playground* (Rutgers University Press, Piscataway, 2002), 113
- <sup>6</sup> Gene Folwer, Schnozzola (Viking Press, 1951), 15
- <sup>7</sup> *Variety* 1917
- <sup>8</sup> Elvin C. Bell, *Beyond Cantua Creek* (iUniverse, Bloomington, IN 2010), 321
- <sup>9</sup> From the Article "Old Coney Nightlife Described in Book", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 2/22/31.
- <sup>10</sup> Gene Folwer, Schnozzola (Viking Press, 1951), 15
- <sup>11</sup> Lawrence Gushee *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of the Creole Band* (Oxford University Press, New York), 380
- <sup>12</sup> Randy Weston, Willard Jenkins *African Rhythms: The Autobiography of Randy Weston* (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2010), 26
- <sup>13</sup> Henry Louis Gates, *Harlem Renaissance Lives* (Oxford University Press, London, New York, 2009), 147.
- <sup>14</sup> From the Article "Jazz Band at the Shelburne", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 6/15/19.
- <sup>15</sup> From the Article "Shelburne 'Black Devils' Draw Crowds", *The New York Sun* 6/16/19
- <sup>16</sup> From the Article "Jazz Programme at Shelburne", *The New York Herald* 7/20/19
- <sup>17</sup> From the Article "The Shelburne is Gay", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 7/13/19
- <sup>18</sup> From the Article "Jazz Programme at Shelburne", *The New York Herald* 7/20/19
- <sup>19</sup> From the Article "The Shelbourne", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 6/29/19
- <sup>20</sup> Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle* (Da Capo Press, Cambridge), 126
- <sup>21</sup> From the Article "The Shelbourne", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 6/22/19
- <sup>22</sup> From the Article "The Shelbourne", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 6/22/19
- <sup>23</sup> From the Article "Reisenwebers" *The New York Dramatic Mirror* 9/25/19
- <sup>24</sup> From the Article "At The Shelburne", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 5/30/20

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<sup>25</sup> From the Advertisement for the Hotel Shelburne, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*  
5/22/20

<sup>26</sup> *Billboard* July 21, 1920 P. 31

<sup>27</sup> Martin Williams *Jazz Masters of New Orleans* (The Macmillian Company, New York), 72.

## Jazz Activity in Brooklyn's Grand Theater and Ballroom Scene 1920's-1960's

Theaters had been being built in Brooklyn since the construction of Gothic Hall in 1845, at 187-189 Adams Street, located near where the Brooklyn Bridge touches down in the borough. As Vaudeville became more popular, more theaters were constructed until the Great Depression, and through a long saga of fires and rebuilds, by the mid 1930's Brooklyn had developed a borough-wide network of smaller neighborhood theaters, and larger, more grandiose theaters. Unfortunately many of those built in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and before would fall prey to the double-edged dagger of the Great Depression and the arrival of sound movies, which they were not technically equipped to handle. Conversion to "soundies", and competition from newer, larger, and air-conditioned theaters that catered to the new media proved to be too much of a hurdle for many of the older theaters, and many never recovered. The flagship in the borough was unquestionably the Brooklyn Paramount, located on

Flatbush Avenue Extension and Dekalb Avenue, just about a mile over the Manhattan Bridge. Many of the theaters had more than one use. In the years before 1920, places such as Arcadia Hall, The Brooklyn Palace, and Eastern Parkway arena were used for bowling, bingo/bridge tournaments, professional sporting events (World Heavyweight Champion and long time Brooklyn transplant Floyd Patterson began fighting professionally at the Eastern Parkway Arena). As social dancing became popular, these same halls built for vaudeville were the venues for dances, and later jazz concerts. Deserving special mention here is the Brooklyn Academy of Music, located on Lafayette Avenue just off of Flatbush Avenue, about 3 miles into Brooklyn over the Manhattan Bridge. It became an important venue for staging some of the grandest, albeit infrequent jazz concerts in the Borough. Although initially envisioned as strictly a hall for classical music, it found itself unable to shield itself from the requests and bookings of early syncopated music, jitterbugs, and later even "The New Thing" of the 1960's.

Brooklyn Paramount, Loews Metropolitan, Brooklyn Roseland, Brooklyn Apollo...at least one half of these names might sound familiar to anyone with a knowledge of the important Manhattan theaters and ballrooms. And they should. The fact is that many of the more prominent Manhattan theaters at one time or another had a Brooklyn counterpart. In one respect this itself acknowledges the trend of Brooklynites to not be too eager to cross the river to Manhattan for entertainment. If they wouldn't come, the theater owners would bring it to them, because there were profits to be made also on that other side of the East River. Brooklyn, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was also still figuratively far enough from Manhattan to sometimes be out of the reach of that the city's various governing agencies, from the Police to the Musician's Union. Part of this was certainly due to the presence of organized crime, partnerships between it and the authorities, and the overall climate of corruption in New York politics that even predated John McKane's late 1880's involvement with Coney Island. In most cases, the counterpart theaters were owned or managed by the owners of the original theater in Manhattan, but sometimes not. In

some cases, enterprising theater builders unconnected with the company that may have originally owned the Manhattan theater simply built a Brooklyn theater with the same name, hoping to cash in using name recognition (In the case of at least one Brooklyn club, the Brooklyn club owner tried to get slick...Manhattan had their famous Town Hall, and Crown Heights had the "Town Hill"). In a few instances these names were used without permission, certainly in direct violation of copyright/trademark laws, but the theater was allowed to exist through many means, including manipulation of the corrupt political system. In other cases they were shut down, sometimes rather mysteriously. These complex relationships between official city authority and the local neighborhood "governing bodies" with ties to organized crime may account for the brief existence of some of these counterpart theaters. For example, as stated in the chapter on Coney Island, six years after the Savoy Ballroom on Lenox Avenue in Harlem opened it's doors a second ballroom named the Savoy was built on Coney Island around 1932. This is where Jelly Roll Morton made a brief appearance that year, but the theater seems to have been gone by



1933. Although very little is known about this short-lived ballroom located awkwardly over a railroad trolley depot, its here-today-gone-tomorrow existence is typical of businesses with organized crime connections throughout the Borough. The fact that Coney Island was close to the historically Italian neighborhood of Bensonhurst is more than a coincidence in some of these occurrences, although the presence of organized crime in the Brooklyn entertainment industry was hardly limited to that ethnic group or to the area close to that part of Brooklyn.

Manhattan/Brooklyn Counterpart Theaters and Ballrooms with jazz activity, in Chronological order of Brooklyn Opening:

<b>Manhattan Theater</b>	<b>Year Opened</b>	<b>Brooklyn Theater</b>	<b>Year Opened</b>
RKO 23 <sup>rd</sup> St. Theater	1889	RKO Greenpoint (First of 6 Brooklyn RKO Theaters)	1908
Liberty Theater NYC	1904	Liberty Theater Brooklyn	1910
Loew's 42 <sup>nd</sup> St	1909	Loew's Warwick (First of 22 Brooklyn Loew's)	1914

		Theaters)	
NY Strand Theater	1914	Brooklyn Strand Theater	1918
Roseland Ballroom NYC	1919	Brooklyn Roseland/Rosemont	Approx. 1922
125 <sup>th</sup> Street Apollo Theater	1913	Brooklyn Apollo	Approx. 1925
Majestic Theater NYC	1914	Majestic Theater Brooklyn	1926
Paramount Theater, NYC	1926	Brooklyn Paramount	1928
Windsor Theater, NYC	1906	Windsor Theater, Brooklyn	1928
Palace Theater, NYC	1913	Brooklyn Palace Theater	Approx. 1928
Rainbow Theater NYC	1915	Brooklyn Rainbow Theater	1930
Savoy Ballroom, Harlem NYC	1926	Savoy Ballroom, Coney Island	1932
Renaissance Ballroom, Harlem	1922	Renaissance Ballroom Coney Island	1934

There were many more counterpart theaters besides those listed, but although some may have been a part of the larger theater circuits, such as the Loews or RKO, the same acts did not always play all of the theaters in a particular borough, and therefore did not all showcase ragtime/jazz activity. There was also a distinction between the more grand theaters and a second type of smaller, regional theater. The smaller theaters were those placed further into certain neighborhoods, and off of the main thoroughfares in Brooklyn such as Flatbush Avenue. The grand theaters were, for the most part, located in the Downtown Brooklyn area and either on or near Flatbush Avenue. Vaudeville acts were usually only placed in the more grand theaters, such as those in Downtown Brooklyn, and the smaller neighborhood theaters tended to only feature film with no stage show, infrequent stage shows, or a stage show utilizing performers of less prestige. Therefore in Brooklyn if an act played the RKO Albee theater, which was the RKO flagship theater in Brooklyn, they might not have played the neighborhood Gotham, Greenpoint, or Gates theaters. I should also say here that discussion of the theaters in the Bedford-Stuyvesant

neighborhood are largely not being mentioned in this chapter, and will be reserved for the chapter which focuses on that area.

Although the Brooklyn Theaters were important, there was still a feeling among the Vaudeville Theater administration that the Brooklyn circuit could be used as a supplementary circuit to the Manhattan one, and also as a tryout for acts that were not yet established in, or might be possibly be controversial to the New York market. By late 1915, The Original Creole Band had been a hit for over a year as they made their way East from the Pantages circuit operating between the West Coast and Canada. Although their show was inundated with racial stereotypes of the time, their type of New Orleans ensemble playing had simply never been heard on a widespread basis before outside of New Orleans. They were often given the most favorable review of shows in which they were a part of, even outshining the headliners. On their first scheduled trip to the east coast, the Simon's and Weber agency handled the bookings but may have had reservations about thrusting them into the Manhattan spotlight. Instead they were placed

at B.F. Keith's Bushwick Theater in Brooklyn for their New York debut during the week of November 29, 1915. Although no reviews from their performance exist, and it was not mentioned in *Variety* the day before the engagement was to begin (which casts some doubt in the mind of Original Creole Band historian/author Lawrence Gushee as to whether the engagement actually took place), something must have gone favorably in the interim, because they ended up making their Manhattan debut a few days later on December 5. It would seem that through the cautious practice on the part of the Weber agency that the borough of Brooklyn was exposed to the very first sounds of the New Orleans ensemble style of jazz played by New Orleanians in the city of New York.

### **The Brooklyn Academy of Music**

Although the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) was initially envisioned as a hall for classical music, it was unable to shield itself from the popularity of early syncopated music, jitterbugs, and later

even avant-garde music, among other things. It was first formed in 1861 by the Philharmonic Society of Brooklyn and opened its first building in the Brooklyn Heights neighborhood, where it remained until it was destroyed by fire in 1903. In 1908 it opened near its present location in Fort Greene, just past downtown Brooklyn and remained strictly a house of the classics until just before the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A few years after its opening, it began to be mentioned in conversation with the finest halls in New York City such as Aeolian Hall, and Carnegie Hall. The Clef Club, based in Harlem, had been playing an important role in uplifting the African-American's musical image in the New York area since its founding in 1910. It had always had aspirations to play in the city's premier halls and achieved that goal when James Reese Europe led their orchestra in their first concert at Carnegie Hall in 1914. In the years after Europe's departure from the Clef Club his own Tempo Club dimmed the spotlight a little on the Clef Club, yet it still received enough work to sustain themselves, and to present grand concerts on the scale of their earlier Carnegie Hall concert. Still set on achieving their ambitious goals, which were

put in place after Europe and Tim Brymn returned from WWI, they put the relatively new hall in Brooklyn in their sights. The Clef Club took advantage of the new jazz craze after WWI, and for certain engagements the Clef Club Orchestra was renamed "The 50 Joy Whooping Sultans of High-Powered Syncopation". With Europe no longer associated with them, and Brymn organizing his own group to lead at his upcoming engagement at Brighton Beach, the Clef Club turned to W.C. Handy, a recent New York transplant. On April 6, 1919, Handy led the "Sultans" syncopated orchestra in a concert of Ragtime, Blues, and classics at BAM. Handy had only settled in New York a year earlier, and this was his first opportunity to lead a group of Clef Club musicians. The management of the Academy decided to schedule the concert on a Sunday, historically an economically low-risk evening for a performance, but nonetheless this was the first jazz concert ever held at BAM. This concert opened the door for jazz at the hall, and for African-Americans to have at least a limited presence in BAM's future programming.

In the 20's it was still difficult for many people to negotiate associating jazz music with the "higher" arts, therefore making it difficult for the music to have an opportunity to play in halls where the European Classical music, Opera and serious theater were presented. Paul Whiteman was one of the first who's music provided a middle ground between the two entities. In 1924, during his first North American Tour, Whiteman brought his orchestra to BAM for a concert of the relatively new style of "Orchestral" or "Symphonic" jazz. It seems that Whiteman's formula for success was hardly in place at this period of his career, and one description of this and other concerts during this tour state that the musical arrangements "failed to carry the day.

As with most halls, it had to operate primarily as a business despite their initial artistic outlook, and in many instances succumb to the requests of presenters to present popular music on their stages. As jazz took hold of American Society in the 1920's and 30's, it began to be integrated into all facets of social behavior. Historically speaking, one of the many types of engagements that jazz musicians have



performed in is the benefit concert. The Brooklyn Academy of Music theater, with its large performance space and easy accessibility became the location for many of the benefit functions held by various organizations. On May 8, 1938 what was advertised as "the biggest benefit show which has ever come to Brooklyn"<sup>1</sup> took place at the Academy of Music. The Brooklyn Urban League held their annual Gala Benefit entitled "Swing to Opera." Advance advertisements coyly stated that "Leading artists of Concert-Radio-Screen-Stage" would appear, but they exceeded their delivery of that promise. For the engagement the line up included: "Duke Ellington, Teddy Wilson & Lionel Hampton [advertised as Courtesy of Benny Goodman], Fats Waller, James P. Johnson, [vocalist] Babe Matthews, and Noble Sissle". Even the multi-talented Hazel Scott was included. Along with the musicians the dance team of Buck & Bubbles was also present, along with many other dancers. The House band for the engagement was "Ray Kavanaugh's Earl Carroll's Vanities Orchestra." There was even the thirty-five piece "Sam Wooding Swing Music Choir" from Philadelphia, and in another example of the James Reese Europe's

influence in Brooklyn, the Brooklyn-based 45 piece (!) "Lincoln Settlement Clef Club and Rhythm Band" youth orchestra also performed.

**NOTHING EVER LIKE IT!**

**BROOKLYN URBAN LEAGUE'S**  
**GALA BENEFIT**

ON  
**SUNDAY 8 MAY**  
**EVENING 8.15 p. m.**

AT THE  
**BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC**

**"SWING TO OPERA"**  
 (By An Array Of Stars and Celebrities)  
 Under the personal direction of **GEORGE W. LATTIMORE**  
 Including:

**BUCK & BUBBLES — IVIE ANDERSON — DUKE ELLINGTON — TEDDY WILSON & LIONEL HAMPTON — Courtesy BENNY GOODMAN — FREDI WASHINGTON — FIFI DORSEY — NOBLE SIDDLE — "FATS" WALLER — JUAN MARTINEZ & ANTONITA — SUNNY BICE — HAZEL SCOTT — HENRY ARMSTRONG — JAMES HERBERT — BARRINGTON GUY — JOHN W. COOPER — VALENTINOFF — CLAUDIE LOMBARD — SAM WOODING'S "SING MUSIC" — BUDDIE GILMORE — BERNARR COOPER — PETROVA — ANITA THELMA — JAMES P. JOHNSON — BABE MATTHEWS — AND OTHERS**

Entire performance played by **Ray Kavanaugh**  
 and his **Earl Carroll Vanities' Orchestra**

**TICKETS NOW ON SALE**

**50 Cents to \$2.00 (All Reserved—Tax Exempt)**

**APPROVED BY THEATRE AUTHORITY, Inc.**

*The New York Age 4/23/38*

In 1939, the Harlem Based African-American newspaper *The New York Amsterdam News* began to present an annual benefit concert, and at least 3 occasions they were held in Brooklyn. Following the Urban League's lead in bringing a star-studded cast to Brooklyn a few years before, on February 2, 1946 they engaged Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Billie Eckstine, the Ink Spots, and Savannah Churchill for their Annual Benefit at BAM. A few months later, the Elks hosted a Charity Fund Concert on April 22, 1946. The concert was organized by presenter Bob Streeter, a native Brooklynite who often promoted concerts at Town Hall in Manhattan, among other places. In a display of how much the definition of the music and acceptance of it had changed in the few decades since the 1919 Clef Club performance, it was advertised as "The First Jazz Concert Ever Brought to the Academy". This concert was described as capturing "The spirit of the Roaring Twenties" and featured, Henry "Red" Allen and his orchestra along with J.C. Higganbotham, Don Stovall, Benny

Moten, Eddie Bourne, Bill Thompson, Stella Brooks, Sam Price, Hank Duncan, Sol Yaged, Freddie Moore, Earl Bostic and Sidney Bechet. The Hank Duncan/Earl Bostic combination was especially fervent that night, those two together receiving special notice for having "climaxed the event with their own rousing jazz interpretation of "Obobereeba."<sup>2</sup>

Brooklyn had always had an important presence in the early Bebop movement from it's inception in the late 1930's. Early Brooklyn Beboppers Max Roach, Duke Jordan, and Leonard Gaskin were all a part of early Bebop activity, and of course Roach and Jordan played in Charlie Parker's first quintet. On Friday, December 26, 1947, The next generation of Brooklyn Beboppers had an opportunity to hear their hero at the Brooklyn academy of Music. Dizzy Gillespie and his orchestra gave a concert at BAM featuring Sarah Vaughan. Brooklyn-born saxophonist Cecil Payne was a part of the orchestra.



*Dizzy Gillespie: The*

*Bebop Years, 1937-1952 by Ken Vail, p.54*

The most significant and continuous jazz presence at the Brooklyn Academy of Music by one entity during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century would have to be Norman Granz' Jazz at The Philharmonic (JATP). In a six-year span, from 1946 through 1955, the star-studded, jam session themed concert series was held exclusively at BAM within the borough. The concert series had proven itself a hit in its first two seasons, 1945 and early 1946, respectively. Although JATP had made its New York debut at Carnegie Hall on May 27<sup>th</sup> 1946 at the end of the second national tour, at the beginning of its Third National Tour in the fall, its

only New York area appearance was at BAM, which was again following the trend of being associated with the premier hall in the city. This also was the beginning of a trend that Granz would repeat. On 5 occasions JATP would place a concert at Carnegie Hall and at BAM within close proximity to each other. On most occasions, this time period would span 2 or 3 months; sometime ending the previous tour at one, and then beginning the next tour at the other. On 2 occasions though, the Brooklyn/Manhattan concerts were in much closer proximity. During JATP's 8<sup>th</sup> national tour in 1949, the Carnegie Hall concert that began the tour was on February 11, 1949, and the concert at BAM which ended the tour was on March 30, 1949. In September 1955, during the 16<sup>th</sup> national tour, both concerts were in the same month, with the Carnegie performance on September 17, 1955, and the concert at BAM near the end of the month . This made for an interesting practice given that the two halls were only a little more than six miles away from each other.

Granz was following the dual-borough trend began by theater builders at the turn of the century, and those club owners who had secondary Coney Island business. He realized that Brooklyn was sufficiently self-contained enough, and in the minds of New Yorkers far enough away from Manhattan to support its own concert, yet still close enough to satisfy those Manhattanites who hadn't had their fill at the previous Carnegie Hall concert. On November 13, 1946, JATP invaded the Academy with its all-star lineup consisting of Tenor Saxophonists Coleman Hawkins and Illinois Jacquet, Trumpeters Roy Eldridge, Buck Clayton and Rex Stewart, Bassist Charles Drayton, Drummer Jackie Mills, Pianist Kenny Kersey and Vocalist Helen Humes. For its second appearance in Brooklyn during the spring of 1947, again following a Carnegie Hall concert close to the end of the previous tour, Norman Granz decided to begin his Fourth National Tour on the east coast and work his way west with a concert at BAM on February 6, 1947. The tour brought back Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, Buck Clayton, Kenneth Kersey and Helen Humes, but added Trummy Young, Willie Smith, but this time added two Brooklyn-born musicians to the roster.

Drummer Buddy Rich, and saxophonist Flip Phillips, who “began an unbroken string of seasons with JATP continuing through the last domestic tour in 1957, a record matched only by bassist Ray Brown.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1949, Granz began his association with vocalist Ella Fitzgerald, eventually taking over her management from the Decca Record company a few years later. From 1949 forward, Fitzgerald would make at least 3 JATP appearances at the Academy, on March 30, 1949, September 18, 1951, and September 18, 1952. In total nine Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts were presented at BAM before Granz stopped organizing regular national tours of the concert package in 1957 (See appendix for complete listing of concerts).

Jazz performances would continue to dot the performance schedule of BAM over the years, gradually increasing in frequency as the idea of Jazz in the concert setting became more of a reality. Various benefits would be held there over the years, such as the NAACP benefit held on March 25, 1948. The headliners of that event included Jimmie Lunceford and his Orchestra, Andy Kirk and his Orchestra, Una Mae



Carlisle, Willie Bryant, Teddy Wilson, the Eddie Williams trio, and others. Duke Ellington would also give concerts at BAM on various occasions, including December 4, 1956, which was advertised as his only New York appearance of that year, and also on December 4, 1966.

On April 19, 1968, Thelonious Monk's Quartet and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers performed at BAM for over 2000 people as part of a concert presented by Lionel Hampton enterprises, which was producing a series of concerts at the Academy. Monk's music, and the play of his quartet, which included saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Larry Gales, and drummer Ben Riley, was said to represent the "unchallengable in jazz" because of its genuineness and originality. Blakey's group included saxophonist Billy Harper, trombonist Julian Priester, trumpeter Bill Hardman, pianist Ronnie Matthews, and bassist Lawrence Evans. Harper stole the show on this occasion.

**The Downtown Theater District - The Brooklyn Paramount, The  
RKO Albee, The Brooklyn Strand, Brooklyn Fox, The Loew's  
Metropolitan**

The Downtown Brooklyn area, while being the governmental center of the Borough, was also the location of the grandest theaters in Brooklyn. Within a 2 block distance in the proximity of Flatbush Avenue and Fulton Street, amongst other smaller but equally lavish theaters one could find the Fox Theater, The Brooklyn Strand Theater, The RKO Albee, The Loew's Metropolitan and the flagship, The Brooklyn Paramount. Being the "top-tier" theaters in the borough, they all presented the most popular entertainment, which at times included the most popular Big Bands. As would be expected, they competed with and therefore played a continuous game of copycat with each other. As far as jazz is concerned, when one theater had success with the presence of a name band, another theater would be soon to engage one for their own stage. All five of the grand theaters of Brooklyn were also owned by a parent company which built or

acquired them primarily to show their own motion pictures and/or to showcase the stars in their films through the vaudeville programs presented there. Given this fact, the reality is that none of the theaters held an allegiance to jazz or any particular type of entertainment aside from motion pictures, and experimented with combinations of different attractions in order to find ones that were popular/profitable. Because of this neither theater became the place known for hosting hot, swinging bands, but between all of them and the Brooklyn Roseland Ballroom which was also in the vicinity during its existence, the lindy-hoppers and Jitterbugs were able to get their fill. Also, once one of the Downtown Brooklyn entertainment houses had taken a chance on a hot band and had done well, the others took notice and eventually hired the group for their own stage. After a few years a core group of bands became the Brooklyn "regulars" at the Downtown theaters, rotating from one to another at different times. All of this worked out well for Brooklynites, and combined with the activity in a few of the smaller, neighborhood theaters the Big Bands spent a good amount of

time in Brooklyn during the years of 1930 until the end of the WWII years.

### **The Brooklyn Paramount**

The Brooklyn Paramount was the grandest theater in Brooklyn. It was built in 1928 on the corner of Flatbush Avenue and DeKalb Avenue, just a few blocks from the Crescent theater and the Brooklyn Roseland. It was also one of the most versatile of the grand theaters, also being capable of presenting athletic events such as Basketball games. In fact, since it's sale to Long Island University in 1960, it has been converted into a full-time gymnasium, although the original stage is still present. Oddly enough, the original Wurlitzer Organ has been maintained, and is still used for LIU basketball games! Between 1955-1960, it even became the location for Disc Jockey Alan Freed's hugely popular "Rock 'n' Roll" parties. Freed hosted 20 of these concerts at the Brooklyn Paramount in that five year period, which featured veteran jazz musicians in the house orchestra, led by saxophonist Sam "The Man" Taylor, such as Panama Francis, "Big" Al Sears, Georgie

Auld, Earl Warren, and King Curtis. For the 1955 "Holiday Jubilee", Count Basie and His orchestra with Joe Williams were added to the program full of early Rhythm and Blues stars.



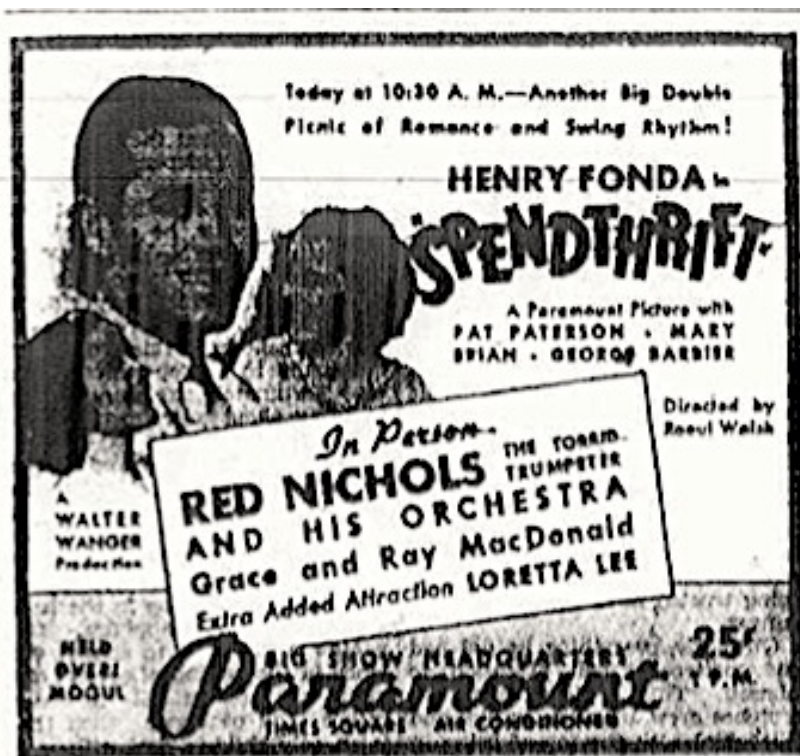
The Paramount, and all of the other large theaters, initially hired a house orchestra and an intermission organist (or two in some cases) as part of their regular musical presentation and at times they were used in place of, or in addition to the name bands that were presented

there. Although regular employment for many musicians was gained for many years through these "house musician" jobs, in Brooklyn they would unfortunately outlast the swing bands' participation in the grand theaters. For a reason that cannot be precisely determined, the grand theaters in Brooklyn only regularly presented name bands as part of their programming alongside film during two brief periods: 1930-1933, and 1939-1942. The first period was when the Downtown Brooklyn theaters made a regular practice of plugging in a few of the hot, groundbreaking bands into their programming which mainly consisted of the more popular (and "safer") sweet/society bands. During the second period, the Flatbush Theater, which was a smaller, neighborhood theater, began a series presenting vaudeville, name bands, and film years after the Downtown theaters ceased the practice. After it was successful, one of the Downtown theaters, the Strand, brought the practice back for a short time to compete with the Flatbush. In between the two periods sweet bands infrequently dotted the film/vaudeville programming schedule of the theaters, with vaudeville beginning to phase out by the end of the 1930's. The most

peculiar aspect of this trend is that all of the parent companies continued to host name bands at their Manhattan theaters during this time, after ceasing to do so in Brooklyn in the early 1940's. This went against the long-standing trend of placing the same act into a company's Manhattan and Brooklyn houses. Theaters like the NY Paramount and NY Strand continued hosting bands along with film well into the 1950's.

For example, compare these two advertisements for the New York and Brooklyn Paramount theaters from the year 1936:

New York Paramount:



Brooklyn Paramount:



This became normal practice beginning around 1934 or so, with the  
Manhattan theater featuring a name band, and the Brooklyn theater



now showing a Double-Feature with the second film in place of Vaudeville.

It did not go unnoticed by Brooklynites. While discussing the lack of stage shows in the Borough as part of a 1945 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* write-in column, one band lover wrote:

"I think it's a fine idea to bring back stage shows in Brooklyn. At this moment I'm waiting for my date, and guess where we're going?---To hear Tommy Dorsey at the Capitol [A Manhattan Theater]. I'd prefer to stay in Brooklyn, but where will you get a show like that? So, we go over the river..."<sup>4</sup>

The Brooklyn Paramount, being the flagship, had ambitions to set a standard for high quality entertainment from its inaugural performance on November 24, 1928. During this time, jazz music was still in question as to whether it belonged into that category, and the programming at the Paramount took notice. For its inaugural week, dancer Maria Gambarelli leading her ballet years before she was to become the Prima Ballerina of the New York Metropolitan Opera, was featured along with a theatrical show and the featured film. The

programming at the theater seemed to follow this type of path during the following months until a clear direction in their live music policy was defined. In the same year as the Paramount's opening, a young saxophonist and vocalist named Rudee Valle began recording on the radio with his band "Rudee Vallee and the Connecticut Yankees." Also around this time was the beginning of the widespread use of electric microphones, which helped to project Vallee's soft, tenor/contralto pitched voice over his band without the use of a megaphone, and also providing the listener a never heard before level of detail into the subtleties of the human voice in the popular song context. The exposure from this and his already existing commercial recordings, along with his smooth vocal style and good looks catapulted him to success. In 1929, he made his first picture for RKO Radio. His success was so overwhelming that Paramount, a competing studio, couldn't ignore his stardom and Vallee began performing at the New York Paramount in that same year. In July of 1929, he began appearing at the Brooklyn Paramount in support of his Radio and Film Career, and began the familiar cycle of alternating between a Brooklyn venue and

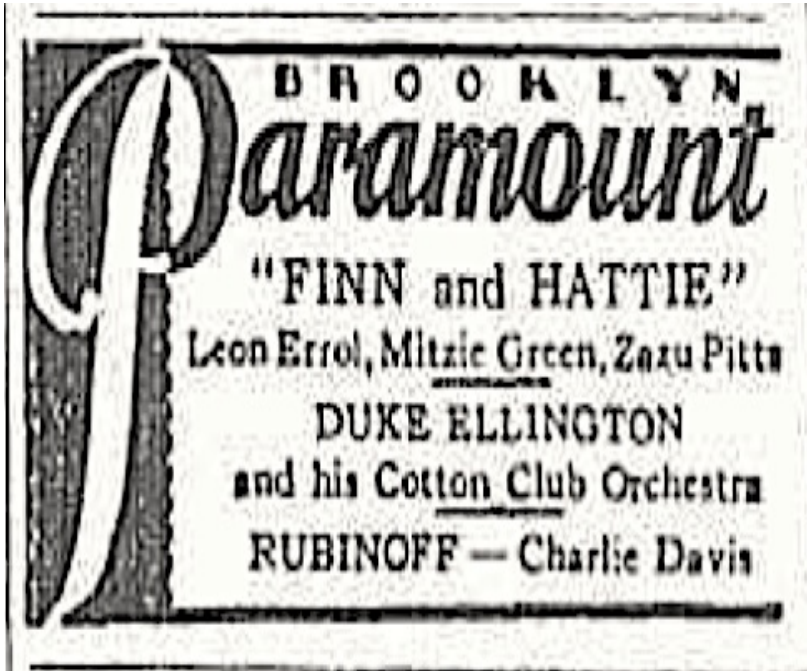
a sister one in Manhattan. While his vocal style would go on to coin a new adjective applied to singers, the "crooner", and influence Frank Sinatra and others, Vallee's style of music was on the sweet side and it would set the tone for the preferred type of music at the Paramount. The other theaters in the Downtown District would also soon show a preference for this type of band. Vallee's Connecticut Yankees would become the band-in-residence at the Brooklyn Paramount through 1930, performing there more than at its Manhattan counterpart. Other sweet bands would fill in occasionally, but Vallee had found a home for the time being in Brooklyn.

In January 1931, Vallee and his orchestra left the Brooklyn Paramount to go on tour after his long residence there, and a replacement was needed. In what may have been a try-out for the regular spot in Vallee's absence, Duke Ellington's Cotton Club Orchestra was engaged at the theater, beginning on January 23 of that year. Ellington's band was placed as part of a vaudeville revue entitled "Three of a Kind", which contained many non-jazz elements, and also included an organ-

led songfest which was played by the Paramount's two house organists.

All accounts seem to point toward Ellington's orchestra only being initially engaged for that particular week, but the next week the management of the Paramount decided to hold them over and also bring in a second band and new revue to further augment the stage show. Charlie Davis and His Joy Gang had been a part of the Publix Vaudeville Theater circuit for a few years after being discovered in Indiana, and through that association wound up working Paramount movie houses. Davis' popular sweet band had already recorded for the Vocalion record label a few years earlier, and his original composition "Copenhagen" had been recorded by The Wolverines with trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke in 1924. The vocalist with the Davis' orchestra was Dick Powell, who had been with the band since its Indiana days. Powell would soon go on to stardom as a Film and Television performer. In what could be seen as an elevation in status in the stage show, Ellington's orchestra is provided with its own spot in the show,

and Davis' orchestra was a part of a Publix revue entitled "Illustrations", which also featured the former Ziegfeld Follies star, Ruth Etting. Given that the Paramount had set the tone for sweet sounding bands with Vallee's extended presence, the inclusion of Davis' band may have served the purpose of balancing out the hot, energetic sound of Ellington's Orchestra. Although Ellington had admired sweet music early in his career, had recorded it and played it in live performance, the one thing that was always present in his music was a relentless, swinging *beat*, whether the music was sweet or hot. Ellington's band is clearly a success, given top billing among the vaudeville acts featured in advertisements. As their engagement at the Brooklyn Paramount continued, they are also described in increasingly more complimentary terms in advertisements, progressing from being the band "Supplementing the film attraction" during Week 1 to being the "Chief Stage Attraction" by Week 3, after being held over a second time.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 1/31/31*

Ellington would leave after three weeks at the paramount, ending on February 6, 1931. He was followed by a 40-person revue led by Ted Lewis. Charlie Davis, however, would take over Vallee's duties as resident sweet orchestra (while copying the same format featuring a Baritone crooner as vocalist) the next week at the Paramount and appear there and at the Manhattan Paramount over the next year, with the majority of the time being spent in Brooklyn. In a rare spring appearance, Cab Calloway and His Orchestra made his first appearance at the theater during the week of April 26, 1931, along

with Bill “Bojangles” Robinson. For this week Rudy Vallee was also in attendance, mimicking the earlier Hot Band/Crooner format of the earlier Ellington/Charlie Davis combination. When this format couldn’t be provided at the theater, the stage show programming which accompanied the pictures was varied, with a show featuring popular magician Howard Thurston along with the Paramount orchestra, and performances by the house organists during the week of October 25<sup>th</sup>.

The next week, Harlem invaded Brooklyn again with the staging of a 50-person revue led by Cab Calloway and *his* Cotton Club Orchestra beginning on October 31. Calloway’s production had played the Manhattan Paramount in the previous weeks, and featured popular dancer/singer Cora LaRedd along with a 16-person dance troupe.

Calloway’s revue was engaged for three weeks at the theater, being followed by a stage show featuring Russ Columbo’s Orchestra, the Mills Brothers, and the Song and Dance team of Buck and Bubbles. Again the management of the Brooklyn Paramount was demonstrating a trend in programming, first “trying out” Calloway’s orchestra on a show alongside another act, and then later featuring the orchestra as

the headliner of a large revue, as would soon be done with Duke Ellington and his orchestra. An obvious connection between Irving Mills, who served as manager for both Ellington and Calloway, and Paramount Theaters seems to be in play here.



The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 10/30/31



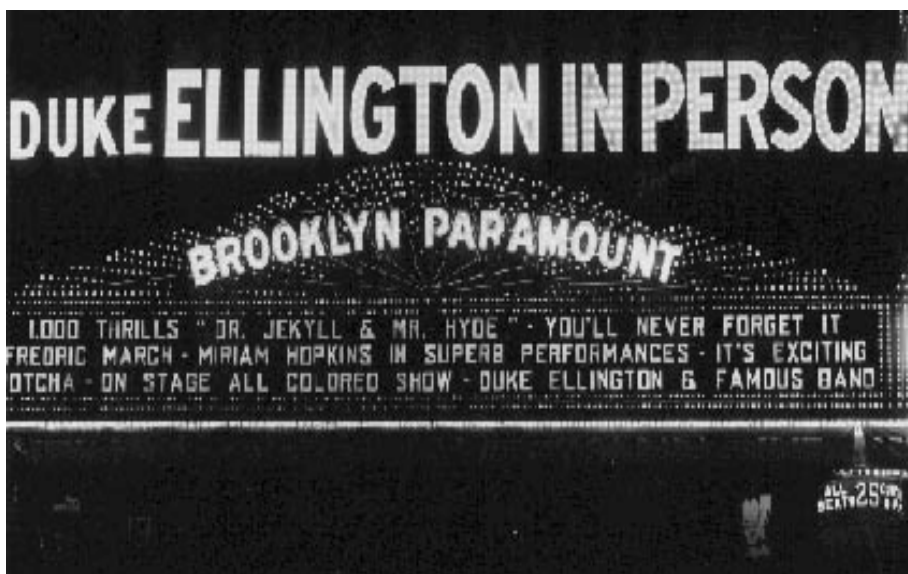
Columbo would stay on as the resident band until February 1932, when Duke Ellington and his Orchestra were brought back to the Paramount, this time as the leader of their own Harlem Revue. The Orchestra had been on the road for a year on it's first national tour after a Thirty-Eight month run at the Cotton Club. It was a particularly harrowing tour, and even though they were back in New York city the band must have enjoyed being able to sit in a theater for a week. Of that tour trumpeter Cootie Williams recalled:

"We were on the road for a year...Other than the theater dates, half of the time we didn't know where we were at. We'd get out of the train, do the gig, and split." <sup>5</sup>

The Revue was entitled "Hot Harlem Blues" and featured the Four Step Brothers, A dance team known as "The Harlem Strutters", a performer named "Nicodemus", and Duke's new vocalist, Ivie Anderson. In a paring that must have surely thrilled the Brooklyn Paramount's patrons

during the engagement, Ellington's orchestra was heard alongside the classic film *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

The softer, sweeter band preferences of the Brooklyn Paramount's patrons would come to light in a review of the paring, with the Ellington band being described as "too noisy" in a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article.



**BROOKLYN**  
*Paramount*  
PLATINUM H. DE KALE  
**TODAY!**  
*Thrills you'll never forget!*

Thousands have seen it twice!  
 Be sure to see it at least once!

"Exciting!"  
 — *Daily Mirror*

**"DR. Jekyll and MR. Hyde"**  
*A Paramount Picture with*  
**FREDRIC MARCH**  
 Miriam Hopkins — Rose Hobart  
*A ROBERT MANKOFF production*

— *On the Stage* —  
**Extra! In Person!**  
 His Only New York Appearance  
**DUKE ELLINGTON**  
*and his famous ORCHESTRA*  
 Singing All Hit Broadway Songs!  
 "HOT HAREM BLUES" and  
 THE FOUR STEP-BROS.  
 © Famous Black & White  
**IVIE ANDERSON**  
*Harlem Blues Singer*  
**NICODEMUS**  
*Trinidadian Singer*  
 The Harlem Strutters

MIRIAM HOPKINS  
 in a performance  
 you'll never re-  
 member!

BDE 2/5/32

FRIDAY—Up, and being wearier than that of work, to spend a grand hour or two with the New Yorker...and so to get back in harness, and to labor... and to the office, to labor some more...to the local Paramount to catch Duke Ellington...and we think his band's too noisy, and sue us if you like...to the Fox.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 2/8/32*

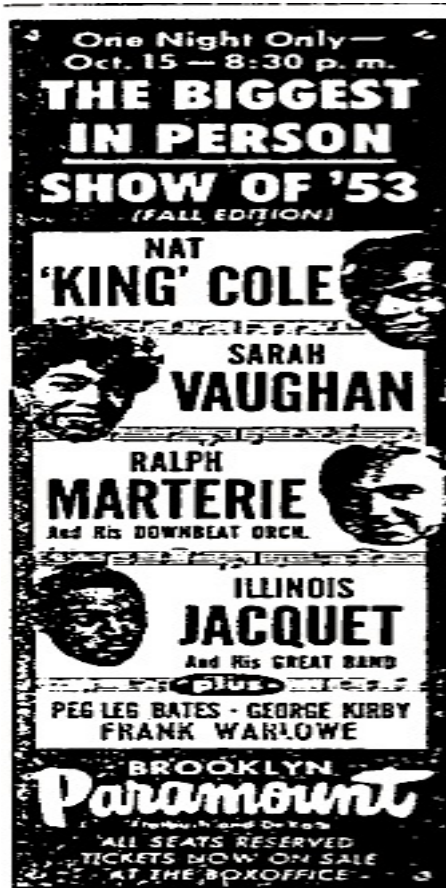
After Ellington's second departure, Russ Columbo would return to the Brooklyn Paramount. Things would continue along these lines until November 5<sup>th</sup>, when a production of Lew Leslie's current show, "Dixie to Broadway" was staged at the Paramount for a week featuring Ethel Waters, The Mills Brothers, and Brooklyn native daughter Adelaide Hall. 1932 would end the Brooklyn Paramount's dalliance with hot bands, and bands such as Russ Columbo and Ben Bernie would dominate the Paramount's programming throughout 1933 and the beginning of 1934. Soon afterwards even the sweet bands would disappear from the Brooklyn Paramount's regular programming. There were sporadic appearances of Big Bands leading up to the WWII years and after, such as Count Basie and His Orchestra playing a 6-day

engagement beginning on November 23, 1938, but by then the presence of bands at the Brooklyn Paramount would become a *special* occurrence instead of a *regular* one. They did, however continue as regular attractions at the Manhattan theater. In at least one instance going forward, the Brooklyn Paramount would provide encouragement to a talented, but struggling new orchestra led by virtuoso trumpeter Harry James, as recounted in Peter Townsend's book *Pearl Harbor Jazz*:

"Late that fall [1942], the James band arrived at the Brooklyn Paramount at 8:00 a.m. after having driven all night from a date in Pittsburgh. Fans were lined up around the block waiting for the first show. As James remembered, when he got off the bus, "I thought there had been an accident or a fire or something because we hadn't seen a big crowd since we started the band. So I walked up and asked somebody, 'What's wrong?' and the guy said, 'We're waiting to see Harry James'"<sup>6</sup>

While the Brooklyn Paramount's band policy was in effect, it would begin a copying trend among many of the other Downtown Theaters. Many of them opened their doors before the Paramount, but didn't begin to feature name bands until the Paramount had shown success with them. It is only then that Ellington, Calloway, and others began to be seen, albeit infrequently, rotating between the other Downtown Brooklyn theaters.

In the years after World War II, the band activity at the Brooklyn Paramount became largely limited to limited run "In-Person" all-star shows, and/or seasonal and holiday events until the aforementioned Alan Freed Rock and Roll shows began in 1955. In 1953, the Fall In-Person show included Nat 'King' Cole, Sarah Vaughan, and also Ralph Marterie and Illinois Jacquet with their respective bands.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 10/3/53

The 1953 concert, dubbed an “experiment” by *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* with Nat Cole and Sarah Vaughn mentioned above was so successful that in the following months three more shows followed of varied format. The number of people turned away from that first concert caused the theater to change the number of performances from one to two on the day of the show. Following the first concert, a Mambo show became the second in the series, featuring Tito Puente

and Joe Loco, it took place on April 24, 1954. For the third concert of the series, the management of the Brooklyn Paramount turned to bandleader Stan Kenton. He put together a show known as "Stan Kenton and his Festival of Modern Jazz". It took place on February 6, 1954, and featured Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Lee Konitz, Candido Camero, June Christy, The Erroll Garner Trio, and Kenton and his orchestra.





*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 1/27/54*

The Brooklyn Paramount had found a winner with the new policy, and brought back Kenton's Festival of Modern Jazz for a second concert at the Brooklyn Paramount on November 6, 1954. This time the show featured the Art Tatum Trio, Charlie Ventura and his Quartet, Shorty Rogers and his Giants, Guitarist Johnny Smith, Candido, vocalist Mary Ann McCall, and Kenton and his orchestra.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 10/24/54*

After the overwhelming success of Alan Freed's concerts, the writing was on the wall for the presence of Jazz at the Brooklyn Paramount, although it would slip into the programming every once in a while.

From April 15-25, 1960, in what was a rare occurrence by that time, an almost all-jazz show was presented for ten days in commemoration of the Easter season at the Brooklyn Paramount. It was hosted by WNEW DeeJay William B. Williams (his first time hosting a stage show), and featured Dinah Washington, Brook Benton, Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross, Maynard Ferguson's orchestra, the Art-Farmer Benny Golson Jazztet, and Rock and Roll group Dion and the Belmonts.

Dinah Washington's two young dancing sons, Bobby and George also performed short tap routines in between her numbers as a team called the "Dinah-mites". Dinah Washington and Brook Benton had a recent hit on the radio with the song "Baby, You've Got What It Takes", and because of how well they sang together, it was assumed that they would perform multiple times together. People even thought that they were lovers. In actuality they had a very testy relationship and only performed "Baby" together.

Brooklyn has always been a “tell-it-like-it-is type” of place, and by her own account Dinah Washington experienced that aspect of the borough one day on Flatbush Avenue during the 1960 show.

Brooklynite and jazz fan Harold Valle remembered her account of it while attending one of those shows:

“I remember a revue I saw there with Dinah Washington. I remember her particularly because she was sporting a blond wig. She was a master when it came to humor. I remember vividly she indicated that during a break or whatever she was crossing the street there at Flatbush Avenue and there was an open manhole cover. She said she straddled it for a moment and looked down and saw the gentlemen who were working down below looking up. She looked down and said ‘you fellas are no gentlemen,’ and they said ‘and you’re no blond.’”<sup>7</sup>

After the sale of the Brooklyn Paramount to Long Island University in 1960, it continued to host concerts of varied type for a number of years, and fittingly, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra would play the last jazz concert there in March of 1971.

Of Course hardly any live music, if any at all, is performed there today, but even looking at it in it's current state it is possible to at least imagine what use to be. In my personal opinion, based off of this current view from the original stage, this has to be the most grand and formal looking basketball court that I have ever seen.



## **The Loew's Metropolitan**

The Loew's Metropolitan, along with the Brooklyn Strand Theater, was one the oldest of the Downtown Brooklyn theaters, both opening their doors in 1918. By that year, Founder Marcus Loew had converted his chain of nickelodeon houses into one of the leading vaudeville circuits in the United States. Among the Downtown Brooklyn theaters, they were the most consistently committed to presenting vaudeville stage shows along with their films, continuing to do so regularly through until around 1938 or so, a few years after the other theaters abandoned the practice. Unfortunately, this didn't always mean that hot jazz bands were a part of the programming during those years. As with the others, the line up was inundated with variety acts and sweet/commercial dance bands, but occasionally some significant jazz activity would take place at the Metropolitan.

Of the Downtown Brooklyn theaters, The Loews Metropolitan did seem to be the first to begin hiring African-American performers, and even

during the years before full-length films shared the programming at the theaters, Loews included a few choice African-American artists on it's predominantly white vaudeville circuit. In perhaps the earliest instance at the Metropolitan, Mamie Smith and Her Jazz Hounds performed for a week at the theater from November 6 to November 11, 1922 while making a tour of the Loew's Vaudeville circuit.

Trumpeter Bubber Miley had just recently left the Smith organization, with trumpeter Joe Smith taking his place. On tenor saxophone, she featured a very young Coleman Hawkins, just days before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and just a few months before he would have experience his first significant period of musical growth as a member of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. He would only be with the band for a year or so, making Brooklynites very fortunate to hear him in performance, even at that young age.

It wasn't until the late 1920's that name band activity began to pick up in the Loews programming, which had been previously dominated by musical novelty band as a part of Vaudeville stage shows. One of the first significant jazz events to take place at the Metropolitan must have

been the presence of Paul Whiteman and his famous orchestra at the theater around May 18, 1928. Pioneering trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke was in the trumpet section, giving Brooklynites their first chance to hear his original solo style. This was a particularly exciting time for Whiteman and his orchestra, as he had just begun a new recording contract with Columbia on May 15, and can be seen in a famous Film Short shot at Midnight of that day tearing up his expiring Victor Records contract to symbolically bring the new venture into effect. During the two weeks around the Metropolitan appearances, Whiteman's band would record fifteen titles for Columbia.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 5/18/28*

Beginning on January 23, 1931, the Brooklyn Paramount brought in Duke Ellington and his orchestra to replace crooner Rudee Vallee's

outfit after a long run at that theater. A week later, in what was probably a reaction to the success that the 2½ year old Paramount was having, the Loews Metropolitan brought in Luis Russell and his orchestra, beginning on January 30<sup>th</sup>, as the first “hot” dance band at the theater. Russell and his orchestra must have been well received, because they would play at the theater often over the next few years, although during this period Louis Armstrong was also hiring the Russell band, fronting it as if it was his own. In an act that was possibly a result of direct competition between the two is not known, but the Paramount responded by bringing in a second name band, that of Charlie Davis’ and his soon-to-be-famous crooner Dick Powell, along with Ellington during the same week. Either way, Brooklynites benefited from the competition.

During the start of the next year’s vaudeville season, the orchestra of African-American actress and singer Amanda Randolph was featured at the Metropolitan during the week of August 25, 1931. Sweet Bands came to dominate the band activity at the Metropolitan, as with the

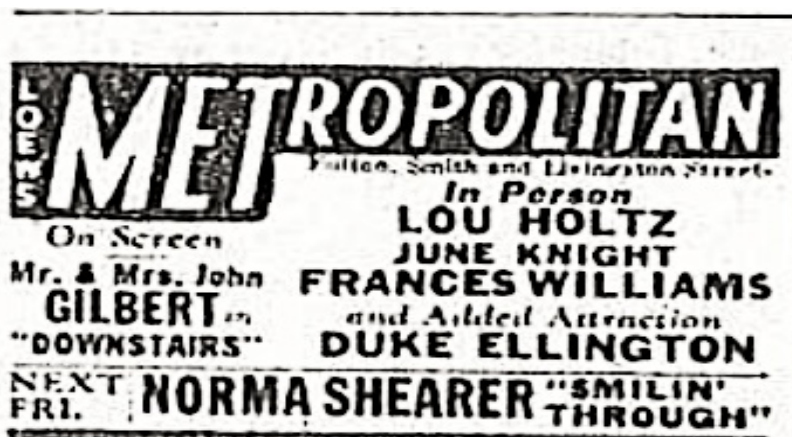


other theaters (Henry Santrey's orchestra was a favorite there during that season), but Luis Russell was brought back to the theater in January of 1932 to spice things up a bit. During this period Russell's orchestra contained many of the greatest soloists on their instruments at the time. After replacing Teddy Hill in Russell's band, saxophonist Greely Walton lists the personnel as: "Red Allen, Otis Johnson, J.C. Higginbotham, Charlie Holmes, Albert Nicholas, Bill Johnson, "Pops" Foster, Paul Barbarian, and Luis Russell"<sup>8</sup>. According to Jelly Roll Morton, Russell's greatest influences came from time spent in New Orleans around 1916 and had a preference for New Orleans musicians and the sound of the music from that city in his band. Walton explains:

"They had a little deal in the band where the New Orleans guys would play and the rest of the guys would rest. Just the five pieces—Red, Nick, Pops, Russell and Barbarin—with their New Orleans music, and then we would come on and play our music which was quite different from theirs, because they played nothin' but the New Orleans stuff and we played what we could play well. You had two small bands that were in the band, but we had J.C. Higginbotham, and we did just as well as the guys from New Orleans."<sup>9</sup>

The contrast between this type of band performing a small portion of the year and that of society bandleaders such as Henry Santrey at the Metropolitan performing during the bulk of it must have been incredible to the ears of the theater's patrons.

Eight months later, the Metropolitan decided to get in on the Ellington act itself, after witnessing the success of the band during two different performances the Brooklyn Paramount. Ellington and his Orchestra played the Loews Metropolitan beginning on October 8, 1932. This was the beginning of Ellington beginning to "make the rounds" in Brooklyn, as his theater appearances and social club dance activity in the borough would increase in the remaining years of this decade.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 10/8/32*

A couple of weeks later in the same month, Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra made a his second trip to the Metropolitan in five months, beginning on October 22. Then later that year, following what would seem to be a trend, Cab Calloway followed Duke Ellington with a Cotton Club Revue at the Loews Metropolitan on December 19, 1932. The same pattern had occurred at the Brooklyn Paramount in 1931. Certainly Jazz impresario Irving Mills had something to do with this recurring theme, as he was managing both Ellington and Calloway at the time.

The next year saw Luis Russell's band return to the Loews Metropolitan during the week of February 5, 1933, after the society bands of Harold Stern and others had held court during the month of January. Hot band activity began to taper off after this year, but Vaudeville stage shows continued, which at least opened the door for sporadic future performances featuring name bands. During the week of September 9, 1934, a new Cotton Club Revue was presented at the Metropolitan

alongside the film "Hide-Out" starring Robert Montgomery. The Revue featured Lucky Millinder and the Mills Blue Rhythm band, and Brooklyn songstress Adelaide Hall.

Beginning June 13, 1936, Lucky Millinder and his orchestra played at the Metropolitan with vaudevillian Benny Fields. The next week, society bandleader Harold Stern was back on stage in a show hosted by then Broadway columnist, Ed Sullivan. Sullivan, 12 years before hosting his famous Television variety show, was essentially filling the same role that he would become known for, as a promoter of new talent.

By 1939, even with the Swing era in full blossom the band activity at the Brooklyn theaters had dwindled down to a slow crawl, although the Metropolitan did continue featuring stage shows. Occasionally the bands led by the younger hot bandleaders of the time began to make their way into the Metropolitan's stage. On May 11, 1939, Clarinetist Joe Marsala brought his orchestra, with vocalist Adele Girard to the

Metropolitan stage along with a "Jitterbug Jamboree" featuring Brooklyn High School Students. Similar contests were being held at many of the Downtown Brooklyn theaters during this time.

### **Loew's Met. to Stage Swing Contest Friday**

Students of several Brooklyn high schools will stage a Jitterbug Jamboree on the stage of Loew's Metropolitan Theater Friday evening. Joe Marsala and his orchestra, featuring Adele Girard, billed as "The Sweethearts of Swing," will furnish the dance music. Marsala and Miss Girard are credited with writing the latest swing sensation, "Little Sir Echo," which they will feature Friday evening. The theater will present silver cups to the individual winners and winning teams. In addition to the jitterbug contest the orchestra and Miss Girard will present vocal and instrumental numbers.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 5/9/39*

Some of the other theaters in the Loew's chain would also present jazz in their theaters from time to time. Saxophonist Jerry Jerome entered

into the concert-presenting business in the 1950's, and on one occasion he hosted a show at the Loew's Kings Theater entitled "Hot vs. Cool", featuring Charlie Parker. The concert took place at the theater on March 24, 1952. In Parker's "Hot" band was pianist Teddy Wilson, bassist Eddie Safranski, and drummer Don Lamond. The "Cool" band consisted of trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen, Trombonists Big Chief Russell Moore and Bill Harris, Billy Butterfield, Dick Cary, and Jerry Jerome.

### **The Brooklyn Strand**

The Brooklyn Strand, located at 647 Fulton Street, just a block off of Flatbush Avenue, adjacent to the Brooklyn Majestic Theater, and around the corner from the Paramount, was opened in 1918 as a vaudeville house. It is located just across from the Brooklyn Academy of Music, which ended up working in its favor in preventing it being

demolished, as it is currently undergoing a renovation, and will be reopened under the auspices of BAM.

Although it opened the same year as the Loews Metropolitan, they did not mimic the types of programming during their early years.

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's they did not feature name bands along with their vaudeville, even though the other Downtown Brooklyn theaters were all having success with the society band/occasional hot band formula. It does not seem to have ever had air-conditioning installed, and continued to adhere to a fall to spring Vaudeville schedule, which would comprise one full season. There are reports that a group of New Orleans musicians, including clarinetist Omar Simeon, were part of a vaudeville act at the Brooklyn Strand in 1928, around the time that Simeon was recording with Jelly Roll Morton's "Red Hot Peppers" for Victor. However, the Brooklyn Strand would not feature much in terms of regular jazz band activity until a decade later. In 1938 The Brooklyn Strand, whether a result of a change in management or another unknown reason, instituted a stage and

screen show policy during the 1938 Vaudeville season, well after the other theaters in the vicinity had abandoned regular stage shows after the 1933 season.

With it's new policy, the Brooklyn Strand followed the lead of the other theaters by engaging a resident society band, this time the orchestra of Teddy King, to play at the theater and brought in revues featured around a name band or a vaudeville show with a jazz act as special events. The theater opened up their new series with The Andrews Sisters performing with Teddy King's orchestra, among other acts on September 16, 1938, and for the next few months King's orchestra was the centerpiece of the stage shows. In December, things changed for the holiday season. A Vaudeville revue that included Silm Gaillard and Slam Stewart among many non-jazz acts performed during the week of December 4, 1938. The next week, the Strand went all-in, bringing Duke Ellington and his Orchestra to the Strand's stage, along with vocalist Ivie Anderson, and dancer Dolores Brown. By this time,



Duke Ellington had been making Brooklyn a regular stop for a number of years, and had amassed a good following in the Borough.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 12/10/38*

During the 1940 season there began to be more of an emphasis on double-features, and a few stage shows than before. When there was band activity, the sweet and novelty bands dominated the programming, with orchestras under the leadership of Benny Meroff, Bob Howard, and the ever-present Ted Lewis being featured. During the 1941 season the Strand abandoned stage shows completely, but fortunately it would return. For the 1942 season a three-day stage show policy was re-implemented at the Brooklyn Strand, after a noted

absence. One peculiar element of this second, reincarnated series was that in the two seasons when the Strand scaled back and then stopped the policy altogether, the Flatbush Theater continued with the their own short-lived name-band series. The Strand seems to have been motivated by their success and many of the bands, both sweet and hot, brought in for the 1942 season had appeared at the Flatbush during the 1939 and 1940 seasons. Crooner Vaughn Monroe and his orchestra were selected to begin the series on August 29. Trumpeter Ziggy Elman, who Clarinetist/Saxophonist Bob Wilbur often refers to as a specialist in "Klezmer Trumpet," was a member of Monroe's orchestra, was featured in what was a high point of the show.

## Brooklyn Strand's New Stage Show Sets Town on Its Ear

Vaughn Monroe and Orchestra Top Bill; 'World Premiere' the Screen Fare

By AL DELANEY

Shout it from the housetops! Fill the air with hosannas! The Brooklyn Strand re-opened yesterday with an all-out, two-for-one entertainment that's bound to set this town of ours on its ear. After a long absence from downtown Brooklyn, real flesh-and-blood entertainers are coming back for the type of reception that only Brooklyn can give them. And, if yesterday's turnout is any criterion, Brooklyn can't wait to clap hands.

For its initial offering, the Strand has taken the strings off the bud-get and gone to town. The outstanding bit of the stage show is Vaughn Monroe and his orchestra, currently the hottest of the nation's

Profile is cast as a whimsical producer who makes a picture exposing the Axis and he gets mixed up in plots and counter-plots and spies and counter-spies. The whole thing is treated frothily with Mr. Barrymore nearly wearing out his tongue against his cheek.



VAUGHN MONROE, whose orchestra heads the holiday weekend stage bill at the Brooklyn Strand.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 8/30/41*

On September 4, 1941, Ella Fitzgerald and her orchestra were brought to the Brooklyn Strand, to the delight of Brooklyn Jitterbugs. She was the center of an all African-American revue which featured The Four Ink Spots, the dance team of Red and Curley, and comedians Moke and Poke. This was the first program that catered to true swing fans in quite some time at the Strand, and the press took notice at the change in clientele. A *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article which sounds very much like

the grandfather trying to make fun of the language of the young

“whipper-snapper” stated:

“The cats are hep to the Brooklyn Strand. They’ve heard tell that it’s borough headquarters for hot boogie-woogie. They’re stampeding the place and they’re right on all counts. There’s digging at the Strand. Right smack in the groove Ella Fitzgerald, queen of jive, is singing a battery of her songs. The Four Inkspots, still sizzling from their radio workouts, bring down the house on the tag end of the bill, and Ella’s negro orchestra keeps things popping between times.”<sup>10</sup>

Of the band, the writer mentioned that “Ella’s boys get to be noisy when they’re on their own.” Once again, the polite, sweet band preferences of the press reveal themselves, as this is the same description that was applied to Duke Ellington’s orchestra while at the Brooklyn Paramount by a different writer over nine years earlier. The *Eagle* did reveal something besides their disdain for “noisy”, jumping big bands. In a separate article, the origins of Ella Fitzgerald’s hit from her days with Chick Webb, “A Tisket-A Tasket” are revealed. Apparently, while visiting relatives in Bedford-Stuyvesant near P.S. 25,

Fitzgerald heard the schoolchildren chanting the lyrics while playing, and that incident "inspired Ella to fool around with [it]" <sup>11</sup>

## Kids From P. S. 25, Brooklyn, Gave Ella Fitzgerald a Lift to Fame

**Song They Hummed Made Her Famous;  
She'll Return to Borough Tomorrow**

Ella Fitzgerald had just come back from Hollywood and she was feeling in fine fettle when the interviewer arrived.

Ella will play her first engagement in Brooklyn at the Strand Theater Friday, where she'll co-headline with the Ink Spots. She was somewhat of a mystery—this 23-year-old Harlem girl, who had inherited an entire band three years ago.

"From Brooklyn?" she queried.

Well she knows Brooklyn.

It was the kids around Public School 25 in Brooklyn, who were largely responsible for her writing the hit tune that entirely changed her career and made the name Ella Fitzgerald a draw at the box-office.

Several years ago while visiting a relative in the Bedford section of Brooklyn, she stopped to watch some children at play in the Public School 25 school yard, Ella explained.

**Song Hit Was Born**

The children were chanting a strange song that went something

like "tisket, a-tasket, a green and yellow basket."

It was a nursery song that was many, many years old. At that time another colored songstress, Maxine Sullivan, was making a name for herself by swinging "Loch Lomond" and other Scotch classics. This inspired Ella to fool around with "tisket, a tasket." With the aid of Chick Webb and Arranger Al Feldman, a Brooklyn musician who has since become the band leader Van Alexander, a swing arrangement was made.

When the smoke had cleared the song was sweeping the country and Ella was reaping the usual harvest. Chick Webb's band skyrocketed into the first ten class of the big bands that numbered Benny Goodman and Guy Lombardo as leaders. Lustrative dates such as the N. Y. Paramount resulted.

And several months ago the climax was reached when Hollywood sent for her to play an important role in Abbott and Costello's next epic, "Ride 'Em Cowboy."

**Stage Struck by Chance**

Ella Fitzgerald was born in Newport News, Va., and when her parents died she lived the rest of her youth in the Riverdale Orphan Asylum. One of the most popular radio programs at the asylum was the Harlem Amateur Hour which emanated from the Apollo Theater. One night Ella went A. W. O. L. and entered the amateur contest.



### FORECLOSURES

to covenants, restrictions, easements and violations, if any.

Dated, August 13th, 1941.  
THEODORE MOSKOWITZ, Referee.

au21-61 Tu Th

**SUPREME COURT, KINGS COUNTY**  
—THOMAS FISARRA, plaintiff,

against JULIA T. KELLY, et al., defendants.

ALBERT W. FRIDOURG, Plaintiff's Attorney, 206 East 42nd Street, New York City.

Pursuant to a judgment of foreclosure and sale, dated July 22, 1941, I will sell at public auction, by LEO J. GOLDBERG, auctioneer, at the Brooklyn Real Estate Exchange, No. 123 Montague Street, Brooklyn, New York, on the 12th day of September, 1941, at 12 o'clock noon, the premises directed by said judgment to be sold, being a plot of land with the buildings and improvements thereon in the County of Kings, beginning at a point on the northwesterly side of Ridge Boulevard, distant 24 feet southwesterly from the corner formed by the intersection of the northwesterly side of Ridge Boulevard and the southwesterly side of 94th Street, having a width, front and rear, of 24 feet, and a depth of 100 feet on either side, said premises being known as and by the street number 9406 Ridge Boulevard, Brooklyn, New York. Subject to any state of facts an accurate survey may show, and subject to prior mortgage. Approximate amount due as per judgment is \$1,218.37 with interest thereon from July 4, 1941, together with costs and allowances amounting to \$218.83 together with the expense of sale.

Dated, New York, August 13, 1941.  
JAMES J. KEEFE, Referee.

au21-61 Th Tu

**NOTICE OF SALE.**  
**SUPREME COURT, KINGS COUNTY**  
—THE WILLIAMSBURG SAVINGS BANK, plaintiff, against HER-  
TIA NICHOLSON, et al., defendants.

Pursuant to a judgment entered herein, dated August 13th, 1941, I will sell at public auction, by MONROE J. BURMAN, auctioneer, at the Brooklyn Real Estate Exchange, 123 Montague Street, Brooklyn, New York, on September 11th, 1941, at 12 o'clock noon, the mortgaged premises in the Borough of Brooklyn, County of Kings, City and State of New York, directed by said judgment to be sold, with the improvements thereon, situate on the southerly side of Avenue K, distant 19 feet westerly from the corner formed by the intersection of the southerly side of Avenue K with the westerly side of East 34th Street, being a plot 21 feet in width front and rear by 100 feet in depth on both sides, with a party wall on the westerly side of said parcel, together with street rights and subject to covenants and restrictions of record. Reference is made to said judgment for a more complete description of said premises.

Dated, August 13th, 1941.  
MORRIS HONIG, Referee.  
S. M. & D. E. MEXER, Attorneys for Plaintiff, One Hanson Place, Brooklyn, New York. au21-61 Th & M

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 9/4/41*

The next week brought a revue featuring Tony Pastor and his Orchestra. Pastor, a saxophonist and vocalist who made a name working with Artie Shaw, had a nice, swinging band with a good beat, although the phrasing of the band tended to be very legato sometimes, in between a sweet band and a hot one. Stylistically the band owed a lot to Artie Shaw and Count Basie, but I'm sure it kept the Jitterbugs happy for a second week. After the success of Fitzgerald and Pastor's performances at the theater, the number of days in a given week that shows were performed were extended from four to five.

The Strand implemented the change at a good time, because beginning on September 23, 1941, Cab Calloway and his orchestra were brought in for a four-day engagement at the Brooklyn Strand. The Band had been touring for quite some time, playing the same show, but there was one change since the last visit to Brooklyn. Calloway and his orchestra had last performed in the borough in 1939 at the Flatbush Theater, and featured a young, hotshot, prank-playing

trumpet player nicknamed "Dizzy" Gillespie who had been in the band just over a year at the time. Dizzy, just on the breakthrough of formulating his contributions to the upcoming Bebop movement, had been very musically adventurous in the Calloway orchestra, to the disdain of the leader, who just wanted a trumpet soloist to play the solos as written. The Trumpet player that Cab wanted before hiring Dizzy was Jonah Jones, who initially turned him down. After two years of listening to Dizzy play "Chinese Music", as Cab liked to call his solos, Jonah Jones was finally hired in March 1941. Almost immediately began to be given Dizzy's solos, because Jones was willing to play them the way that Cab wanted. Jones, also wanting to stay abreast of the new ideas that Dizzy was playing, began to learn some of the new harmonies and directions in improvisation from Dizzy himself, and Cab wasn't too pleased. According to Jones:

"I didn't have any idea what Diz was doing, so he started taking me downstairs [at the Cotton Club] too. I put some of his ideas in one of my solos, and Cab yelled at me 'You too? Play like that and I'm going to fire you!' So I went back to my old way of playing." <sup>12</sup>

Two days before playing at the Brooklyn Strand, Cab Calloway and his orchestra were playing at the State Theater in Hartford, Connecticut, which was the location of the famous “spitball” incident where Dizzy was mistakenly accused of throwing a spitball on stage during the performance. The real perpetrator was Jonah Jones, but after being accused by Cab, a scuffle between the leader and Dizzy ensued, ending in Dizzy cutting Calloway with a knife and subsequently being fired. The engagement in Brooklyn was the first concert following Dizzy’s firing, and as Calloway and Gillespie biographer Alyn Shipton states, “Musically, the casual listener to the band would hardly have noticed the difference between the way the band sounded in Hartford and the way it sounded in Brooklyn.”<sup>13</sup>

October of 1941 saw a mix of the hot and sweet with Brooklyn-born Shep Fields orchestra at the beginning of the month, followed by Louis Prima and his new band at the Brooklyn Strand beginning on Friday, October 10. Prima had become popular with Brooklynites over the last year, as he had performed at the Brooklyn Roseland in 1940, at the



Brooklyn Windsor Theater in March of 1941, and was to be featured in a holiday show at the Flatbush in December of the same year. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* Review of the performance again noted the change in the audience:

"The Brooklyn Strand's clients are strictly jitterbugs. They stamp and they clap and they whistle when the show is in the groove. They applaud genteelly when it's in the rut. They know what they want, and they know when they're getting it. They're getting it at the Strand. Louis Prima and company, once they got going yesterday, were hot."<sup>14</sup>

The next week brought the popular bandleader Sammy Kaye and his "Swing and Sway" orchestra on the Strand's stage for four days, beginning on October 17. Xavier Cougat and his popular Latin Orchestra filled out the end of the month.

November brought another treat to the jitterbugs, when a stage show featuring Jimmie Lunceford and His Orchestra and famous hoofer Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson to the Brooklyn Strand for four days, beginning on November 7. The combination would play the New York Strand the next weekend. At least for a short time, Robinson must have enjoyed

working so close to home, as he had become a Brooklynite since the late 1930's when he purchased a home in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Future Jazz Producer, Critic, Writer, native Brooklynite Ira Gitler (b. 1928) remembers the importance of theaters such as the Brooklyn Strand, and may have attended this concert featuring Lunceford and Robinson.

In his book *Swing to Bop* he says:

"Most major cities had huge movie palaces with the facilities for stage shows, but New York had more of them. Manhattan had the Paramount, Capitol, Strand and Loew's State. The neighborhood houses, such as the Flatbush (in Brooklyn) and the Windsor (in the Bronx) were otherwise used more for theater presentations rather than motion pictures. Even if one was in grade school it was possible, when school let out at three o'clock, to hear bands such as Count Basie and Charlie Barnet's band in one's own neighborhood. Then there was downtown Brooklyn, where one might see and hear the Jimmie Lunceford band at the Brooklyn Strand in a show headlined by Bill Robinson; and of course, the bright lights of Broadway."<sup>15</sup>



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 11/5/41*

December was also jumping when Lionel Hampton and his orchestra featuring Maxine Sullivan played the Strand for four days beginning on December 5.

Of course, Lionel Hampton's engagement at the Strand encompassed one of the most infamous dates in American History, December 7, 1941, the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor which caused the United States to enter the second World War. Musicians were not oblivious to what was happening in the world around them, although it was impossible for them to realize the effect that the conflict in Europe

would have on them as Americans, and on the music which they loved.

In Ira Gitler's book *Swing to Bop*, trumpeter Joe Newman

remembered:

"By the way, I was with Hamp's band at the Brooklyn Strand when Roosevelt went on the air and declared war—Pearl Harbor. During that day we were playing, Maxine Sullivan was on the bill. I remember just like yesterday."<sup>16</sup>



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 12/7/41*

After the new year, Harry James brought his band to the Brooklyn Strand beginning on January 9, 1942, featuring Helen Forrest as vocalist. This was during the period where James carried a small string section of three violins and a cello with his regular orchestra, and the sound pleased the *Eagle* reviewers, who by this time had demonstrated a disdain for “noisy” bands. In fact, the writer made sure to point out that “This [band] isn’t a noisy band, though it’s bigger by six men than most of the combinations that play our town.”<sup>17</sup>

## Harry James' Trumpet and Band Head Boro Strand's Stage Show

By HERBERT COHN

Harry James brought his trumpet and his orchestra to the Brooklyn Strand stage yesterday, and a full house came to hear. An enthusiastic house, too. The boys and girls like the James combination of sweet and swing, liked the way they play it, liked the way the leader solos on his horn.

Billy Rayes, the comic with the British accent who made a big hit in one of George White's late "Scandals," is the comedy high light of the borough Strand bill. He has a peppery line of patter and he keeps it flowing while he juggles his hat, or three or four tennis balls, or a set of bowling pins. To make it harder, he adds tap-dancing to his act for a finale.

But it's the trumpeter and his band who are the bulk of the show. This isn't a noisy band, though it's bigger by six men than most of the combinations that play our town. It even has a cello as well as three violins, a guitar and a bass player who uses a bow. There's a difference in their program, too. They don't play hackneyed tunes.

The James Trumpet Rhapsody climaxes the bill and the catchy "Blues in the Night" number from the film of that name comes midway in only a fair arrangement. "You Made Me Love You" is another of the band's items. Helen Forrest, she of the small voice and the big personality, is one of the vocalists, singing "He's 1-A in the Army" and "Make Love to Me."

Jimmy Saunders is the second singer, doing a neat job on the lyrics of "Everything I Love" and "A Sinner Kissed an Angel."

Corky Corcoran is the saxophone soloist and the Four Samuels fill out the bill with a comedy-dancing routine. On screen are Ralph Bellamy and Margaret Lindsay in "Ellery Queen and the Murder Ring."

### First 'Lohengrin'

Though she had already created a sensational success as a pinch-hitter, Astrid Varnay made her first actually scheduled appearance at the Metropolitan Opera House last night as Elsa in Wagner's "Lohengrin." As an "official debut" this was as outstanding for the 23-year-old soprano as her previous performances. A hearing of the third act found her equal to the demands of the role vocally and histrionically. Her lower register has not yet acquired the forcefulness necessary even for this role, but the rest of her voice is admirably suited to it. Like her Sieglinde and Bruennhilde, her Elsa is something to see, both for youthfulness of appearance and for natural acting ability. Given the experience she needs, Miss Varnay should go far indeed.

### STAGE PLAYS—

TONIGHT and TOM'W—B  
LEE J. COBB says: "The  
I have ever seen  
**AMERICAN YOUTH**

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 1/10/42*

February was dominated by the sweet/novelty bands again, beginning with the McFarland twins and their short-lived orchestra in a stage show along with The 3 Stooges on February 6. The next week, Bob

Chester and his Orchestra along with the Mills Brothers performed beginning on February 13. Ina Ray Hutton and her new "All-Male Orchestra" were engaged beginning on February 20. She was another performer that had enjoyed success at the Flatbush over the previous 3 years, and was finally available for the Strand to get in on the act.

The Jitterbugs may have returned for her performance, but no special notice was made of their presence in the press this time. They almost certainly were present the next week, as Gene Krupa and his Orchestra played the Brooklyn Strand beginning on October 27.

Featured with Krupa were vocalists Johnny Desmond and Anita O-Day, and Trumpeter/Vocalist Roy Eldridge, "Wizard of the Trumpet"<sup>18</sup>

Surprisingly Krupa's high energy style of drumming doesn't garner the much used "noisy" adjective, but the reviewer made sure to mention the duet that Eldridge and O-Day performed with the band, "Let Me Off Uptown".



## GENE KRUPA AT STRAND WITH HIS BAND AND DRUMS

By HERBERT COHN

It's a jitterbug's holiday this weekend at the Brooklyn Strand where Gene Krupa and his company of instrumentalists and vocalists, all of them doubling in drums, are the stage attraction. There's hot music nearly every lick of the way except when Pat Henning comes on with some comic imitation to match the only other act, a fast dance routine by Louis and Van. The Strand's show is streamlined for swing.

And there's no lack of enthusiasm, either in the giving or the receiving. Krupa, as usual, is a human dynamo, whacking away at his skins and his cymbals as if possessed, leading his band, playing master of ceremonies and quelling an audience that couldn't get enough of him and his rhythms. There was stomping and whistling and a great clapping of hands at the Strand yesterday as there always is when the hepcats are having fun. That's the tipoff on the show.

Ranking next to the dynamic

drummer boy among the keymen of the Krupa outfit is Roy Eldridge, the talented Negro trumpeter. Roy shines in Nacio Herb Brown's "American Bolero," the showpiece for the band, high-lighting its virtuosos, Roy takes a vocal, too, with Anita O'Day in "Let Me Off Uptown." And Anita, as bluesy a singer as there has been on the local stage this year, also does right well singing alone in "Thanks for the Buggle Ride" and particularly in "Blues in the Night." Howard DuLaney is the male vocalist. He works with the trumpet quartet in "This Love of Mine," does "Anniversary Waltz" appealingly by himself, and winds up the show on a patriotic note with a hearty arrangement of "Keep Them Flying."

John Howard plays the top role in the borough Strand's screen feature, "The Man Who Returned to Life," the story of a man who resumed his right identity to help a former friend though he knew he'd be caught for having ducked an old offense. Lucille Fairbanks, Ruth Ford, and Marcella Martin are also in the cast.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 2/28/42*

March opened up with trumpeter Claude McCoy and his "Sugar Blues" orchestra on March 6. He was followed by Joe Venuti and his orchestra, featuring Kay Starr as vocalist and dancer Hal LeRoy on March 13. Venuti had also performed at the Flatbush on a show with the Andrews Sisters in 1940. The next week, Red Norvo and his orchestra with Mildred Bailey were featured on a stage show with the ever-present "Schnozzola", Jimmy Durante, beginning on March 20.



Norvo and his Orchestra were the first to perform on the Flatbush's name-band series in 1938. To close the Month, Les Hite and His Orchestra were engaged in what was described as "A Generous Slice of Harlem" on March 27. Featured with Hite's Orchestra was vocalist/actress Ethel Waters, vocalist Jimmie Anderson, performer Stepin Fetchit (whose real name was Lincoln Perry), and the dance team of Timmie Gordon and Freddie Rogers. Described as a "Hot, Swingy, noisy bill," the reviewer enjoyed that the band was featured at the center of the performances, and gave a special note to a piece written by "one of the slip-horn players," entitled "Three Bones". Ethel Waters' performances were given especially favorable mention, citing that she absolutely had to sing "Stormy Weather" before making her exit.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 3/21/42

3/28/42

Coincidentally, Brooklyn narrowly missed out on another chance to hear the young Dizzy Gillespie because of an extraordinary occurrence. Dizzy had been freelancing with different bands after being fired from Cab Calloway's orchestra. In what was probably the only instance where two brothers were drafted together out of the same orchestra, trombonist Britt Woodman and his brother, pianist Coney Woodman, were both drafted into the Armed Forces and had to report for induction directly after the Brooklyn Strand engagement. Hite took the opportunity to make several changes in his band, including hiring Dizzy, one week after the playing the Brooklyn Strand.

### Dizzy Gillespie Joins Les Hite

When Les Hite went into a period of intensive rehearsal after concluding his booking at the Brooklyn Strand Theatre last week, he had a new man in each section of the band—trumpet, trombone, reed and rhythm.

One of the new men was Gerald Wiggins, a young piano discovery whom Les heard accompanying Stepin Fetchit at the theatre before the comedian's abrupt departure from the show. Wiggins replaces Coney Woodman, who was drafted. His brother, Britt Woodman, also gone with the draft, was succeeded by a trombonist from Baltimore named Leon Comegys.

In the saxophone team, Johnny Brown took Sol Moore's place on baritone sax. Most important of the changes was the acquisition of John "Dizzy" Gillespie, quixotic young man with a horn recently heard with Benny Carter and Charlie Barnet. He replaced Stumpy Whitlock, who went back to his home in Omaha.

*(Dizzy Gillespie: The Bebop Years, 1937-1952 By Ken Vail, P. 20)*

As it would turn out, another event connected with Hite's band would provide excitement in the absence of Dizzy's presence: performer Stepin Fetchit had been a wanted man in connection with a paternity suit, and was arrested promptly after the opening. As Gerald Wiggins remembered:

"We were working at the Brooklyn Strand. The house band was Les Hite's band from Los Angeles...The army took his [Hite's] piano player, and the police took Stepin Fetchit off the stage."<sup>19</sup>

Perry (Stepin Fetchit) biographer Mel Watkins writes, "Wiggins replaced the pianist in Hite's group and traveled to California; Step went directly to jail."<sup>20</sup>

The next month brought trumpeter Mugsy Spanier and his orchestra, featuring vocalist Edith Harper beginning on April 3. According to *Billboard*, Spanier was also looking for a new vocalist during the engagement:

"Mugsy Spanier beads out on the road after six months air time at Arcadia Ballroom, New York. Will play Strand Theater, Brooklyn, April 3-6 and Tunetown Ballroom, St. Louis for two weeks, opening April 28. Has traded clarinetist Irving Pazola to Teddy Powell for Harold Tennyson and brought in Charley Queener to replace Dave Bowman on piano. Will audition girls singers during the Brooklyn Strand engagement as Edythe Harper (Mrs. Vernon Brown) is leaving the band to await the stork."<sup>21</sup>

Les Brown and his "Band of Renown", featuring vocalist Betty Bonney, were at the Strand beginning April 10. Brown's appearance seems to be the last for the Month of April, and unfortunately was the last of the name band series at the Brooklyn Strand. By the beginning of what

would be the 1943 vaudeville season, double-feature film programs were being offered, and as with the rest of the Downtown theaters, only occasional stages shows were presented there, and even less jazz. In a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article a few months after Les Brown's performance at the Brooklyn Strand which praises his success, the primary reason for ending stages shows at the theater was revealed: "The Brooklyn Strand tried a name band policy some months ago, and while the entertainment was top-notch, the money in the till was anemic."



## **The Brooklyn Fox**

The Brooklyn Fox Theater, located one just a block down Flatbush Avenue from the Brooklyn Paramount, also opened its doors in the same year, 1928. It was the largest of the Downtown theaters, with a seating capacity of 4,300. Like the other grand theaters, an orchestra was employed full time at the Brooklyn Fox, and it was conducted by Charles Previn, the Great-Uncle of pianist Andre Previn. Unfortunately for its owner, William Fox, and many other Americans it was built a year before the stock market crash of 1929. Unlike its competitor just down the street, it didn't weather the Great Depression well, and by 1929, the combination of a serious automobile accident that injured Mr. Fox, the stock market, and an antitrust lawsuit against Fox Film Corporation cause the company to find itself in dire straits until it merged with Twentieth-Century Pictures in 1935. Unfortunately for the presence of jazz at the Brooklyn Fox, these years encompass some of the most important in the development of the audience for jazz at theaters, especially in defining its place in the vaudeville stage

show/film combination. The combination of financial woes and legal problems seemed to cause the Fox's name band series to not be as aggressive in hiring many of the newer, riskier Swing-era dance bands or as lengthy as many of the other Downtown Brooklyn theaters. The showing of Twentieth Century Fox's films took priority at its theaters over the vaudeville that accompanied it. The "safer" Sweet/Society bands truly ruled at the Fox, with a few exceptions. In the 1959, after disc jockey Alan Freed presented the last of his Rock and Roll shows at the Brooklyn Paramount, he attempted to continue the concerts for a couple of years at the Brooklyn Fox, to no avail. Competing disc jockey Murray Kaufman (who's stage name was "Murray the K" and referred to himself as the "Fifth Beatle"), began his holiday Rock and Roll shows at the Fox until 1966, when the building closed down forever. It was demolished in 1971 and replaced with a Con Edison building.

The curse that was soon to befall Fox Film corporation was long-armed enough to reach some of its musicians. During the last week of August 1929, just a couple of months before things were to come crashing



down for William Fox and the rest of the country via the Stock Market, Ben Pollack and his Orchestra played a week's engagement at the Brooklyn Fox. Pollack's popular orchestra had only come to New York a year or so earlier, and had secured a regular engagement at Manhattan's Park Central Hotel.. Many of the star soloists in the band who had been a part of the band since its organization in the Windy City had been at odds with Pollack in recent times because they felt that the band was losing it's loose, fun-spirited musical nature, and that Pollack was becoming too commercial. He would even hire another drummer, Ray Bauduc to play with the band while Pollack conducted and sang. For clarinetist Benny Goodman and trumpeter Jimmy McPartland, the engagement at the Brooklyn Fox would provide the spark that led to their leaving the band. McPartland explains:

"Then [in 1928-29] came the vaudeville circuit around New York, and one week we were in a place called the Fox Theatre in Brooklyn. The Goodmans, Gil Rodin and I used to play a lot of handball together on the beaches or any spot where we saw a chance, and this particular afternoon Benny and I were playing ball against a wall on the roof of the Fox. We used to have cute black and white shoes for our uniform those days, and naturally our shoes got a little dirty. Suddenly it was time for the next show. There was no chance to clean up, just time to run downstairs, grab our instruments and hurry on

stage. During the act, why, I would get up a couple of times and do a solo out front. When I got back to my seat Pollack began hollering about my shoes. As soon as the curtain rang down he went off into a tirade, was going to give me my two weeks' notice. Up steps Benny Goodman to say: "If you give Jimmy his notice you're going to give me mine, too." Pollack gets real mad then, and says: 'All right, he's got his two weeks' notice.' So Benny comes back mildly: 'Well, you got mine.' And that was it. It so happened that the whole band was pretty much fed-up at that time. Pollack had changed lately from being one of the boys, shall we say, to acting like a real leader, and the thing developed so that all the boys got together and were going to have Pollack's band without Pollack. We would have put Rodin in charge, because he was the one that more or less handled the band anyway. Gil was the diplomat who smoothed things over, and he didn't have the leader complex. We had a lot of fun talking about it but nothing materialized."<sup>22</sup>

<b>FOX</b>	<b>FLATBUSH AVE. AND NEVINS ST.</b>	<i>Enjoy the Comfort of Frozen Air</i>
Wm. Fox presents the Movietone version of		
<b>4 DEVILS</b>		
<b>MARY DUGAN</b>	<b>JANET GAYNOR</b>	<b>CHARLES MORTON</b>
<i>Another Rousing, Melodious Stage Show</i>		
<b>BEN POLLACK AND HIS PARK CENTRAL BAND</b>		
<b>JOHN T. MURRAY &amp; VIVIAN OAKLAND</b>		
<b>PATTI SPEAR, Syncopated Comedienne</b>		
<b>FOX MOVIE TONE NEWS</b>		

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 8/28/29*

Beginning in 1931, Abe Lyman's orchestra was engaged as the resident orchestra at the Brooklyn Fox. Although a Sweet dance orchestra, his orchestra at times had a beat that was not quite as "commercial" as some. Society bands such as his and those of Harold Stern dominate the 1930's. Even during the 1930-33 period when the Brooklyn Paramount and Lowes Metropolitan were mixing bands such as Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway into their sweet band programming, and Luis Russell's orchestra was practically the house band at the Loew's Metropolitan, the Fox chose not to do so. It wasn't until the 1942 vaudeville season that the Fox began to bring in some of the bands that the Jitterbugs were looking for. In another instance of proof that all of the Downtown Brooklyn theaters were watching other to either copy what was successful, or implement a policy that was discontinued by one of the others, *Billboard* noticed that the Brooklyn Fox was picking up where the Brooklyn Strand had left off a few months earlier.

## Fox, Brooklyn, To Get Names On, Off; Miller Band First

NEW YORK, July 25.—Fox Theater, Brooklyn, will open with Glenn Miller's band August 28, for a full week. House will play big attractions when available.

Fox supersedes the Strand as the Brooklyn vaude outlet this season. Strand operated last season with four days of band shows every week. Policy this year for the Fox is being altered in favor of strong shows only.

Fox is one of the houses operated under a pooling arrangement by the Warner, Paramount and Pabian-Fox interests.

Bookings will be by Harry Levine, representing Paramount, with Harry Mayer for Warner, working in conjunction.

Miller is getting his usual salary for this date. There has been no attempt to cut the price, despite its Brooklyn location. So far, no other names or bands have been signed.

*Billboard* 8/1/42

Glenn Miller did indeed open at the Brooklyn Fox on August 28, featuring vocalist Marion Hutton. The *Billboard* article, when stating that the theater "supersedes the Strand as the Brooklyn valued outlet" may have been accurate, but the volume of activity between the two

theaters would hardly be equal. As it turns out, there would only be two performances in the entire series, all in the month of September.

Luckily for Brooklynites, the second performance did allow a second opportunity to hear a young Dizzy Gillespie, still freelancing after his tenure in Calloway's band. The first opportunity had come a few months earlier, but may not have been witnessed by a large number of people. After playing with Les Hite and completing a tour of the West Coast with that orchestra, Dizzy joined Lucky Millinder's orchestra in May of 1942. On July 25 of that year Millinder's Orchestra played a benefit concert at the Brooklyn Majestic theater, which was located adjacent to the Brooklyn Strand Theater just off of Flatbush. The Majestic was not a theater that had much jazz activity, and given that that was a single appearance and a benefit concert, Dizzy's daring, groundbreaking new style may not have been extensively on display that evening. Beginning on September 18, Millinder was engaged at the Brooklyn Fox for one week as part of an all African-American revue that also featured the Ink Spots, saxophonist Tab

Smith and dancer Peg Leg Bates. Young, soon-to-be Brooklyn

Beboppers who may have heard about Dizzy through the grapevine

would have plenty of time to decide for themselves if what they heard

was true.

**Ink Spots at Fox Friday  
With Lucky Millinder Band**

The Ink Spots, the nation's finest singing quartette, will appear on the Fox Brooklyn Theater stage Friday in the second of the theater's periodic stage-and-screen show combinations.

Sharing the "in person" show will be Lucky Millinder and his popular orchestra featuring Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Tab Smith and Trevor Bacon. Peg Leg Bates, one-legged dancer, and Gordon and Rogers round out the all-Negro stage show.

The screen attraction will be "Sweater Girl," with Eddie Bracken and June Preisser heading the cast.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 9/16/42*

This would be the extent of Jazz activity at the Brooklyn Fox for that

year, and it would soon follow suit and begin to feature more motion

pictures, while stage shows and it's Jazz activity largely moved to

Manhattan after 1942. It would follow the pattern of most of the

Brooklyn theaters as they began to struggle financially in the 1960's

and 1970's, and occasionally present special event jazz concerts to draw crowds, such as when Miles Davis and his quintet performed at the Fox for a single night at 1960.

### **The RKO Albee Theater**

The Albee Theater opened it's doors in 1925, and was the centerpiece of Downtown Brooklyn until the Brooklyn Paramount was built three years later. It was the showpiece of vaudeville impresario E.F. Albee, and the theater bore his full name at its inception, until a series of mergers caused it to become under the auspices of RKO (Radio-Keith-Orpheum) in 1928. At the time of it's opening, it was described as "probably the finest example of a vaudeville theater in America."**(BDE 1/19/25)**, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson was featured at it's inaugural performance.

For a theater this grand, it was only fitting that Paul Whiteman be engaged during its inaugural season, for one week beginning on June

8, 1925. This would be his first concert in Brooklyn, almost three years before his next appearance at the Loew's Metropolitan, and he didn't come cheap.

### Whiteman Here June 8

Paul Whiteman has signed a contract to appear at the E. F. Albee Theater for one week, beginning June 8, at the highest figure ever paid anywhere for a vaudeville act. He will bring with him his 28 musicians with whom he recently toured the entire United States.

Negotiations for the appearance had been carried on for over two weeks between the Albee Theater management and Whiteman.

It was announced at the theater yesterday that in spite of the cost for the Whiteman orchestra the regular program, which includes several star acts, will be carried out and the bill will cost more than any ever booked by any vaudeville house with one or two exceptions at the New York Hippodrome.

Whiteman was booked at the suggestion of Col. E. F. Albee, head of the Keith-Albee Vaudeville Circuit, as a means of showing his appreciation for the patronage given the new Brooklyn theater by local residents. This patronage has kept the house filled practically every performance since its opening.

One of the other star acts which will be played the same week as Whiteman and his band is Karavieff, a European dancing extravaganza which has just been given a five-year contract by the Keith-Albee management.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 6/7/25*

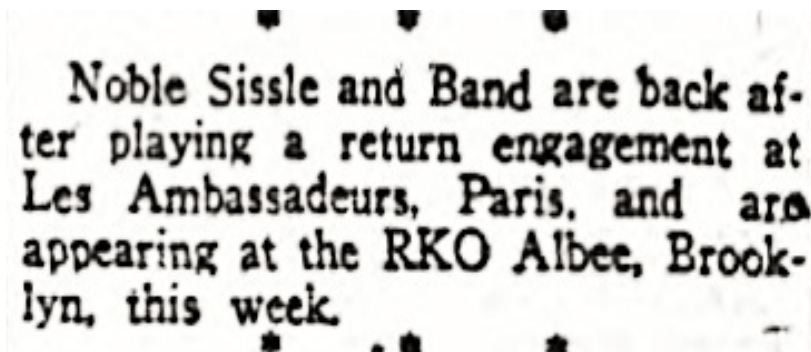


A *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* writer familiar with Whiteman's concert repertoire spoke in anticipation on hearing "an outstanding selection in George Gershwin's 'Rhapsody In Blue,' probably the most discussed of modern musical compositions." Also to be featured during the engagement was a winning composition of a local song contest, a song called "You'll Never Know", written by a Brooklyn girl named Gracelyn Adele Fenn.

In the 1930's, The Albee never implemented an official name band series as a few of the other Downtown Theaters did, instead they seemed to toy with the idea, implementing it at times but never fully committing to it. They were more interested in vaudeville variety shows without name band performances, but occasionally a few did make appearances beginning in the 1932 season. Near the beginning of that season, Noble Sissle and his Orchestra were featured for a week at the Albee. This was probably an engagement booked at the last minute, as Sissle and his Orchestra had unexpectedly returned

early from an extended engagement at Les Ambassadeurs in Paris.

The French government had recently administered a new policy restricting the number of foreign workers in their country (including musicians), and stipulated that Sissle would only be able to complete the second half of the booking if fifty percent of the orchestra were made up of French musicians. Clarinetist/Saxophonist Sidney Bechet had made the trip with Sissle to France, but when the band ran into the contractual trouble he deserted the band for another engagement in Berlin. Unfortunately for Brooklynites, he was still in Germany when the Sissle orchestra played the Albee, and wouldn't return to the states until September of that year.



Noble Sissle and Band are back after playing a return engagement at Les Ambassadeurs, Paris, and are appearing at the RKO Albee, Brooklyn, this week.

*The New York Age 7/25/31*

Again, as was common with the Brooklyn theaters, mostly sweet bands and those led by male "Crooners" were engaged, such as Will Osbourne and His Orchestra playing the Albee during the week of October 13, 1931, or Vincent Lopez and his Orchestra during the week beginning January 31, 1932. Things jumped a little bit more when Lucky Millinder and his Orchestra played the Albee theater beginning on March 19, 1932.

For the beginning of the 1933 season, the Albee began hiring sweet bands for extended stays, as a few of the other theaters had done.

Ben Bernie and his orchestra began the season, but an orchestra led by Phil Fabello seemed to fall into favor in September of 1932, and would act as the de-facto in-house orchestra for the next two years, dominating the programming when a visiting band wasn't playing the Albee. Beginning October 8, Lew Leslie's latest revue, "Rhapsody In Black", was brought to the Albee stage. The revue starred Ethel Waters, but also featured the Berry Brothers, Cecil Mack's Choir, and trumpeter/vocalist Valaida Snow, and the Pike Davis Orchestra. Davis' orchestra had a longstanding association with Leslie, as his had been

the orchestra (under the title of the "Plantation Orchestra") which had played for the first production of Leslie's "Blackbirds" in 1926, and recorded for Columbia while the show was playing in London.

*There's ALWAYS a BETTER show at RKO*

**ALL THIS WEEK**  
The Biggest Stage Show in Albee History  
**ETHEL WATERS**  
in Lew Leslie's Musical Revue  
**"RHAPSODY IN BLACK"**  
with  
**45 ENTERTAINERS—45**  
including  
VALAIDA—BERRY BROTHERS  
CECIL MACK'S CHOIR  
DUSTY FLETCHER & FLORENCE HALL  
BLUE McALLISTER—AVIS ANDREWS  
ELOISE UGGAMS—PIKE DAVIS BAND  
Hot Tantalizing Tunes by George Gershwin  
On the Screen  
**"VANITY STREET"**  
with CHARLES BICKFORD  
HELEN CHANDLER  
MAYO METHOT  
**ALBEE** 10 & 11 25  
Albee Sq. Brooklyn  
**PATHE NEWS**

**TODAY to TUES.**  
**4 MARX BROTHERS**  
in  
**"HORSE FEATHERS"**  
Their newest, merriest, maddest mirth-quake!

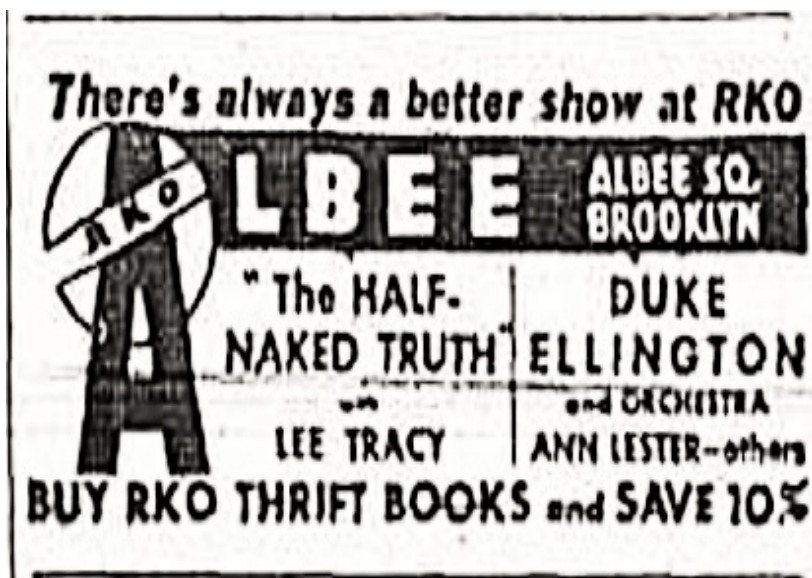
<b>PROSPECT</b>	10 & 11 AVE.
<b>MADISON</b>	10 & 11 AVE.
<b>KENMORE</b>	10 & 11 AVE.
<b>KEITH'S</b>	10 & 11 AVE.
<b>ORPHEUM</b>	10 & 11 AVE.
<b>BUSHWICK</b>	10 & 11 AVE.
<b>DYKER</b>	10 & 11 AVE.
<b>TILYOU</b>	10 & 11 AVE.
<b>GREENPOINT</b>	10 & 11 AVE.

Coming—PROSPECT—Sat. Oct. 15th—RKO CIRCUS—16—SCENES—16

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 10/8/32*

The Albee couldn't think of a better way to start the new year than to engage Duke Ellington and his Orchestra, and personally, I can't either. Ellington and his orchestra were engaged for one week beginning on January 1, 1933. There was truly an embarrassment of

riches in Brooklyn during this period, as Ellington had been playing the Loews Metropolitan in October during the very week that "Rhapsody In Black" was seen at the Albee, and just two months later, they were on the stage.



(BDE 1/3/33)

Sweet bands would dominate the remainder of the 1933 season, and Phil Fabello and His orchestra were firmly entrenched at the Albee for the 1934 season, with few exceptions. One such occasion though was when Fats Waller led a revue entitled "Hot Harlem" at the Albee during the week of September 13, 1934. Although no revue from the *Eagle*

exists, but it apparently was broadcast for radio, and the writer describing it held Waller in high regard:

"Brooklyn, New York, 13 September:

Columbia Broadcasting System's latest sensational feature, "Fats" Waller, is the current headliner at Radio-Keith-Orpheum's Albee Theatre.

"Fats" appears at the piano several times during the act, playing the favorite tunes he has made famous over the air. Many are his own compositions, for "Fats" is one of our outstanding composers as well as pianist.

"Hot Harlem" is the title of his new act, which features other than "Fats," a versatile group of musicians."<sup>23</sup>

Band activity would follow the lead of the other Brooklyn theaters, and taper off to the regular infrequent occurrence at the theater in future years.

### **The Flatbush Theater**

After the aforementioned lull in regular Big Band activity at Brooklyn Theaters beginning around 1933 or so, the Flatbush Theater, not a part of the Downtown theater district, decided to bring back the practice beginning in 1939. Being the height of the Swing era, there



was an obvious demand for the Big Bands by Brooklynites, and they Flatbush wisely took over where the Downtown theaters had left off a few years earlier.

## Flatbush Stresses Vaudeville Acts

By ROBERT FRANCIS

The Flatbush continues its recent policy this week of stressing the vaudeville angle rather than offering a revue built around a name band. Personally, we welcome this and think from observation that the customers do, too. Of course, the current show is headed by Tommy Tucker and his orchestra, and we

like Mr. Tucker and his boys as well as any we have heard over there in a long time. But the young maestro doesn't attempt to have everything revolve about him. Contrariwise, he seems bent on building up the other acts, which is engaging and results in a real variety bill.

Perhaps the presence of a veteran vaudeville troupier to share the honors has something to do with it also. Anyway, Bennie Fields is there, a little balder and, as he says, "with another depression wrinkle or two," but with a voice and poise that make most of our modern crooners look like amateurs. We heard him before he ever saw a mike and he gives a song the same sort of effortless production that he did 20 years ago at the Orpheum.

In addition, five of the girls who used to dance at Old New York out at the Fair last year have a rollicking dancing act, culminating in their furious Can-Can. Gil and Bernie Mason have a dog act that's hilariously different. You'll have to see Bennie the bulldog to see what we mean. Jack Masters and Rowina Rollins offer scatterbrain comedy didoes. Miss Rollins looks as if her first name ought to be Eleanor and gets plenty of laughs. Don Brown and Amy Arnell sing pleasantly with the band, and that about covers the proceedings.

We recommend it all. It comes close to the old-fashioned vaudeville which everybody is always wanting back.

## Nazi Sea Tyrant On Strand Screen

Back during the first World War, German submarine strength reached even our New England Coast; later, when exposed, it was to leave a frightening picture.

"Mystery Sea Raider," the picture that pierced its way into the Brooklyn Strand Theater yesterday, possesses such terrifying overtones. It concerns the activities of a German mystery ship flying a Danish flag in American waters — somewhere near the Bahamas—that beckons British vessels with false manifestations of fire on board.

It is an evenly paced, dramatic story though, at times, the drama is coated with artificial touches.

Boris Karloff peers into the secret of how to halt death in the associate feature at the Strand, "Before I Hang," one of those eerie things. —A. R.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 10/18/40

The theater was built opened in August 1914, and was one of the largest in Brooklyn at the time, with a seating capacity of 2,000. It is important to note also that the Flatbush was a neighborhood theater, a few miles into the heart of Brooklyn and well past the Downtown Brooklyn area. By 1916 it was operated by the B.S. Moss theater chain. The Flatbush was probably rivaled the Brooklyn Strand and Loews Metropolitan for the most lavish social hall in Brooklyn until the opening of the Brooklyn Rosemont nine years later. It, like many of the city's larger neighborhood theaters, featured a resident orchestra (the one at the Flatbush was 30 pieces) during its initial years which provided important working opportunities to Brooklyn musicians. The Flatbush Theater was advertised as having a policy of presenting "vaudeville of the highest class", a view that it would try its best to hold on to. By the mid 1920's it was operated by the Werba's theater chain, and its management was very cautious about adding acts to its programming that may possibly cause controversy within its audience.



It's no surprise that the first sounds of jazz in theaters on its chain came from established artists, or were a part of successful shows that had been proven in other theaters or clubs. On November 11, 1925, they presented "Wilbur Sweatman's Dusky Dozen" at the Werba Brooklyn theater among other vaudeville acts, well after he was an established vaudeville star. Again, they weren't fully confident that the show would be as well received as others, so the program was again presented on a Sunday only, the "safe day" of programming.

Following this trend, it comes as no surprise that the Flatbush's first taste of syncopated music and dance did not come until 1926, when an all African-American revue called "Romantic Youth" was presented there. The cast was 25 persons in all and featured "a jazz orchestra, stagers and dancers." A pianist named Jim McWilliams "scored his usual hit," during his performance, and the article gives the impression that he already had somewhat of a following at the Flatbush by the time of the performance which was accompanied by two films and a news reel. Another opportunity for syncopated music came when producer

Lew Leslie placed the 1929 version of his "Blackbirds" revue at the Flatbush. This was the third incarnation of Leslie's show, and came directly after the hugely popular 1928 version completed an astounding 518 show run on Broadway featuring Bill "Bojangles" Robinson (who would be "semi-living" in Bedford-Stuyvesant with his mistress by the late 1930's), and the Brooklyn-born songstress, Adelaide Hall. Neither Robinson nor Hall were a part of the 1929 review however, with Harriet Calloway (no relation to Cab, although throughout her career she would have you believe otherwise) as the featured female vocalist. The Flatbush production did benefit from the famous Cecil Mack choir, and Will Vodery leading his Plantation Orchestra, just a few years after imparting vital composition and orchestration lessons on a young Duke Ellington. The Flatbush does seem to be the earliest of the grand Brooklyn theaters to regularly present African-American revues, and the success of productions such as Leslie's "Blackbirds" demonstrated the profitability of such productions to other Brooklyn theaters. In the 1930's there was a noticeable increase of African-American theatrical revues in theaters

not located in primarily African-American neighborhoods in the borough.

There is absolutely no question that feet were tapping at the Flatbush during the week of March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1930, when *Hot Chocolates*, the popular African-American review with music written by Fats Waller, played at the theater, a few months after a 219-show run on Broadway. Although Louis Armstrong had played and sung with the show on Broadway, it is unlikely that he was a part of the Brooklyn run. Waller did play for the show at the Flatbush, along with blues singer Edith Wilson. Even though Waller hadn't done a lot of singing in public yet at this point in his career, he was a more than capable jazz vocalist and could have filled in for Armstrong while singing his own hit composition during the show, "Ain't Misbehaving".

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*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 3/9/30*

The vaudeville based Film and stage show combination would come to dominate the majority of Brooklyn's theaters during the swing era,

although its popularity was by no means confined to that borough. By the beginning of the 1930's, the theater would become a part of the Brandt theater chain, but the programming trends would stay the same. While other Brooklyn theaters in the beginning of the 1930's began to regularly feature jazz bands as part of their vaudeville packages along with their screen presentations, the Flatbush would alternate between variety act based vaudeville and film presentations *without* a name band as part of the presentation. They also alternated this type of show with purely theatrical presentations. By 1939, vaudeville as it had been known was seemingly dying out, and many of the other Brooklyn theaters had discontinued their vaudeville policies, presenting only film for the majority of the time and only bringing in name bands along with it for special occasions. Luckily for business at the Flatbush, that is precisely when they began to feature the combination, and for a couple of years they were the only Brooklyn theater to regularly feature that show format. An article in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* outlining the new policy of William Brandt, the

operator of the 87 theater chain, and how it was changing with the times, stated:

"Old two-a-day vaudeville with its pit band is gone for good. Higher admission tariffs forced upon it by increased expenses outmoded it ten years ago. The big variety circuits are no more, and attempts to revive variety in individual houses have resulted in financial catastrophe. Lastly, the use of the stage microphone has developed a whole new technique, and a new generation has grown up which demands everything sleeker and speedier than ever before. Vaudeville has gone streamlined like everything else.

Mr. Brandt has set about solving the problem in the most practical way. First admission prices must be reasonable and capacity business done to make up the difference. This entails getting the best "name" bands and variety acts obtainable. He then applies the policy to four of his houses, in Fordham, the Bronx, Jamaica, and, of course the Flatbush. This plan allows a month's run to each bill and forms the beginning of a small circuit. The shows run something over an hour and there are at least four of them a day, with frequently an extra on weekends for midnight performances. They usually consist of from five to six features, and are of two types. Where a "name" band is used, the rest of the stage show is usually built around it with the band's maestro acting as a master of ceremonies, while when a feature act is the central attraction a set-up more in the pattern of old-line vaudeville is used. They seem equally popular.

To Date, Mr. Brandt is delighted with the response with the new plan is receiving. He believes Brooklyn is a vaudeville town at heart and is prepared to extend the policy to other theaters here. Brooklyn can have variety again, if it wants it."<sup>24</sup>

Red Norvo and Mildred Bailey, billed as “Mr. and Mrs. of Swing”, opened up the series on March 17. The Flatbush must have had tremendous respect for the orchestra and its two leaders, because they would shy away from using the word “swing” to describe the majority of its bands, even the notably “hot” ones. The theater’s line up was a mix of swing bands and sweet bands, with Benny Meroff, The Andrews Sisters and Artie Shaw all announced as appearing in the future. When the Andrews sisters made their debut at the theater with Benny Meroff and his Orchestra during the week of March 26, the article advertising the took a seemingly highbrow approach to announcing them. The article was sub-titled, “Andrews Sisters *Get By Though Only One Reads Music*” (italics added).

**SWING**  
Coming to **FLATBUSH!**  
Beginning **TOMORROW**  
Entire Week

The Mr. and Mrs. of Swing  
**RED MILDRED NORVO-BAILEY**  
and their 15-piece Swing Orch.  
★ TERRY ALLAN ★ LORRAINE & ROGNAN  
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On Screen:  
**EDGE OF THE WORLD**  
Plus SELECTED  
SHORT SUBJECTS

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 3/16/39*

In April the Flatbush would begin a noticeable trend of booking female groups, as Rita Rio (who was also known as the actress Dona Drake) and her All-Girl Orchestra were engaged for a week at the Flatbush. The next week Jimmy Dorsey brought his orchestra with Helen O'Connell as the songstress. Later the same month, the Flatbush was the site of a Jitterbugging contest with Vincent Lopez' orchestra providing the music, complete with a \$25 contest to determine who could best imitate Lopez's vocalist, Betty Hutton.



The Flatbush's management had at least partially given into the demand for the popular swing bands, but some portion of their audience most certainly wasn't happy with the change in programming. Fittingly, along with a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article advertising Paul Whiteman's May 1939 appearance at the Flatbush, he was also asked "How soon swing will die?" Those hoping for a quick demise would be disappointed with Whiteman's answer. Although he did believe that jazz was tired of years of "experimental peckin' and Suzie-Q-in'," he believed that jazz would return to its blues roots.

According to the article Whiteman stated:

"The first signs of the blues return are visible in 'secret jam sessions,'" he points out, "Just pop in on a high-class 'jam' session when the boys think nobody's listening. They won't be improvising fast 'Tiger Rags' or 'Dinahs.' The faster the tune, the less appeal it has for them. The real swing men will be playing the blues. Blues offer the best framework for improvisations. Blues are slow. The improviser has time to think of what he's going to play."<sup>25</sup>

One wonders what Whiteman would think of the music that Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie would be playing in just a few years after the writing of this article.

Following Whiteman, Charlie Barnet and his orchestra began a week at the Flatbush with Judy Ellington as vocalist, along with the usual compliment of dancers and comedians. The screen feature was "Mystery of Dr. Wong." Continuing the Flatbush's penchant for female orchestras, Ina Ray Hutton and her "Fourteen Melodears" began the final engagement of the season from June 2-9, 1939 before the onset of the summer months.

Opening the next season, clarinetist Sammy Kaye and his orchestra began on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1939. By looking at the programming, it seems like the management took a step back from the more daring swing bands of the previous season, choosing to engage the sweeter/society bands at the beginning of the current one. Of all the

Brooklyn theaters mentioned in the press, only with the Flatbush was there a concerted effort to qualify their combined music/film stage presentations as Vaudeville, always informing their patrons that their focus had not changed, although the times clearly were. Among others, the Gray Gordon Orchestra with vocalist Benay Venuta, the Will Osborne Orchestra with singer Dick Rogers, and the Teddy Powell Orchestra, which borrowed Betty Hutton from Vincent Lopez's Orchestra, were all engaged at the theater in November. In January of 1940, Jimmy Durante made a return to a Brooklyn stage, headlining the show at the Flatbush. Jay Mills and his orchestra provided the musical entertainment, and ol' "Ragtime Jimmy" might have taken notice of the pianist with the band at the time, the virtuoso pianist Walter Liberace, playing with his first professional band. The next month opened with Russ Morgan's orchestra with Fifi D'Orsay doing vocal duties. A week later pianist and arranger Lennie Hayton's orchestra was featured on a vaudeville bill at the Flatbush along with actor Henry Armetta, just months before Hayton would re-locate to Hollywood to assume his post as musical director for Metro-Goldwin-

Mayer. The next week he was followed by Ben Cutler and his orchestra. March saw Bobby Byrne and his orchestra at the theater for a week. As if it wasn't evident, the review of the show let the cat out of the bag in reference to the preferred type of band for the theater. Of the band it says, "They are at their best when they keep to the "sweet" (original quotations) side. Incidentally, Mr. Byrne blows one of the pleasantest trombones we have ever listened to." The article makes sure to state, "In all, it's a good show and one which vaudeville fans should like." It is interesting to note that none of the articles ever refer to the orchestras as "Swing" or "Hot" bands, even when the words were commonly used, and when those type of bands appeared at the Flatbush. The theater's publicity department was very cautious to not use language that would give the impression of anything except business as usual to its vaudeville loving patrons, even if occasionally the sound of the band said otherwise. The theater also dodged this situation by interspersing weeks where no dance band was featured, instead programming theater and/or vocalists who sang operatic or folk music.

The Flatbush management finally gave in to the Jitterbugs by the month of April. During the week of April 7<sup>th</sup>, The Andrews Sisters were featured with Joe Venuti's orchestra, with Kay Starr providing additional vocal duties. This was their second appearance at the theater, and Venuti's orchestra was clearly an upgrade in the swinging department from their first appearance earlier in the year. The next week, certainly no Brooklynite within earshot could keep still when Count Basie brought his Orchestra along with Maxine Sullivan to the Flatbush. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* took a rather unflattering approach to announcing Ms. Sullivan's arrival with Basie's band, in an article titled "Once Floor Washer, Now Swing Star"<sup>26</sup>, which gave a condensed account of her rise to stardom. Either all that jitterbugging must have left a bad taste in the mouths of the theater management, or Basie must have swung so hard that he made it unbearable for any other band to perform after him, because for some reason the stage shows were continued earlier than usual, after the week of April 21<sup>st</sup>,

although films were still shown for a few weeks until the warm weather began.

A more likely possibility for the early abandonment of the theater's band/vaudeville/film format could be the beginning of the scenario that would end the inclusion of the Big Bands into the Flatbush's programming. Beginning in the summer of 1940, the Brandt chain partnered with Broadway producer Jules Levinthal to re-incarnate the "Subway Circuit", a chain of theaters that would present Broadway shows outside of midtown Manhattan at neighborhood theaters in the summertime, when most theaters shut down for the summer. The Windsor Theater in the Bronx was another member of the Brandt theater chain that was to undergo a similar transition from music to theater. Many of the vaudeville reviews discussed here were at the Windsor either before or shortly after playing at the Flatbush. In this new summer theatrical circuit, sometimes a number of the original cast members could be retained for the productions, and ticket prices were made much more affordable for those in the outer boroughs who

were delighted not to pay midtown Manhattan prices. It did seem to be understood by the public that the production on the Subway circuit, while enjoyable, might not be up to the same exacting standards of the same show on Broadway. A small hiccup or two during the performance was tolerated. The idea of more theatrical performances at the Flatbush played directly into its vaudevillian tendencies, although one more season of the combined band/vaudeville/film programming would take place for the 1940-41 season. Surprisingly, in terms of participation by swing bands, it was even more ambitious than the previous season.

Once again featuring an all-female group to headline the show, "Sally Rand and her all girl revue" opened up the 1940-41 season with a week's engagement on September 12 at the Flatbush, with Art Jarrett's orchestra providing the "musical background". Jarrett's band was described as "a very good, sweet band, with a five-piece reed section pleasant to the ears"<sup>27</sup>. Before the next engagement, an interesting function took place at the Flatbush. Dixie Walker, star

outfielder for the Brooklyn Dodgers, celebrated his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday at the Flatbush Theater on September 24, 1940. Aside from the customary cake and gifts, graced the theater with song. He reportedly sang "I'll Never Smile Again", and "Sierra Sue". On another selection, "Six Lessons From Madam LaZonga", he sang a duet with Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra vocalist Helen O'Connell, who made the song famous. While no audio exists from the performance, there must have been a jazz orchestra on stage with them, and the absence of commercial recordings by Dixie Walker, *vocalist* may offer some insight as to his singing capabilities.

The next week, on September 25<sup>th</sup>, the Flatbush was jumping a little more than in previous weeks with Cab Calloway and his orchestra, leading a fifty-person "Cotton Club Revue" that included Avis Andrews, Cozy Cole, Chu Berry, and the "band within a band", the Four Cab Jivers. Although Calloway had many sweet arrangements in his book, he was sure to give the people what he was known for, high energy, hair-flipping hot music. By the fourth day of the week-long



engagement, the Cab Jivers had played so well that they received their own mention in a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article dedicated to them.

Entitled "Cab 'Jivers' Trace Origin to Accident", it describes their inception taking place at the Cotton Club when four of his musicians "indulged in an impromptu "jam" session on "After You've Gone".

When they had finished, the few customers around were yelling for more. Calloway heard the shouting, and the "cabbies" became a regular group."<sup>28</sup>

Calloway's band at the Flatbush also included a twenty-two year old, hotshot trumpeter just beginning to break from his Roy Eldridge-inspired mold, John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie. Dizzy, just a couple of months away from being fired from Calloway's band after being mistakenly accused of throwing a spitball at the leader during a show, was already known for his playful antics. He also had roots in vaudeville going back to his father, a part-time bassist, and his grandfather, who used to give amateur vaudeville shows in the family backyard of his South Carolina hometown. Dizzy's own showmanship would be on full display in front of his own big band by the middle of

the decade, but he always expressed his discontent for not being allowed to be a part of the Cab Jivers. In his autobiography *To Be or Not To Bop*, he says:

“A small group in Cab Calloway’s band called the “Cab Jivers,” comprised of Milt Hinton, Cozy Cole, Chu Berry, and Danny Barker, snubbed me and tried to overlook me when I joined. When I came in the band I should’ve been in that group, but I wasn’t. Now, under any other condition, when I came into the band, as far ahead as I was with that kinda shit, jump `n jive, I would’ve gone right into the Cab Jivers, but Chu stopped it. There was a thing on his part against me, because I always respected Chu Berry’s playing. But he thought I was too young to have that important a job. “There should be a major league and a minor league in music,” he said”.<sup>29</sup>

Gillespie surely wouldn’t have enjoyed reading the article featuring the Cab Jivers, but he would soon have more than his own time in the spotlight.



### Cab Calloway Revue At Flatbush Tomorrow

Cab Calloway, the Harlem king of jazz, will bring his orchestra and Cotton Club revue to the stage of the Flatbush Theater for the week starting tomorrow.

The Calloway show will include a cast of 50, featuring Avie Andrews, the Three Chocolateers, Cozy Cole, Chu Berry and the Cab "Jivers."

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 9/25/40*

The swing level of the bands continued to consistently stay high for the next couple of weeks at the Flatbush, with a 2-band bill coming in for the week of October 3rd, along with Ray Bolger, the actor who had played the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*. Although novelty Latin band Ciro Rimac and his Rhumba-Conga Orchestra were engaged, the

swinging duties were handled by pianist and vocalist Bob Howard.

Although stylistically he owed a lot to Fats Waller in his piano playing, and Louis Armstrong in his singing, he couldn't help but have a good, swinging groove while channeling those two masters. The next week

brought Al Donahue and his orchestra with vocalist Dee Keating

providing the vocals, followed by sweet bandleader Tommy Tucker,

which helped to balance out the ratio of hot/sweet bands up to that

point in the season. To close the month of October, the Andrews

Sisters made their third visit to the Flatbush, and their second in six

months. They were backed again by more-than-capable Joe Venuti and

his orchestra. The reviewers for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* weren't as

impressed with this show as they had been in the past, stating that

"the whole bill doesn't stand up with some that the Flatbush has been

running lately..." and "It is far from the best of their recent bookings."

The unfavorable elements of the show were not the three headlining

sisters, nor the violin-playing orchestra leader accompanying them.

Vocalist Kay Starr was said to "have a lovely voice" and to be "easy to

look at." The reviewer admits at the end of the article that "The

Flatbush has been putting on such well-balanced bills lately that perhaps we are getting spoiled.”<sup>30</sup>

A return to sweet bands would begin the month of November, although it would more than balance itself out by the end of the month. The orchestra of Dick Stabile was engaged beginning November 3<sup>rd</sup>, but for some reason was discontinued suddenly, and by November 6<sup>th</sup>, a new stage show featuring Reggie Child and His orchestra were in place. They were followed by Clyde McCoy and his Orchestra with Mildred Bailey as vocalist for a week starting on November 14<sup>th</sup>. Interestingly enough, Mildred Bailey was described as a “swing” vocalist in the advertisement for the engagement, the first time that the management of the Flatbush described any of their musical acts as so. It is possible that they were either becoming more accepting of the term as applied to the burgeoning musical style, or that they simple couldn’t ignore the financial rewards of bringing Swing bands, and/or their vocalists to the theater. The next week, Bill Bardo and his orchestra were a part of a vaudeville package including

George Jessel, who's presence would have easily calmed the nerves of any vaudeville-loving theatergoers that were concerned about the number of Swing Bands and jitterbuggers that were beginning to frequent the theater.

Starting on November 28<sup>th</sup>, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra, along with a revue organized by him, were engaged for a week at the Flatbush. Along with vocalists Herb Jeffries and Ivie Anderson, his revue included the comedy team of Stump and Stumpy, singer and dancer Marie Bryant, and dancer Bill Bailey. Again, even with all of the talent amassed on the Flatbush's stage, the reviewer for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* was dissatisfied with the show. This time, the reason was clear in the opening statement of the article's second paragraph, and somewhat admirable:

"What good is a cream-colored piano to match the tails [of Ellington's Tuxedo], when the Duke doesn't play on it? This department expects him to play on it. When he doesn't, there is an obvious gab. Last night,

he was as nimble as all get-out with the baton, but upon the keys---  
just, no! The Brandts should do something about that.”<sup>31</sup>

The reviewer does mention of a few of the outstanding members of the band, saying of Johnny Hodges that he is “the first man we have seen step down from a band stand at the Flatbush to literally stop the show”. Rex Stewart performing his feature number “Boy Meets Horn” was also singled out as noteworthy. The rest of the revue is spoken about favorably, but as with a previous review he admits, “The show is far from the best that the Flatbush has offered. But we suppose that they can’t hit the bulls eye every week.”<sup>32</sup>

**B K L Y N** **STARTS TODAY 11 NOON** **20¢**  
**FLATBUSH**  
 CHURCH & FLATBUSH AVES TILL 1 PM  
**IN PERSON**  
 HARLEM'S ARISTOCRAT OF SWING  
**DUKE ELLINGTON**  
 -AND HIS ORCHESTRA-  
**STUMP & STUMPY**  
 REPIA COMEDY WOVES  
**IVIE ANDERSON**  
**BILL BAILEY • MARY BRYANT**  
**& HOT HARLEM REVUE**

**Duke Ellington Band**  
**At Flatbush Today**  
 Duke Ellington, Harlem's aristocrat of "swing," brings his orchestra and revue to the stage of the Flatbush Theater for the week starting today.  
 The Ellington revue includes Ivie Anderson, the dancing of Bill Bailey and the comedy antics of Stump and Stumpy. Ellington will sing and play some of his own compositions, including "Sophisticated Lady" and "Moon Indigo."

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 11/28/40*

What the reviewer didn't notice, while worrying about Ellington's coattails, was the new bassist and fifth saxophonist that were new to



the orchestra since it's last two Brooklyn appearances, at the Brooklyn Roseland on October 11, 1935, or at the Urban League Benefit held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on May 8, 1938. The bassist was Jimmy Blanton, and the tenor saxophonist was Ben Webster. Blanton single-handedly expanded and re-defined the role of the Bass in Jazz as a solo and accompanying instrument, and the self-taught Webster, aside from his completely original conception on his instrument, expanded Ellington's saxophone section to five horns for the first time. This gave Ellington a texture which he had never had at his disposal before; a new toy to play with going forward. Blanton and Webster joined the orchestra in 1939 and 1940, respectively, and both would make indelible marks on each of their instruments.

The Temperature from Ellington's "Hot Harlem Revue" must have called for a cool down, because to start off the last month of 1940, a return to the sweet bands was necessary. A revue centered around Blue Barron and his Orchestra performed at the Flatbush beginning on December 5<sup>th</sup>. The Following week, a revue entitled "The Crazy show

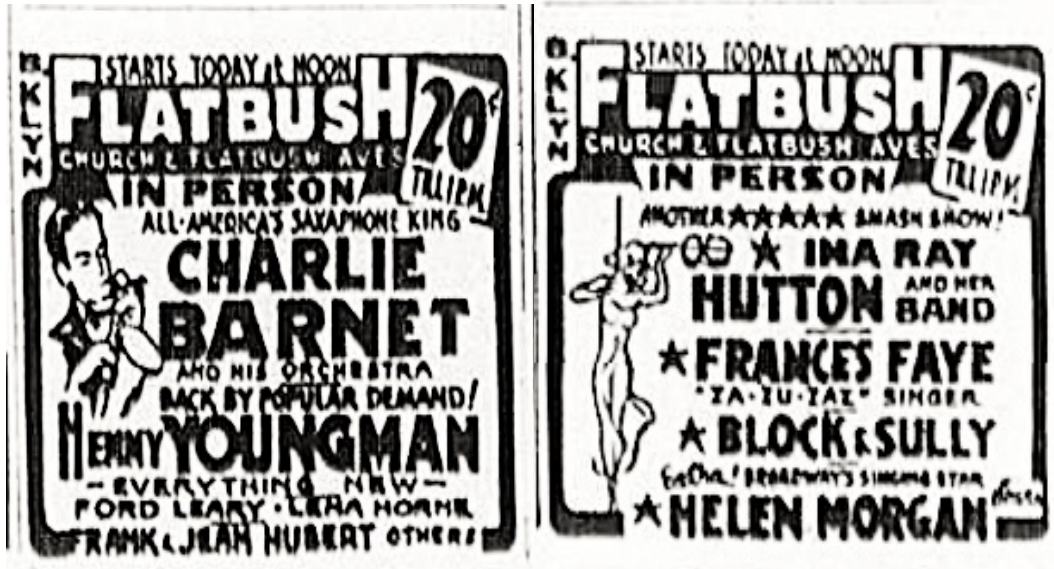
of 1940" began on December 12<sup>th</sup> at the theater, and fittingly Milt Britton and his Musical Maniacs were engaged. Although long forgotten, they were well known for beginning to play a song in the traditional way, and then halfway through it a musician would begin to knock an instrument out of another musician's hand, bringing about laughs. Vocalist Dinah Shore also performed with Britton's orchestra during the week. The 19<sup>th</sup> of December saw Louis Prima and his Rhythm Orchestra headline a pre-holiday stage show at the theater. The Mills Brothers were also brought to share in the vocal duties. For the final week of the year, a revue featuring Teddy Powell and his Orchestra played the Flatbush. A interesting addition is that of the Adrian Rollini Trio, billed as the "Biggest Little Band in the Land", and described as a "swing combination". The Flatbush was definitely getting comfortable with that word, at least when in quotes. Brooklynites would also have been happy to see the return of Brooklyn-born pianist/vocalist/composer Frances Faye as a part of the line-up.

1941 began continuing the policy of mixing sweet and hot bands at the Flatbush. "Jan Savitt and his Top Hatters" orchestra started the ball rolling. Things warmed up a little toward the end of the month when popular Radio star Ozzie Nelson brought his Orchestra, featuring his wife Harriet Hilliard as vocalist, to the theater. Their performance was billed as their final New York appearance before going to Hollywood to make the film "Betty Co-Ed" for Columbia Pictures. They were followed by Harry James' orchestra with Dick Haymes, vocalist in a stage show for a week beginning on January 30<sup>th</sup>. James, a staunch Brooklyn Dodger fan, had just penned a new song that he was going to premiere at the theater, "Flatbush Flannigan", written about "the perfect Brooklyn Dodger rooter, the guy who has always been waiting till 'next year'".<sup>33</sup> He would record the song for Columbia Records in 1941, and the song would stay in the bands repertoire throughout the 1950's. He was also featuring his arrangement of the Hebrew chant, "Eli, Eli." A picture in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* shows James' concern for conveying the mood of the song by rehearsing it alongside a local

Rabbi in the backstage area of the Flatbush to gain approval for his rendition.

Sweet/Society bands would dominate the Flatbush's programming for the remainder of the season ending in the summer of 1941. Returning names such as Van Alexander, Ina Ray Hutton, Benny Meroff, dominate the programming during February, March and April. The jump element temporarily was brought back to the Flatbush when Louis Prima began a week-long engagement on March 13th, returning after just a few months. An orchestra fronted by Actor Ben Blue was on hand to cool things down the next week. In April, the temperature briefly rose again when Charlie Barnet brought his orchestra to the theater for his second appearance at the Flatbush. Ina Ray Hutton and her orchestra headlined an "almost" all-female show at the Flatbush that included pianist/vocalist Frances Faye and vocalist Helen Morgan. The female domination of the stage was only ruined by the inclusion of the husband and wife vaudeville team of Block and Sully. The Flatbush even hosted a borough-wide high school swing band contest on April

16<sup>th</sup>. Tenor Saxophonist Tony Pastor was the judge, and his orchestra also opened for a week's engagement later that day.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 4/10/41

4/3/41

During the summer of 1941, the Flatbush featured even more of the “Subway Circuit” theater than in the previous summer. By this time the network of participating theaters had been expanded, and the promise of more work for the theatrical performers helped to secure more of the original Broadway performers during the summer performances. Also, sometime during the summer of 1941, Air Conditioning was installed in the Flatbush Theater, which would do even more to solidify its availability as a year-round theatrical house.


It would seem that the writing was on the wall for the Flatbush, although they would give the vaudeville format one more try in the fall.

For the 1941-42 season, the hot swing bands which in past seasons comprised at least a small portion of the Flatbush's Fall and Winter vaudeville schedule, would play an even smaller role. More and more sweet bands and the most schmaltzy reviews dominate the listings, but even this wasn't enough to ensure a permanent presence for Big Bands at the Flatbush going forward. During this season, there were more weeks without a band at the center of the vaudeville revue than ever before. Bands such Ray Heatherton's Orchestra beginning October 29<sup>th</sup>, and Charlie Spivak's Orchestra beginning November 13<sup>th</sup> were heard at the theater until the end of the year. Again, the hottest orchestra before the new year was that of Louis Prima, who began on December 21<sup>st</sup> through the Christmas Week. The reviewer for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* enjoyed this show, with the only unfavorable portion of the review focused on vocalist Lois Andrews Jessel, wife of

George Jessel. Special note was given to drummer Jimmy Vincent, who "does a terrific job with Sing, Sing, Sing," and is one of the liveliest performers on the skin heads we have seen in ages." Again, the reviewer reminds us of the preferences of the audiences and management of the Flatbush by saying that the show was "well balanced and entertaining", but "a bit noisy and with a dull spot here and there."<sup>34</sup> It seems that anything resembling an energetic, jumping swing band raised a disapproving eyebrow at the theater, even if it was popular.

The new year began ended with Will Bradley and his orchestra featuring drummer and vocalist Ray McKinley. He was followed by Glen Gray and his Casa Loma Orchestra. Both were engaged for a week each. February 1942 started out with business as usual, featuring banjoist Lou Breese and His popular radio orchestra engaged for the first week of the month. By the end of the month, things began to pick up. On February 26<sup>th</sup>, trumpeter Oran "Hot Lips" Page debuted his orchestra at the Flatbush, along with an all African-American revue

which also featured the singing of Maxine Sullivan. The revue ran for one full week, and was described as "The greatest array of Negro stars ever assembled on one stage". As part of the revue was the song and dance team of Buck and Bubbles, and the dance team of Tip, Tap and Toe.

<p><b>SWING SHOW</b></p> <p>The greatest array of Negro stars ever assembled on any stage comes to the Flatbush Theater starting tomorrow for one full week. On the bill is the world premiere of the featured trumpet star of Artie Shaw's orchestra. Hot Lips Page and his band; also Buck and Bubbles, Tip, Tap and Toe and as an extra attraction Maxine Sullivan.</p>	 <p><b>COMING TO BORO</b>—Maxine Sullivan—and—an—all-Negro swing show will be at the Flatbush Theater for one week beginning Thursday.</p>
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*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 2/25/42*

Stan Kenton and his orchestra were scheduled to spend a lot of time in Brooklyn in February and March of 1942, but the destruction of the Brooklyn Rosemont on February 19<sup>th</sup> of that year curtailed many of



those plans. Fortunately, despite the shuffling around of dates and venues to fill the schedule in between engagements they were still able to open at the Flatbush on schedule, beginning a week starting on March 12<sup>th</sup> as part of a revue along with dancer Dixie Dunbar, and vocalist Wee Bonnie Baker. They were followed by Brooklyn-born composer and pianist Raymond Scott, with his orchestra and quintet. Scott, born Harry Warnow in the Brownsville neighborhood to Russian Jewish immigrants, was still a year or so away from the use of his most well-known composition *Powerhouse* in many of Warner Brothers "Looney Tunes" and "Merrie Melodies" cartoons.

WWII and its effects on the Big Bands has been well noted by historians, and the situation that swing bands found themselves in during the war years actually supported the ambitions of the Flatbush in regards to its future programming. Even before the war, many of the New York City-based "non-name" bands worked primarily in the city, with only limited touring to a region close to the city. During the war, with the outlook uncertain, many of them looked to secure long-

term security by working at institutions such as a particular theater (or network of theaters), hotel, dance hall, radio network, etc. While the theater wouldn't engage only one band during these years, the Flatbush, which was already scaling back the inclusion of hot bands in their Fall and Winter Vaudeville by 1942, began to engage the same four or five bands for the occasions when one was included in the stage show. The chosen bands were all sweet ones. The bands of Ina Ray Hutton, Tommy Reynolds, Mitchell Ayres and a few others monopolize the jazz band performances at the theater between the years of 1943-1944. The Subway Circuit grew immensely popular, and by the end of the war in 1945, the Flatbush was primarily a theatrical house. Soon, the vaudeville format was abandoned entirely, and replaced with either theater or motion pictures year-round. Sweet bands were engaged every few months or so for one or two day periods, usually in the middle of the week, to fill in the time while waiting for a certain production to begin. Interestingly enough, this movement away from Vaudeville to movies affected Brooklyn and the outer boroughs much more than Manhattan.

In the end, at least with the Flatbush, the desires of theater-lovers won out. A 1943 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article announcing the end of the "Legitimate Play" for that year's summer season states it the best: "Come next Sunday, the legitimate drama departs from the borough again and the old Flatbush Theater returns to its Fall and Winter policy of movies and maybe a bit of vaudeville. It is always with a trace of sadness that this department sees the end of another summer of flesh and blood theater, and it always futilely wonders why Brooklyn can't have plays again the year around."<sup>35</sup>

It seems that within a year of the writing of this article, the author would have his request granted, and no further vaudeville or bands would be presented on the Flatbush' stage.

**Rosemont Ballroom/Brooklyn Roseland**

As mentioned in the chapter on Coney Island, the owners of the popular Roseland Ballroom in Manhattan made an investment in Brooklyn, opening the Rosebud Ballroom on Coney Island around 1923. This however, would be their second venture into the Brooklyn entertainment scene. At least a year earlier, they opened a Brooklyn counterpart to their Manhattan hall, named the Rosemont Ballroom. It was located on the corner of Fulton Street and Flatbush Avenue with an address of 532 Fulton Street, just past downtown Brooklyn and near the aforementioned Crescent Theater. It seems that in the beginning that they were trying to establish a separate identity for their Brooklyn location, but it would soon bear the same name as it's Manhattan counterpart, at least for a time. In the 1930's, the name was changed to the Brooklyn Roseland, a name that lasted at least until the beginning of 1941, when the name was changed back to the Rosemont. It was only a year or so later when the Rosemont Ballroom would be destroyed by fire, never to return to Brooklyn. During it's last moments, clarinetist Jerry Wald and his Orchestra were in the middle

of a residence there, and reportedly “lost a few of its instruments, but managed to save its library” before being sent to the Raymour Ballroom in Boston to finish out their contract in lieu of the fire. Stan Kenton’s band was playing at the Roseland in Manhattan just before the fire, and was scheduled to be pulled from there to begin a ten-day run at the Rosemont the next week, but they also were sent to the Raymour Ballroom in Boston before coming back to Brooklyn to play at the Flatbush and Windsor theaters.<sup>36</sup>

The Rosemont/Roseland was reportedly a beautiful hall, and the most grandiose of all of the Brooklyn halls used strictly for dancing. From all indications, the ballroom was not initially air conditioned, and it followed the seasonal schedule of older vaudeville theaters, operating only during the cooler months—August until May. Brooklynites benefited from its relationship to the Manhattan Roseland, as many of the bands playing in the Manhattan hall were also sent to the Roseland, and also the Rosebud on Coney Island during the resort season following the earlier trend exhibited with the Coney

Island/Manhattan club owners. The owners were also able to capitalize on ownership of all three halls, enabling them to hire many of the most popular groups with the promise of working all three of their properties. The Rosemont Ballroom played possibly the earliest role in establishing the existence of a hall strictly for dancing in the Downtown Brooklyn area. A 1922 advertisement for a "Halloween Mask Dance" at the Rosemont states that dancing was "Continuous every night," and that "Sunday and Holiday Matinees" were provided. For the Halloween dance, Abe Smalls Melody Men and Joseph Lanins' Rosemont Orchestra were engaged. During the 20's, when the Jazz Age dance band came into fashion, it became a regular stop for many of the best musicians and bands, both well-known and those aspiring to be.

**Rosemont Dancing**

CONTINUOUS EVERY NIGHT,  
SUNDAY AND HOLIDAY MATINEES  
FULTON & FLATBUSH - B'KLYN

**HALLOWEEN  
MASK DANCE**

**MONDAY  
NIGHT**

**OCTOBER 30<sup>TH</sup>**

Whether you mask or  
not you will have a won-  
derful time.

**CASH PRIZES**

Souvenirs to all.

SMALLS' MELODY MEN

JOSEPH LANINS' ROSEMONT ORCHESTRA

Early Jazz violinist and bandleader Sal Dentici remembers,

“In 1924 I played at the beautiful Rosemont Ballroom, a famous place in Brooklyn owned by the same family who own the Roseland Ballroom in New York. The Rosemont Ballroom was situated at Flatbush Avenue and Fulton Street. I played there with The Melody Six Orchestra, and later at the Rosebud Ballroom in Coney Island, a resort town in Brooklyn, and a series of Sunday evening basketball and dance dates at Prospect Hall in South Brooklyn, for the famous Visitations professional basketball team.”

The basketball and dance event is part of an entertainment/sports trend that has its origins in earlier days. Lawrence Gushee, in his book *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of the Creole Band*, tells of how in 1914, The Original Creole Band, before beginning its vaudeville tours is known to have played for Boxing matches in Los Angeles. This Basketball and music function is one that would become popular in Brooklyn, and will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on



Bedford-Stuyvesant. Dentici also goes on to discuss the musical format at these halls, and some of the bands that played there:

"At the Rosemont and at the Rosebud Ballrooms there were two playing bands, one on and one off. Some of the bands we played together with were the Memphis Five-Phil Napoleon (leader/trumpet); with Jimmie Lytell, a great clarinetist; and Frankie Signorelli, a very talented pianist. The Indiana Five with Tommy Morton (Monaco) leader and drummer. The Georgia Five with the Drewes Brothers. The Way Down East Orchestra with Chauncey Gray, leader and pianist; Ralph Waders, banjo; Tony Gianelli, trumpet (a very good trumpet man); and others. We can't leave out Fess Williams and his Orchestra, Fletcher Henderson and his Band, the always genial Andy Kirk and his Orchestra, and Johnny Ringer and his Orchestra. All great bands"<sup>37</sup>

Dentici also remembered of The Melody Six Orchestra that,

"Harry Warren, the famous song-writer [who was an Italian immigrant raised in Brooklyn from an early age] and his brother-in-law, Jimmie "Red" Winslow, played with us occasionally. Harry and Jimmie came from the Ocean Hill section, adjacent to the East New York Section of Brooklyn. I remember Harry (in between dance sets) sitting at the piano and jotting down music on pieces of manuscript paper, which in later years were to become famous. One of Harry's greatest song hits, "Rose of the Rio Grande" was to become years later our theme song when I organized the Sal Denton and His Melodians orchestra in 1929."<sup>38</sup>

The year that Sal Dentici remembered that his band alternated with clarinetist and saxophonist Fess Williams and his orchestra at the Rosemont was 1925. This was also the same year that Williams began making his wonderful recordings for the Gennett record label. Williams would begin his residency at the Rosemont that year, and continue until February of 1926. His Gennett recordings paired with the exposure he was receiving from playing nightly at the Rosemont gave him a much needed boost in popularity, and in March 1926 he was asked to play at the Grand Opening of the soon-to-be-famous Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, an engagement that he would keep for almost two years.

Being a "Ballroom" and not a traditional theater, the Rosemont/Roseland's focus was on keeping its patrons' feet moving. None of the other "upper tier" establishments in Brooklyn consistently presented the most danceable jazz as the Brooklyn Rosemont/Roseland throughout its short 19 year existence. While some of the vaudeville theaters began to convert to offer film along

with music in the 1920's, the Rosemont/Roseland just kept bringing the most exciting bands to Brooklyn. It would also provide inspiration to many young New Yorkers that were destined to make their mark on the future of American Music. Composer Harold Arlen, after moving to New York City from his native Buffalo around 1926, visited the Brooklyn Roseland "to hear the heroes of his youth, The Memphis Five. 'When they came off the stand,' he said, 'I stood there with as much awe as if the president of the United States had just finished speaking.'"<sup>39</sup>

In 1927, Brooklyn Trumpeter Phil Napoleon led his own group at the Rosemont during his post-Original Memphis Five years<sup>40</sup> and in 1928 the Ross De Luxe Syncopators, a territory band from Miami, Florida which had just recorded its only sides for the Victor label 8 months before, played there. Their engagement lasted from March 18th until April 1<sup>st</sup>. This would be the band's last two weeks in existence, as they broke up just after the Rosemont engagement. With them were two important young musicians they had picked up in Florida, 17 year old

Cootie Williams on Trumpet, and 27 year old Clarinetist Edmond Hall.

Edmond Hall arranged with Williams' father for Cootie to join the band while he was only 15 years old, as long as he took care of the teenage trumpet player. This was their first trip to New York and subsequently their first NYC engagements.<sup>41</sup>

British writer Max Jones interviewed Edmond Hall when he recalled how the band made its way to Brooklyn:

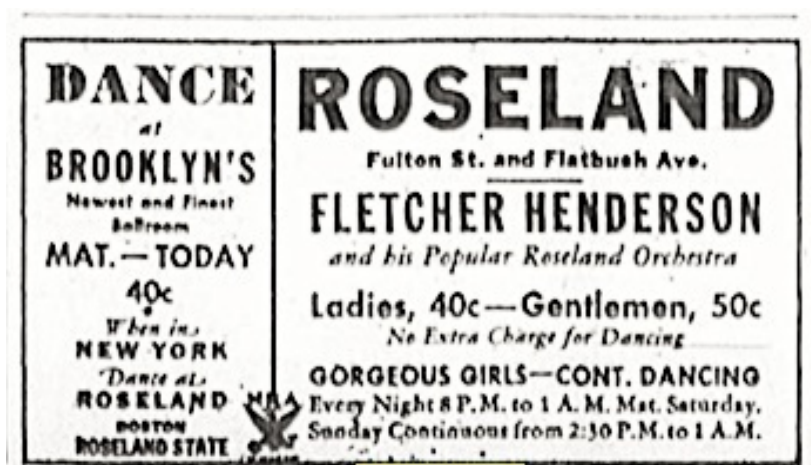
" Then, [after playing around the state of Florida] he said 'it happened that we went to Savannah, Georgia. Victor wanted that tune, *Girl of My Dreams*, recorded by Blue Steele, and sent a mobile outfit to Savannah to get it. They had scouts out who heard our band. We were asked to Savannah to do some sides, and made a few records mostly original tunes. I think I had a few bars on baritone.'

'When the records came out,' Hall continued, 'the manager of the Roseland heard them and sent for us. He had two places, the Roseland on Broadway and the Rosemont in Brooklyn. We played at the Rosemont.

'That's how I came to New York. I'll never forget the day I arrived: 25 March 1928. It was the first time I ever saw snow.'<sup>42</sup>

By 1932 or so the name had been changed to the Brooklyn Roseland, and in that decade things picked up even more. Pianist Joe Bushkin, who would go on to have a long and storied career, and in a few years

would accompany Billie Holiday on one of her earliest recordings, landed his first regular engagement playing in singer Frank LaMarr's Orchestra at the Roseland in that year. As with most theaters and ballrooms that were connected to a Manhattan hall or management entity, the Brooklyn Roseland benefited from its counterpart across the river. Fletcher Henderson and his orchestra had been in residence at the Roseland Ballroom in Manhattan since 1924, with groundbreaking contributors such as Louis Armstrong, Don Redman, and Coleman Hawkins as part of the group at one time or another, and was coming to the end of its tenure there. Luckily, before that happened Fletcher Henderson brought his band to the Brooklyn Roseland on September 16, 1933 for a one night engagement. Although Armstrong and Redman left the band much earlier, Coleman Hawkins would still have been present, before leaving for a 5-year sojourn in Europe the next year.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 9/16/33*

The next week, Isham Jones brought his band to the Roseland, and later that month a Lindy Hop Dance Contest was held, engaging "Luis Russell and his Old Man River Orchestra" who was very popular in Brooklyn by this time. Highlights of the 1934 season included Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra on January 18, 1935, Claude Hopkins on March 2, 1935, and Fletcher Henderson again on May 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 1935 near the end of that year's dancing season. The ever-present benefit concert/dances were also held at the Brooklyn Roseland. A star studded event was held on April 24, 1935 under the auspices of Associated Musicians of Greater New York, Local 802. Among the participating orchestras which were announced in advance were those

of Fred Waring, Hal Kemp, Paul Whiteman, Glen Gray, and Claude Hopkins. As if that wasn't enough, there were "others" that were not named at the time of the printing of the advertisement. In the first few months of the 1935 dancing season, Duke Ellington brought his famous orchestra to the Brooklyn Roseland on October 10, 1935.

Next Wednesday night, April 24, over 30 prominent bands will appear at the Brooklyn Roseland at a benefit dance for the unemployed fund of the Associated Musicians of Greater New York. Tickets are \$1. Among the orchestras that will appear are those of Fred Waring, Hal Kemp, Paul Whiteman, Ozzie Nelson, Leon Belasco, Glen Gray, Abe Lyman, Jack Denny, Freddie Rich, Claude Hopkins, Henry King and others.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 4/19/35*

Mimicking the trend exhibited by the Simon and Weber agency while handling the Original Creole Band in 1915, there was still a regular practice to have new, unproven bands to play initially in Brooklyn or elsewhere outside of Manhattan to gauge acceptance from the public (and to give the bands a chance to work out the kinks) before giving

them an Manhattan booking. Such was the case on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1936 when Woody Herman and his orchestra made it's debut at the Brooklyn Roseland. According to historian Lawrence McClellan the performance "was broadcast over the air by the Mutual Broadcasting System. The next job, at New York's Roseland, also received airtime and helped boost the band's popularity. By 1937, the orchestra had begun performing at top venues..." Herman himself had joined Isham Jones orchestra in 1935, well after that orchestra had performed at the Brooklyn Roseland two years earlier, but after Jones retired from the organization for health reasons in 1936, many of the band members reorganized into a cooperative unit in which Woody Herman was president. This new orchestra, retitled with Herman's name, most certainly must have capitalized on Isham Jones previous relationship with the Roseland's owners in order to secure its debut performance.

By the looks of things, the Brooklyn Roseland had no desire to change their programming trends. Brooklynites loved to dance, and they had a dedicated dance hall to do so. An advertisement in the *Brooklyn Daily*



Eagle advertising the August 17<sup>th</sup> opening of the 1937 season stated, "The dance hall, which has been closed during the hot season, will follow its policy of presenting outstanding bands. Paul Whiteman, Glen Gray, Clyde McCoy and Louis Armstrong are among those who have played for Roseland patrons in the past."<sup>43</sup> The orchestras of Billy Jones and Lew Fayne were engaged for the opening night, which was advertised as a "Harvest Moon Ball" with a dance elimination contest.. Soon after the opening of the 1939 dancing season, Count Basie brought his famous orchestra with Lester Young, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Jimmy Rushing, Helen Humes and the rest of his well-known personnel to the Brooklyn Roseland on September 7, to the delight of that borough's lindy-hoppers. The performance was reportedly broadcast for both the Mutual Broadcast System, and for CBS. Also during that season Cab Calloway and his orchestra reportedly "broke it up"<sup>44</sup> during an engagement there in January. Following Calloway, Mal Hallett and his orchestra were engaged for a one-nighter on January 19<sup>th</sup>. The next month Louis Prima's Orchestra began a lengthy engagement at the Roseland. Brooklyn born pianist Joe Springer, a

Brighton Beach native who would become Billie Holiday's regular accompanist in the mid-1940's, was catching the ear of more than a few fellow musicians, because the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that "Joe Springer of Brighton is the greatest living white swing pianist--- according to Duke Ellington. Springer is with Louis Prima's orchestra now at the Brooklyn Roseland."<sup>45</sup>

Going into the 1940 season, Benny Goodman was brought to the Brooklyn Roseland as a single to introduce arranger Sonny Burke's orchestra to Brooklynites on October 18<sup>th</sup>. Goodman was only there for one night to kick things off, and Burke's orchestra proceeded with a "limited engagement" at the hall. In November of that year Clarinetist Tommy Reynolds began playing the Roseland, and they must have been a hit, because they remained for almost a month before leaving in mid-December for an east coast tour. Throughout its existence, Reynolds orchestra would feature musicians as diverse as Baritone Saxophonist Serge Chaloff, and even clarinetist-turned-actor Hal Linden, who would play in TV's *Barney Miller* in the 1980's. (On a side

note, I once played a concert of New Orleans music in Miami with Linden while attending a Florida university in the 1990's, and I must admit he was a really good, swingin' clarinet player!) A little later in that season, beginning on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1941, the orchestras of Don Redman and Will Bradley split the following week, with Redman ending on Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. They were followed by Vincent Lopez' and his orchestra on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Fletcher Henderson was back with his Orchestra on February 10<sup>th</sup>, and in May, the orchestras of Sonny James and Ted Navarre were featured simultaneously. James would return with his orchestra to end the season, as part of another double-band bill with Bob Norman and his Orchestra on June 5<sup>th</sup>.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 10/18/40

Going into what would be the Brooklyn Roseland's final season, for some unknown reason the name was changed back to the Rosemont Ballroom. Jimmy Dorsey kicked things off with an engagement at the Rosemont on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. A double-orchestra bill with the bands of Bob Allen and Ted Navarre followed. The Rosemont seemed operating full steam ahead, but unfortunately fire was to bring it all to a tragic end in February of the next year. Reportedly the night watchman at the building which housed the Rosemont said, "the blaze started with an explosion when he turned on a gas stove to make coffee."<sup>46</sup> It soon expanded into a four-alarm fire which would destroy the Rosemont on February 2, 1942. There would never again, in Downtown Brooklyn be another hall that could rival the Rosemont Ballroom/Brooklyn Roseland in consistently inciting Brooklynites to dance through the night.

## Fire Destroys Dance Hall

### 4 Alarms at Brooklyn's Rosemont

Brooklyn's Rosemont Dance Hall, on the second floor of a sprawling three-story building at 532 Fulton St., in the heart of the borough's business district, was destroyed by a four-alarm fire that broke out about 5 a. m. today.

John Kimon, a night watchman, said the blaze started with an explosion when he turned on a gas stove to make coffee. The flames spread rapidly from the kitchen to the tinseled dance-room and then mounted to the third floor and roof.

A Woolworth 5-and-10-cent store on the ground floor was damaged only slightly by water

leaking through the ceiling, but the third floor, used as a store-room, was wrecked. A small left building adjoining the dance hall suffered only minor damages.

Firemen took three hours to extinguish the blaze but no one was injured.

### Canadian Corvette Lost With 57 Men on Board

Ottawa, Feb. 19 (AP) The Canadian corvette Spikenard has been lost with 57 officers and men, it was announced today.



**FIREMEN ON ADJOINING ROOF** are silhouetted against the flames and smoke that billow from the three-story building at 532 Fulton St., Brooklyn. The Rosemont dance hall on the second floor was destroyed.

(The New York Post 2/19/42)

## **The Strand Danceland**

Special note should be made of the Strand Danceland. This short-lived and little-known-about dance hall was in existence by 1922. It was described as a “dime-a-dance joint” and along with the Brooklyn Roseland were the only halls strictly for dancing in the Downtown Brooklyn area. It was located at 635 Fulton Street, next to the Brooklyn Strand Theater, and was first opened as a “refined dancing school”, teaching the waltz, fox-trot, and one-step.<sup>47</sup>

These types of Dancing Schools were popular in the 20's, and almost always employed a resident dance band for a lengthy engagement.

The bands that played at the Strand Danceland were to be local bands comprised of good musicians, although the groups themselves didn't necessarily have national reputations. In 1924, bandleader Charlie Skeets led the orchestra at the Danceland. He was a distant relative of Brooklyn bassist Franklin Skeets, one of the most versatile bassists

during the Bebop/New Orleans Revival period, who recorded with artists as diverse as Bull Moose Jackson, Bud Powell, Lester Young and Henry "Red" Allen. Charlie Skeets seems to have been particularly adept at securing these types of gigs, as Cat Anderson remembered playing with Skeets at a Harlem dancing school which could have been connected commercially called the "Rose Danceland" around 1927. Historian Phil Schaap also remembers former Ellington Saxophonist Russell Procope mentioning to him that he played with Skeets in the late 1920's at a hall located on Broadway, one block away from where Jazz at Lincoln Center is housed. By late 1928, clarinetist Edmond Hall was playing in Skeets band, possibly alongside Procope. Unhappiness with Skeets' management of the band eventually caused a mutiny against him, and in 1930 pianist Claude Hopkins took over leadership of the band while it was playing at the Rose Danceland. That same year, as the Claude Hopkins Orchestra, they began playing at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem.

On January 31, 1925, there was apparently a fire in the store below the dance hall on during business hours, although the flames were not enough to stop the band from swinging. In true Brooklyn fashion, with smoke billowing from below, they played through the entire ordeal. The dance floor was destroyed in order to extinguish the fire, but fortunately it would only force a temporary closure. The Strand Danceland was up and running by the start of the fall dancing season.

## **SCARE IN DANCE HALL.**

### **Rush to Street When Smoke From Store Below Appears.**

Three hundred men and women who had been dancing in Strand Danceland, on the second floor of the two-story brick building at 633 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, rushed for the coatroom shortly before 9 o'clock last night when they saw smoke curling through the floor.

They did not pause to choose their own wraps and despite efforts of Samuel Gellard, the manager, who had directed the orchestra to continue playing, to assure them there was no danger, the crowd rushed to the street. Two girls fainted in the crush and were revived by attendants.

The fire, the cause of which is unexplained, was downstairs in H. J. Finck's dress shop. The firemen cut through the floor of the dance hall to flood the shop with water. The section is the centre of Brooklyn's theatrical district and the streets became so crowded that police reserves had to be called to prevent traffic congestion.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 2/1/25*

Also in 1925, a five-hundred watt AM radio station operating on 1430 AM and with the call letters WFRL began broadcasting from a facility atop the Strand Danceland. In 1927, the facilities were taken over by another station with different call letters, WLTH, and in that year the new station began to broadcast directly from the dance hall.

<b>Brooklyn Stations</b>	
1170 K.—W L T H—256 M.	
4:00 P.M.—The Home Talkers.	
4:30—Bay Ridge Revel.	
5:00—Happy Times Club.	
5:30—Levy's Kiddie Bazar.	
5:45—Cohn Bros. program.	
6:00—Today in Sportland.	
6:15—Sanders' Hawaiians.	
6:30—Spencer's program.	
6:45—Gallagher's Sales Corp.	
9:00—Eypel's time; the Hup-	
mobilers.	
10:00—Weather; Gilrane's Irish	
music.	
10:30—University Quartet.	
11:00—Strand Danceland Orchestra.	
11:30—The Night Owls.	

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 5/31/28*

By 1926, the band at the Strand Danceland was one led by pianist/vocalist Earle Howard. His band would include a mix of musicians, some that would go on to make a mark in the emerging dance and recording bands. Howard recalls:

"June of 1926 saw us [the Hartford, Conn-Based band which he led called the "Whispering Serenaders"] at the Strand Danceland, Brooklyn, with Bob Labell, trumpet, Mike and Allen Jackson, saxes; Arnold Canty, banjo; Leonard Reed, drums and vocal; and myself, piano ad vocals. Later, Johnny Russell, tenor sax, replaced Mike Jackson, and then we added [Julius] "Geechie" Fields on trombone and Ben Campbell on tuba. We ended there on the last day of May 1927 and headed for a summer of one-night stands in New England. We left the Strand Danceland on June 1, and we had booked a tour that started at a dance in Poughkeepsie, New York."<sup>48</sup>

After his tour of New England, Howard and his band would return to the Strand Danceland in the winter of 1927, although his trombonist "Geechie" Fields would not join him because of sickness. Fields, after making a brief return early in 1928 would retire from playing for a short time to get well before eventually recording with Jelly Roll Morton's "Red Hot Peppers" in June of 1928. In Howard's band, he was replaced by Cuban trombonist Fernando Arbello, who had played with

the Havana Symphony Orchestra and who Howard describes as “Fresh off the boat from Cuba”<sup>49</sup> at the time. Another change in personnel would invigorate Howard’s band. Brooklyn based Saxophonist Pete Brown joined the band for a time. In years to come, Brown would become a musical mentor to a young alto saxophonist named Cecil Payne. Howard says:

“Things happened so fast at that time. We had an unknown celebrity in our midst; he turned out to be Pete Brown, who was playing with a local band. Pete Brown joined my band in the latter part of 1927 and played all the saxophones with us. He played first alto, a little slow rider, a wonderful saxophonist. He started recording with Clarence Williams, because he was what you’d call “hot property.”

During the winter of 1928, we returned to the Strand Danceland, but from the spring of 1929 to around February or March of 1930 I worked with Bil Benford’s Band.”<sup>50</sup>

The radio station WTLH moved to another location by 1930, and the Strand Danceland seems to have closed down by that time.

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<sup>1</sup> From the article “Benefit Plans Concluded”, *The New York Age* 5/7/38.

<sup>2</sup> From the article “Jazz Concert at Academy Aids Elk’s Charity, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 4/23/46.

<sup>3</sup> Tad Hershorn, *Norman Granz: The Man Who Used Jazz for Justice* (Univ. of California Press, Berkley and Los Angeles, 2011), 102.

<sup>4</sup> From the column “Brooklynites Discuss Stage Shows at Boro’s Movie Houses”, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 12/30/45.

<sup>5</sup> A.H. Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World* (Roudegde, New York and London, 2001), 147.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Townsend, *Pearl Harbor Jazz: Changes in Popular Music in the Early 1940’s* (University of Mississippi Press, 2007), 19.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Harold Valle, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on August 23, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> David Griffiths, *Hot Jazz: From Harlem to Storyville* (Scarecrow Press, Lahnam,MD, 1998), 179.

<sup>9</sup> David Griffiths, *Hot Jazz: From Harlem to Storyville* (Scarecrow Press, Lahnam,MD, 1998), 179.

<sup>10</sup> From the article, “Ella And The 4 Inkspots Jive at the Boro Strand”, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 9/6/41.

<sup>11</sup> From the article, “Kids from P.S. 25, Brooklyn, Gave Ella Fitzgerald a Lift to Fame”, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 9/4/41.

<sup>12</sup> Alyn Shipton, *Groovin’ High: The Life of Dizzy Gillespie* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1999), 67-68.

<sup>13</sup> Alyn Shipton, *Hi-de-ho: The Life of Cab Calloway* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2010), 158.

<sup>14</sup> From the Article “Louis Prima And Band Top Fast Stage Show”, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 10/11/41.

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- <sup>15</sup> Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1985), 21.
- <sup>16</sup> Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1985), 80.
- <sup>17</sup> From the article "Harry James' Trumpet and Band Heads Boro Strand's Stage Show", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 1/10/42.
- <sup>18</sup> From the article "Gene Krupa and Band at Boro Strand Friday", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 2/25/42.
- <sup>19</sup> Mel Watkins, *Stepin Fetchit: The Life & Times of Lincoln Perry* (Vintage Books, New York and Toronto, 2005), 238.
- <sup>20</sup> Mel Watkins, *Stepin Fetchit: The Life & Times of Lincoln Perry* (Vintage Books, New York and Toronto, 2005), 238.
- <sup>21</sup> *Billboard* April 4, 1942 P. 23.
- <sup>22</sup> Max Jones, *Jazz Talking: Profiles, Interviews, And Other Riffs On Jazz Musicians* (MacMillan Press, 1987), 165.
- <sup>23</sup> Stephen Taylor, *Fats Waller on the Air: The Radio Broadcasts And Discography* (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD, 2006), 21.
- <sup>24</sup> From the Article "William Brandt, who likes Vaudeville and Believes Brooklyn Likes It, Too, and He Has It", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 9/24/39.
- <sup>25</sup> From the Article "Whiteman, at Flatbush, Sees Return of 'Blues'", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 5/21/39.
- <sup>26</sup> Article, "Once Floor-Washer, Now Swing Star", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 4/14/40.
- <sup>27</sup> From the Article "Vaudeville Opens at the Flatbush", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 9/13/40.
- <sup>28</sup> From the Article "Cab 'Jivers' Trace Origin to Accident", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 9/29/40.
- <sup>29</sup> John Birks Gillespie, Wilmont Alfred Fraser, *To Be or Not To Bop* (Doubleday, New York, 1979), 109.
- <sup>30</sup> From the article "Andrews Sisters Headline Flatbush", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 10/25/40.
- <sup>31</sup> From the article "Duke Ellington at the Flatbush", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 11/29/40.
- <sup>32</sup> From the article "Duke Ellington at the Flatbush", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 11/29/40.
- <sup>33</sup> From the article "'Flatbush Flannigan, a Swing Song About Dodger Fan, in Debut Today", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 1/30/41.

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- <sup>34</sup> From the article "Flatbush Theater Bills Good Holiday Vaudeville", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 12/27/41.
- <sup>35</sup> From the article "Flatbush Finales Legitimate Plays with Ruth Chatterton in 'Caprice'", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 8/25/43.
- <sup>36</sup> *Billboard* February 28, 1942 P. 43.
- <sup>37</sup> David Griffiths, *Hot Jazz: From Harlem to Storyville* (Scarecrow Press, Lahnam,MD, 1998), 212.
- <sup>38</sup> David Griffiths, *Hot Jazz: From Harlem to Storyville* (Scarecrow Press, Lahnam,MD, 1998), 210.
- <sup>39</sup> Edward Jablonski, *Harold Arlen: Rhythm, Rainbows, and Blues* (Northeastern University Press, 1996 ), 17.
- <sup>40</sup> John Chilton, *Who's Who of Jazz* (Bloomsbury Book Shop, London, 1972), 241.
- <sup>41</sup> John Chilton, *Who's Who of Jazz* (Bloomsbury Book Shop, London, 1972), 131, 358.
- <sup>42</sup> Max Jones, *Jazz Talking: Profiles, Interviews, And Other Riffs On Jazz Musicians* (MacMillan Press, 1987), 16.
- <sup>43</sup> From the article "Brooklyn Roseland Reopens For the Season Tonight", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 8/17/37.
- <sup>44</sup> Mention in Print, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 1/13/40.
- <sup>45</sup> Mention in Print, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 2/15/40.
- <sup>46</sup> From the article "Fire Destroys Dance Hall", *The New York Post* 2/19/42.
- <sup>47</sup> Classified Ad, "Strand Danceland" *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 8/27/23.
- <sup>48</sup> David Griffiths, *Hot Jazz: From Harlem to Storyville* (Scarecrow Press, Lahnam,MD, 1998), 225.
- <sup>49</sup> David Griffiths, *Hot Jazz: From Harlem to Storyville* (Scarecrow Press, Lahnam,MD, 1998), 226.
- <sup>50</sup> David Griffiths, *Hot Jazz: From Harlem to Storyville* (Scarecrow Press, Lahnam,MD, 1998), 227-228.

## Bedford-Stuyvesant

### The Neighborhood Scene 1930-1945

"We Were Surrounded by Giants" – Randy Weston

"In the (so called) jazz field many of us from Hancock Street in Bed. Stuy. can recall Bird, Wynton Kelly, Duke Jordan, K.D., and Bud hanging out on the stoops and rapping with the dudes "down the block".

"Of Course Brooklyn had some great clubs and almost every important name in Black music could at one time be seen wailing at The Continental, Turbo Village, The Brooklyn Coronet, Brownies, Town Hill and many other night spots."<sup>1</sup>

(From the Article "Brooklyn, home of soul, hosts bad Black show, by Charles Hobson, *New York Amsterdam News*, 12/4/71)

When I moved to the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in 1996, there was a deeply ingrained tradition there that I was not looking for, but was there to be noticed whether I was looking or not. As a young musician who believed that all of my New York energy would be spent in Manhattan, I was astonished to listen to hard core Brooklynites who never let the word "Manhattan", "Village", or "Harlem" enter into the conversation when talking about the most relevant musical issues.

*Everything* musical was always centered around Brooklyn, and in this

case "Brooklyn" meant *Bedford-Stuyvesant*. This is still common among musicians from that neighborhood today. When I was a resident, and later when I interviewed Randy Weston (b.1926), the two words were synonymous and never was a distinction made between the two. This is undoubtedly derived from the self-serving and self-reliant nature that was created in Bedford-Stuyvesant and many other African-American communities during the years before integration. The residents from those years spoke of their neighborhood as if it was the entire world, because due to the social conditions present during those years it was the only world in which they were accepted and felt comfortable. This line of thinking was simply passed down, even in the years after *Brown v. The Board of Education*. Also, a very gracious aspect of Bedford-Stuyvesant culture is displayed in the process by which you "gain citizenship" to the neighborhood (and the borough by default). If you shared in the challenges of living there (and pertaining to musicians, contributed to its artistic output) then you were a resident whether born there or not.



As Randy Weston put it while we were speaking about the tremendous amount of musicians in the neighborhood and their birthplaces:

**V.G.** - All of these guys were from Brooklyn?

**R.W.** - All Brooklyn. When I say from Brooklyn....I think if you spend a few weeks in Brooklyn you are *Brooklyn*. Yeah, I'm one of the rare [ones] that was actually born here, but still...Brooklyn's got that kind of character. (Laughing).<sup>2</sup>

All of the Brooklyn natives from which I received information spoke this way about transplants such as Freddie Hubbard, Kenny Dorham, Eubie Blake and others...they were Brooklynites. The Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood is an under-documented anomaly in the history of jazz music. It comprises an area of just over 3 ½ square miles, but the amount of concentrated jazz activity within its borders throughout the years is nothing short of extraordinary. During the 1940's, even the neighborhood gangs had jazz bands.

Beginning in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an event now known as the Great Migration was taking place in the United States, in

which African-Americans were moving from their region of origin in America, the Southern States, to the Northern States in search of better employment opportunities and social conditions. Supplementary to this, there was also a separate but very large movement of Afro-Caribbean and Latino-Caribbean immigrants to different urban centers of the Eastern United States, and New York was a preferred destination. Brooklyn in particular received a large number of Caribbean people into its neighborhoods, and their descendants would make up a significant part of the jazz, Latin, and Caribbean music scene from the 1930's going forward. Musicians such as Randy Weston, whose father was originally from Jamaica, saxophonist Rupert Cole, who moved to Brooklyn from his native Barbados in 1924 and would record with Fletcher Henderson and Louis Armstrong, are but two examples of an enormous Caribbean influence that is still prevalent in Brooklyn today. The new Brooklynites settled in the area that had been the former towns of Bedford, Stuyvesant Heights, and parts of the historically African-American settlement of Weeksville, which was founded by African-American freedmen in 1838. This area

became the neighborhoods of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights, which are separated by a main thoroughfare, Atlantic Avenue (for contemporary reference, the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Flatbush Avenue is the site of the new Brooklyn Nets basketball arena, The Barclays Center). Later, African-American expansion moved into the neighboring neighborhood of Fort Greene, and many African-American musicians began living there, although the majority of the venues where the music was performed were in Bed-Stuy and Crown Heights. All of these neighborhoods are where the majority of the jazz activity in Brooklyn took place for the longest period of time, and for the purposes of this writing, the two areas will frequently be combined under the name "Bedford-Stuyvesant" or "Bed-Stuy". It was here that jazz was much more than a commercial venture, but it was an integral part of the dynamics that established the neighborhood from its beginnings as an African-American cultural stronghold in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As more people of African descent moved to the neighborhood, their desire for music, and desire to create an environment which would not require them to frequent areas of the city where they might receive hostile or demeaning treatment came with them. Brooklyn was firmly segregated during these times, and aside from the predominantly Jewish neighborhoods of Brownsville and Ocean Hill, and certain parts of Downtown Brooklyn, it was understood that African-Americans simply didn't live in or regularly visit certain neighborhoods. There is sometimes a misconception, among those that study the social conditions in this country during its worst years, that demeaning public treatment towards African-Americans was confined to the South. In fact, it was occurring also in New York City, and was one of the factors that contributed toward the self-contained nature of Bedford-Stuyvesant and other black neighborhoods. Randy Weston explained:

"You couldn't go to the white restaurants. They didn't want us in the hotels. If you did go to a white restaurant in Manhattan, they'd throw the food at you. The only place we could go and eat in the restaurant was the Chinese restaurant or the Cuban restaurant. Other than that, we don't go out.

Everything happened in the community. And plus, everybody was coming to New York. From Detroit, From Philadelphia, From everywhere. *Bad Brothers*...[Meaning that the *best* of the African-American race in every profession were coming to New York-V.G.].”<sup>3</sup>

The segregation-era policies produced such staunch self-containment in Bedford-Stuyvesant that often jazz musicians from the neighborhood were not aware of white jazz musicians also born and raised in Brooklyn. Often it wasn't until black and white Brooklynites were playing together on 52<sup>nd</sup> street or in Harlem that they realized that they were from the same town. Drummer Tiny Kahn and Vibraphonist/Drummer Terry Gibbs were both from the predominantly Jewish neighborhood of Brownsville, which was only a few miles away from Bedford-Stuyvesant. While talking to residents of the neighborhood that came of age between 1930 and 1950, more than once I stated the name of another prominent white jazz musician from the borough, and received the response “Is he from Brooklyn?” Of course, there was no disrespect intended, but the fact remains that the social climate of those times caused the residents to be musically focused on what was happening in theirs and other African-American

communities, and later on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, and to not be inclined to stay abreast of who was playing what in Brooklyn's other neighborhoods. To hard core Bedford-Stuyvesant Beboppers in the mid-1940's, it simply wouldn't have been important or necessarily caused a sense of pride in them to know that George Gershwin was from Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood, although they were probably dancing to his compositions, or those based off of his chord progressions. Given the social factors, their position is easily understandable coupled with the fact that the amount of musical activity in the neighborhood was so extraordinary.

However, these attitudes did not affect both sides of the story equally, and white musicians in Brooklyn were generally more inclined to travel to Bedford-Stuyvesant than were black musicians to their neighborhoods. Jazz music just did what it has done since its beginnings, brought people together instead of keeping them apart. Simply put, in Bed-Stuy as long as a musician could play, they were accepted. Pianist Gene DiNovi (b.1928), who grew up in the

predominantly Italian neighborhood of Bensonhurst, took advantage of the swinging neighborhood that was in between his own and 52<sup>nd</sup> street. As an intermediate step before invading Midtown Manhattan, where he would go onto play and/or record with Lester Young, Benny Goodman, Fats Navarro, and others, he recalled that his first experiences playing jazz were comprised of sessions in his own basement with white and black musicians, and visits to Bedford-Stuyvesant playing in the clubs there beginning at the age of 15. As he would recall, "I was the only 'ofay' in the neighborhood. Randy Weston and Eddie Heywood were very nice to me."<sup>4</sup> Later, after beginning to play local gigs in Brooklyn, he continued hanging out in Bedford-Stuyvesant and remembered local musicians who lived there and also had day jobs at the time. Trumpeter Vincent Smith, Drummer Eddie Coombs, Tenor Saxophonist Cab Markham, and a Trumpeter named Billy Cooper all lived in the same Bed-Stuy housing project. DiNovi remembers visiting them in one of their apartments, and "we would stand around in a circle and sing Illinois Jacquet's solo on 'Flyin' Home'". None of the musicians he listed would necessarily go on to

have a well-known presence in the jazz world. Eddie Coombs did participate on one 1951 record date for Savoy, led by then pianist/vocalist and later R&B composer/producer Bert Keyes (who later wrote the 1968 R&B Hit *Love on a Two-Way Street*, performed by The Moments), and the trumpet player Billy Cooper would turn up in a big band fronted by Max Roach which will be discussed later. Gene DiNovi describes him as “The first guy that he heard that played like Dizzy [Gillespie]”<sup>5</sup>. DiNovi would not be the only white musician to participate in the scene in Bed-Stuy, of course, although it wasn’t until the 1950’s or so that white people began to regularly populate the clubs along the central entertainment area of Fulton Street in the neighborhood.

Another historical factor that contributed to this self-contained nature of Brooklyn and its neighborhoods is its geographical location within the New York City area. Of those portions of New York City boroughs that border Manhattan, Brooklyn, located on the South-westernmost tip of Long Island, was not directly connected to an affluent section of



Manhattan Island during the years that this mindset was formed in the borough. Western Queens faces the Upper East Side of Manhattan and is convenient to Midtown. The South Bronx and that borough's Riverdale neighborhood are literally a stone's throw away from Harlem and were full of affluent people of European descent until the 1930's. All three of these areas mentioned were looked at as suburbia, places to build country estates in order to escape the New York City crowds. Brooklyn's intra-city coastline is located across from Lower Manhattan, which was full of the worst slums on that island during the years up to and after the annexation of Brooklyn into New York City (1887), and it wasn't until relatively late in its history that Manhattanites began to build the classic Brownstone townhouses that inundate Bed-Stuy's and Crown Heights' blocks. In fact, Brooklynites were concerned at the building of the Brooklyn Bridge...concerned that it would bring in all of the riff-raff living in the slums across the river. Brooklynites didn't necessarily *want* to cross that bridge, and they also preferred that those on the other side of the river not use it also.

This is the attitude that was already prevalent in Brooklyn when African-Americans, Afro-Caribbean people, and Latino-Caribbean people began to populate Bedford-Stuyvesant near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This, coupled together with their response to the social conditions in the city, helped to forge their self-reliance, and gave them the impetus to create a neighborhood environment that would allow them to exist with minimal contact with areas of the city that didn't welcome them. The new residents also took advantage of the architecture that was present in the neighborhood from the period before they arrived. The neighborhood was full of Victorian Brownstone townhomes and mansions built by the wealthy Brooklyn and Manhattan businessmen that called the neighborhood home in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These large houses allowed for entire families to live under the same roof, and were spacious enough to rent rooms, or to be divided into rental units. Bedford-Stuyvesant contained numerous large theaters, including some that were part of national chains and some not, for film and vaudeville performances, which lessened the need for the residents to go to Downtown Brooklyn

or Manhattan for entertainment. This is not to say that they didn't occasionally go Downtown to the Brooklyn Fox or the Brooklyn Paramount, but there was so much going on within the neighborhood that those visits were infrequent. Because of the closeness between African American neighborhoods, they were also more inclined to go take the train to Harlem and visit the various theaters and clubs uptown than to go to Downtown Brooklyn. Bedford Stuyvesant also contained two large Armories, The 13<sup>th</sup> Regimental Armory on Sumner Ave. between Jefferson and Putnam Aves., and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regimental Armory on Atlantic Ave. and Bedford Ave. Both places would be used to hold large social functions, including dances. There were also numerous other multi-use halls that could be rented out for different functions, including dances and concerts.

### **The Neighborhood Scene 1930-1950**

In Bedford Stuyvesant, during the years that jazz was America's popular music and for a while after, everybody lived together. As was

common in the United States at one time, different generations of family members lived in the same house, which solidified the family structure. These generations also intersected on a daily basis in the neighborhood. Brooklyn native Fred Anderson (b. 1934), a retired musician, jazz aficionado and the oldest uncle of saxophonist Wessel Anderson III, remembers that while growing up in the 1940's there were still one or two veterans of either the Civil War or the Spanish-American war living in the neighborhood. This dynamic, translated to the social structure of the musicians living in the neighborhood, meant that the older performers and the younger, aspiring ones were all living and working within this three-mile radius for a number of years. Aside from the native-born Brooklynites, the migrants from the South and the Caribbean, there were also Harlemites who began to move to Bedford-Stuyvesant in the 1930's, in order to escape the overcrowding in that neighborhood which had become a destination for African-Americans since the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As for the musicians, they were all interacting with each other every day on the street, at clubs, restaurants/stores with jukeboxes, etc. The fact that the

residents and the musicians lived in this closed environment, and the clubs were there in the neighborhood, also made for a large population of extremely jazz-literate, but non-musician (or non-professional musician) jazz lovers. These people, such as Brooklyn transplant and jazz aficionado Donald Sangster, who was a close friend of, among others Brooklyn bassist Leonard Gaskin, and Drummers Willie Jones and Max Roach, were not only fans of the music, but have a unique perspective on them from living in the same environment. Many of them, who not only made all the local gigs, but were also with the musicians before and after the gigs, were a constant source of information and added a different perspective about the jazz scene from living amongst them. Sangster remembers of Max Roach:

"When Max spoke everybody listened...we used to get all of the information from the musicians...our style, our dress, our information...the musicians would put it out and Max was at the forefront of that. Musicians were like philosophers. These cats were serious...You couldn't just hang with these cats just talkin' trash, you know...you had to respect these cats because they were bringing you whatever....whatever was hip about the shit, you know?".<sup>6</sup>

Max would also affect the musicians. It was Roach that first participated in the sessions at Clark Monroe's Uptown House in the early 1940's along with trumpeter Vic Coulson and pianist Alan Tinney. After hearing the new sounds, and playing with Charlie Parker there, he brought word of what was going on back to Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Cecil Payne (b.1922) remembered:

"Max used to come and tell us about Bird playing, and then we went over—after hours—to the Uptown House. It could be '42 or '43. I remember Ben Webster comin in there. He was raving about Bird. And Bird was standing up playing chorus after chorus of "Cherokee."<sup>7</sup>

And of course, the aspiring musicians benefited from being so close to their heroes. The musicians' houses would end up being centers of culture also, always open to a youngster wanting to partake of what was being offered. Randy Weston remembers that while growing up, pianist Herman Chittison lived in the neighborhood. As Weston would recall while laughing with amazement, "[He] could play *any* tune in *any* key!"<sup>8</sup> The great swing Alto Player Lem Davis, who played in Eddie Heywood's 1940's small group, lived in the neighborhood, and was

also the local barber. Weston recalls that he and the other youngsters going to his house to get hair cuts, and as is still prevalent in barbershops today, the stories would flow like water. He also remembered that pianist Eubie Blake lived on Stuyvesant Ave. When he was home his door was always open, and he was always willing to impart his stories on the young kids:

**R.W.** Eubie Blake was on Stuyvesant Avenue. I used to go to Eubie Blake's house and just sit there in the corner...just sit there.

**V.G.** You used to go and listen to him play?

**R.W.** No, I'd go there to listen to him *talk*! I knew he could play, but I wanted that oral history...where these cats come from. He'd sit there and tell me about....[pauses while he creates a fictional character] "Big Leg Louie" or something at a piano contest in Baltimore that would whip everybody's butt....all those kinds of names. I used to listen.

**V.G.** Right, one of those kinds of cats that worked on the docks or something and just came in and cut everybody.

**R.W.** (Laughing) Yeah...One guy, he'd play everything in G sharp...*Everything*! Those kind of cats....(Laughing harder)<sup>9</sup>

As an early teenager, Brooklyn-born saxophonist Cecil Payne asked his father for a saxophone after hearing Lester Young. After giving his son an Alto Saxophone, one day his father heard a saxophonist practicing from the window of an apartment on the block in which he and Cecil

lived. He knocked on the door and arranged for the man to give his son Saxophone lessons. The man was altoist Pete Brown, a long time Brooklyn transplant and saxophonist who recorded with trumpeter Frankie Newton and pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith around the time that Payne would have studied with him. Cecil would study with Brown from the age of 14 to 18, and Cecil's style throughout his career would contain certain details which showed Brown's influence, especially his expressiveness on held out notes and his fast but understated terminal vibrato. Another aspect of Cecil's playing that may have been stressed by Brown is his love of the blues, which like his teacher he was more than adept at playing. In fact, Payne once said that it was Dizzy Gillespie hearing him play the blues that cemented his position in Gillespie's Big Band in 1946. Earlier that same year, he made the switch from Alto to Baritone sax while playing in a local band led by Clarence Briggs. Pete Brown would also give instruction to Brooklyn-born saxophonist Flip Phillips around this time.



Cecil's father was a tailor, and ran a tailor shop next door to a Barber Shop run by Randy Weston's Father, which was located on the corner of Pacific Ave and Kingston Ave. As Weston would describe the environment, "It was a wild scene in that shop...the Puerto Rican barbers were drinking the Hair Tonic to get a buzz, and everybody was taking and playing numbers to get by."<sup>10</sup> The two businesses shared a bathroom, and a teenage Weston used to shine shoes in his Father's shop. As a result, Weston and Payne grew up being close friends, well before they were both involved in music professionally. In another example of how the closeness within the neighborhood benefited a young musician is that across the street from the Weston home lived Eddie Haywood, the popular pianist. On numerous everyday occasions, while walking home from school, playing ball, interacting with friends outside, an adolescent Weston would have had chances to either see Haywood, or hear the sound of him practicing his piano coming from his window. This is during the times when the musicians and the athletes, particularly the Brooklyn Dodgers players, were the stars of the day, and having Haywood and other stars in the neighborhood, or

in this case literally across the street, would be akin to a young singer living next door to pop star Beyoncé, or an adolescent New York Giant fan living on the same block as Eli Manning.

Weston's father later ran a popular Lunchonette called Trios, on the corner of Sumner Avenue (Marcus Garvey Boulevard) and Putnam Avenue in Bedford Stuyvesant, beginning in the WWII years. Randy would eventually run the restaurant himself in the years before he became serious about playing music, and it became a meeting place for neighborhood residents, including many musicians both established and aspiring, where they could not only enjoy the good food, but also the conversation. It was also sometimes a popular destination for kids cutting school. Fred Anderson remembers:

"...I used to go and shoot hookey in that Joint...because I had a friend of mine named Corkey, he lived around the corner from there and when he was doing something he would say, "Well, come on let's go to Randy's Joint." He had nice tunes on the Jukebox."<sup>11</sup>

Randy's father was very socially and culturally conscious, and passed on that sense-of-self to his son. In his autobiography Weston speaks about how his father, through example, worked hard to counteract the images of black people that were prevalent during those times for him and his older sister. He also was always willing to engage in conversation about the plight of Black people worldwide with other socially conscious residents (including many musicians) about solutions to the challenges that their race was facing in the world of that time. In the book Weston also explains that "Everybody would come by and we would discuss everything from Communism in China to politics and racism, to whatever various musicians were doing." Musically, that experience would firmly plant a seed in Weston, as well as in all of the other young neighborhood kids interested in music. He recalls,

"Since my Father's Restaurant was right on the corner of Sumner Ave (renamed Marcus Garvey Ave.) and Putnam Avenue, that was my base. I worked there three years. So that where I got the chance to meet a lot of musicians. They would come to the restaurant and hang out. People like [pianist]Cliff Smalls, Duke Jordan, Marlowe Morris, Eddie Heywood.....He lived right across the street...So I was very much a lover of the music before I had

any idea that I was going to be a professional musician, but the roots were there."<sup>12</sup>

As was true of most African-American communities, the church was a powerful entity in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and the connection between it and the neighborhood's young musicians was evident in the testimonies of its musicians, and more importantly, in the playing.

Every denomination of church was represented within the neighborhood, further allowing for the residents to stay within it's borders for their everyday life. Randy Weston's Mother attended People's institutional Church on Madison Avenue and Stuyvesant Ave. He states it plainly, "We had to be in the Black Church *every* Sunday."<sup>13</sup> While growing up in the Bed-Stuy, pianist Wynton Kelly used to play organ at Bridge Street Baptist (now Bridge Street A.M.E.) located on Jefferson Ave. and Stuyvesant Ave. Later, pop singer Stephanie Mills sang at Cornerstone Baptist on Madison St. and Lewis Ave. in the 1970's. Drummer Max Roach also had roots in the neighborhood church. He attended Concord Baptist Church on Marcy Blvd. and Madison St., where his mother was a gospel singer. At the

age of eight, he played piano in Concord Baptist's summer Bible school. In an early memory, Fred Anderson remembered seeing Roach marching in the Decoration Day parades playing the bugle, as a part of the drum and bugle core of Boy Scout Troop 198, which met at Concord. The spirit and feeling of the Black church would surface in his music throughout his career, regardless of the ensemble. Especially evident beginning with the period when he was playing with trumpeter Booker Little in 1958, and the recordings he made in the 1960's with vocalist Abbey Lincoln, *We Insist*, would always have a deeply embedded spiritual feeling. The patience with which he developed a solo using thematic devices was akin to a storyteller, or even similar to the pacing of an effective sermon.

In a remarkable coincidence, his Mother's choir director, and subsequently Max's own musical director at the church for a period of time, was Edward Boatner, the famous Baritone, and acclaimed choral arranger and composer. He served as Director of Choirs at Concord Baptist Church beginning in 1937, and was the composer of such

spirituals as *Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel* and made the definitive arrangement of *Let Us Break Bread Together* used by both college and church choirs nationwide. Within a couple of years of that appointment, he was to lead a one-thousand-voice choir at the New York World's Fair in 1939. As notable as that would be to receive instruction from such an accomplished musician, Boatner's inclusion in this discussion of the jazz scene is even more warranted. Edward Boatner was the father of saxophonist Sonny Stitt. Stitt was born Edward Boatner, Jr. in 1924, and grew up in Saginaw, Michigan. When his mother and father split and she remarried, he took the surname of her second husband, Robert Stitt, although his brother and sister both kept the name Boatner. Randy Weston remembers the senior Boatner as one of the top neighborhood music instructors. His studio was located at 510 Jefferson Avenue, between Sumner Ave. and Lewis Ave. Weston remembered that he lived on Hancock St. and describes him as "One of the Best [music teachers]", and also that Stitt's sister was "a great classical pianist". When speaking about Professor Boatner and the reverence that he had for him, he paints a picture as if youngsters

would stand up straight in his presence...if a young person might have been walking loosely down Jefferson Avenue with the common neighborhood lean and roll before he came near Boatner's studio, he would straighten up and regulate his gait while passing in front of his window, before returning to his normal strut. He also remembers that Sonny Stitt was living in Brooklyn for a time; it is possible that he and his sister came to live with their father on an extended visit at some point, although they would spend the majority of their childhood growing up in Michigan.



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Desaderal Newton, Ellsworth Patterson  
The Rev. JAMES B. ADAMS, Pastor

Rev. JAS. B. ADAMS

Prof. EDWARD BOATNER

**PRICES**  
**\$1.00 - 75c - 50c**  
Tax-Exempt  
TICKETS ON SALE

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 2/19/38*

### **THREE GAMES AND A DANCE**

Bedford-Stuyvesant contained many strong Religious, Social, and Athletic entities, and they would often intersect with each other to host community functions. In one instance the Athletic and the Religious joined forces to host one of Bed-Stuy's most popular events. Known in the neighborhood as "Three Games and a Dance" it was the most popular weekend functions attended by the neighborhood youth, of middle school and high school age, before they were old enough to get into bars and clubs, and as the name suggests, it combined Basketball games and Swing dancing into a single event. The format for these events would usually involve games played by Boys and/or Girls teams separated by age. The youngest teams would play first, the intermediate-age next, and then the Semi-Professional contest would usually be the last and featured event. After the games were over, a dance band would be in place to heat things up for the jitterbugs in attendance. The Basketball and Dance format was not unique to



Bedford-Stuyvesant, or Brooklyn for that matter, as there are accounts of Basketball and Dance events from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in many locations (See Supplemental Clippings).

As would be expected, these were huge social events for the youth of the neighborhood, and the opportunity to dance to a good band was relished by them. In Bedford-Stuyvesant, there were over 20 different dance bands that played for the various social events. They were led by bandleaders such as Tommy Hamilton, Joe Allston, Evan Thompson, and the very popular Clarence Berry. These bands, based mainly in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Harlem, were part of a network of all-black New York dance bands that played for all of the events held in the city's different black neighborhoods, and would frequently travel to each other's neighborhood to play. The two main venues for these events were the auditorium of St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church located at 29 Claver Place between Fulton Street and Jefferson Ave and at the Carlton Ave. Y.M.C.A. at 405 Carlton Avenue. The most popular, and very good neighborhood Basketball team was the

Brooklyn Flashes, made up of former friends that all lived on Jefferson Avenue, and all attended P.S. 44 together (which coincidentally was right across the street from the Weston family Luncheonette). Their games were always huge events in the neighborhood, often being standing room only. At one game at St. Peter Claver in 1939, they drew close to two thousand people. In an article from the *New York Age*, it was said that "the phrase 'The Flashes are playing' is a group of magic words which spreads like wildfire and draws like adhesive."<sup>14</sup> When one band played it was a huge event, but occasionally a second band would be engaged to provide a Savoy Ballroom-type battle in Bed-Stuy.

**WAR EXTRA!**

**BROOKLYN  
FLASHES**  
(Basketball Champions)

**MEET  
ENGLEWOOD  
RAVENS**

**Brooklyn Betas  
Vs.  
Flashes Juniors**

**2 Smash Swingbands · 2**

**CLARENCE  
BERRY**  
VS.  
**EVANS  
THOMPSON**

**AT  
ST. PETER CLAVER  
AUDITORIUM  
2 Jefferson Avenue**

**NEW YEAR'S DAY  
Monday, Jan. 1, '40**  
Dancing Begins At 8 P. M.

<b>ADVANCE</b>	<b>AT DOOR</b>
<b>50c</b>	<b>65c</b>

**ADVANCE TICKETS**  
Brooklyn Offices:

**THE NEW YORK AGE**, 434  
Bunker Ave., nr. Mott St.

**AMSTERDAM NEWS**, 1660 Pul-  
ker St., nr. Lewis Ave.

**BROOKLYN VOICE**, 1621 Pul-  
ker St.

**BROOKLYN'S** **BIGGER**  
**BENEFIT**

A Share of the Proceeds Will  
Aid the Work of the Brooklyn  
Branch Nat'l Ass'n For Ad-  
vancement of Colored People.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 12/20/39*

The band's participation was serious business. Once, in 1940 the Brooklyn Flashes threatened to sue Clarence Berry for leaving the dance floor 15 minutes before the time called for in their contract.

Although normally one of the very good, but not necessarily famous local black New York Bands were engaged for the Three Games and a Dance, occasionally a name band would be brought to these events. It was always an extra treat to dance to the bands whose records you had at home in the neighborhood, and they did frequent the various stages in Bed-Stuy quite often. Such was the case on December 22, 1939, when Jimmy Lunceford and his orchestra were brought to play a "Three Games and a Dance" at St. Peter's Claver. Lunceford was especially popular in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and would make several appearances within its borders throughout the 1930's and '40's.

# LUNCEFORD IN PERSON!



**JIMMIE LUNCEFORD**

**Basketball Game and Dance**

**FLASHES vs. HOLY CROSS C.C.**

Prelims:

Roarico Girls and Whippettes Girls

**St. Peter Claver Auditorium**

Claver Pl. & Jefferson Ave.

**Friday Ev'g, Dec. 22, '39**

**ADVANCE 50c — AT DOOR 75c**

## Lunceford In Person



Brooklyn's basketball fans and jitterbugs are all het up about the coming personal appearance of Jimmy Lunceford and his orchestra at St. Peter Claver Auditorium Friday, December 22. On this date the Brooklyn Flashes meet the Holy Cross C. C. All this adds up to a rare treat.

---

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 12/9/39)*

## **THE SOCIAL CLUB DANCE SCENE**

As was common among young people of all ethnicities in neighborhoods all over the country, they would often organize and form groups, or Social Clubs. Sometimes these groups would be sponsored by a larger, established entity, such as a church, the Y.M.C.A., or a fraternal organization such as the Masons or Elks, but most often, they just consisted of a group of neighborhood friends who shared similar tastes in Music, Dress, or love of and/or participation in Athletics or some other activity. The Clubs would also stay in existence as the members grew older, and "Senior" and "Junior" divisions of the clubs would sometimes be formed. In Bedford-Stuyvesant of the 1930's and 1940's, groups of young people would form Social Clubs for just about any reason, dissolve and reform/reorganize them at will, and also give them fantastic names in the process. These names would be inspired by everything from street names, to physical descriptions of the members (Real or fantastical), to card-playing groups, and even Greek Alphabet names similar to those of Fraternal organizations. As

this selected list shows, they ran the gamut from the fanciful to the self-explanatory:

Mystic Knights of the Sea

Les Dames de L'Heure

Edmonian Social Club

The Elite of Brooklyn

The Irresistible High Hatters

The One Minute to One Social Club

Claver Boys

The Gay Señoritas

The Hampton Club

The Heartbreaking Girls

Zeta Ithna Pala

The Half Moon Maidens

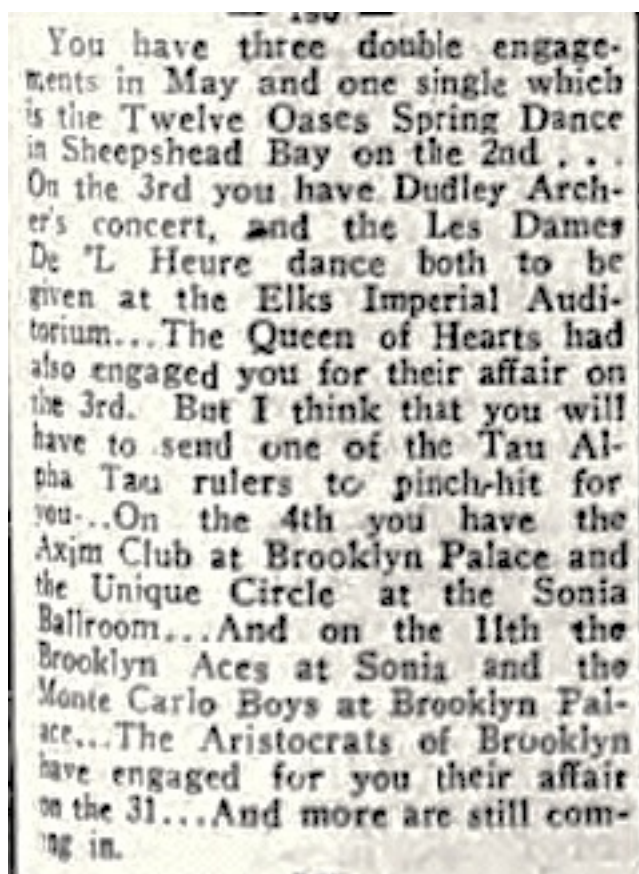
The Buffalo Steppers

Most importantly to the Jazz scene, they were in competition with each other. They usually consisted of groups of at least eight people (although many would have membership in the hundreds) who would pull their resources together and try to think of ways to socially outdo each other, which would allow them to gain status in the



neighborhood. In Bedford-Stuyvesant, which couldn't keep its feet still anyway, that meant hiring a big band and throwing a dance, plain and simple. As a part of the competitive aspect between them, if one hired a good band, another would make plans to hire the same one, and then when another club would host a dance, many times they would plan to have two bands in a Savoy Ballroom-type battle to top the previous events. There were at least 115 of these social clubs documented in Bedford-Stuyvesant during the years 1932-1960, although with the manner in which they operated, there could have easily been more. All of them presented dances, mostly in Brooklyn, but occasionally in Manhattan. Some of the clubs also had chapters in Harlem, and would frequently attend each other's events. My discovery of them has been largely through newspaper research, but not all of them advertised, because among Bed-Stuy's youth word-of-mouth was sometimes more efficient at transmitting information than any periodical. After World War II and the general demise of many of the big bands, the clubs began sponsoring dances featuring smaller groups at local venues, and in these years many of the emerging beboppers,

locally and from Harlem are seen playing in the neighborhood. Before that would happen, though, the clubs made sure that the dance bands knew their way around Bedford-Stuyvesant, as evidenced by this article advertising seven dances given by local clubs during May of 1935, six of them occurring in the neighborhood (one was held in Sheepshead Bay), and more to be announced later:

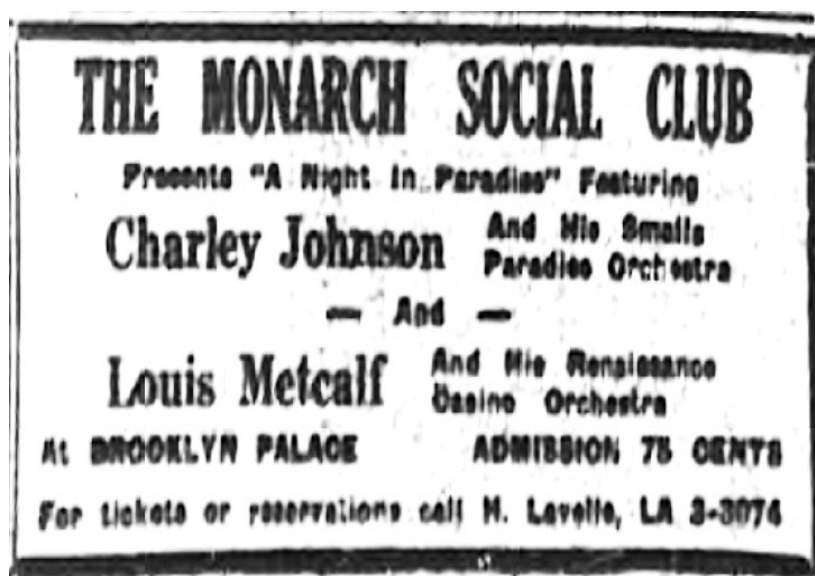


You have three double engagements in May and one single which is the Twelve Oases Spring Dance in Sheepshead Bay on the 2nd . . . On the 3rd you have Dudley Archer's concert, and the Les Dames De 'L Heure dance both to be given at the Elks Imperial Auditorium...The Queen of Hearts had also engaged you for their affair on the 3rd. But I think that you will have to send one of the Tau Alpha Tau rulers to pinch-hit for you...On the 4th you have the Axim Club at Brooklyn Palace and the Unique Circle at the Sonia Ballroom...And on the 11th the Brooklyn Aces at Sonia and the Monte Carlo Boys at Brooklyn Palace...The Aristocrats of Brooklyn have engaged for you their affair on the 31...And more are still coming in.

*The New York Age 4/20/35*

The organizations usually met at a person's house, and the meetings were regularly covered in *The New York Age*, a long-standing African-American Newspaper, which would also report on their upcoming events in order to fuel the competition between them. The clubs would present themed dances, and since they didn't own buildings, they took advantage of the many venues that were available for rent in the neighborhood, which consisted of venues of all type and size, including medium and large-sized ballrooms. In the beginning of their activity, the late 1920's, many of the same Brooklyn-based bandleaders that regularly played at the "Three Games and a Dance" events described above also played the social club dances, but in this case there were simply too many events to keep the work in-house, so bands based in Harlem were also regularly engaged. In many instances, bands that were in residence, or had just completed a lengthy engagement at many of Harlem's nightclubs would be hired. Often these bands continued using the name of the nightclub in which they had been associated with after they ended their tenure there. Bands such as Charley Johnson and his Smalls Paradise Orchestra would be brought

to Brooklyn for a club dance on an off night from their regular Harlem engagement. In fact, when the band activity at the large Downtown Brooklyn theaters tapered off in the Mid 1930's, it was this club activity that kept dance bands working regularly in Brooklyn, with the most significant activity in the Bedford-Stuyvesant Area.



*New York Age 11/24/1934*

The most important aspect of this scene was the music, and how it differed from when these bands were playing their regular engagements. In their residences at different Harlem and Brooklyn Clubs, they were playing for floorshows, and had set routines that

were often performed with little change, or opportunity for unscripted inspiration night after night. Undoubtedly the music remained at a high level during these performances, as is confirmed by the many surviving film clips from these types of engagements, but it was at the Club dances and subsequent Big Band battles that they were truly able to cut loose in ways that elevated their performances above those at their regular engagements. Simply put, they were playing more for the people during these engagements, and could feel their energy translate to their performances. The experience of a Harlem band travelling to Brooklyn and playing for screaming teenagers in their own neighborhood, or a Bed-Stuy band trying to protect their local reputation against an "outsider" from Harlem energized these performances to new heights. Also, being African-American themselves, the musicians knew the differences demanded of them while playing for an African-American crowd, as opposed to playing for an all-white or integrated audience at a Harlem nightclub. The dynamic wasn't lost after the big bands began to be seen more infrequently after WWII either, it continued after the bands playing for dances

transitioned to the smaller Bebop groups. Fred Anderson remembers this dynamic well.

**F.A.** ...Yeah, I used to see it. Yeah, because I remember that the [social] club dances in New York were better than the night club sessions...I don't know if I ever told you that.

**V.G.** No, I don't think so.

**F.A.** Yeah, the club dances were much better than the night club sessions. The night clubs, you know, they didn't play as forceful as they had to play for Black People that were dancing, you know (Laughing). You understand what I'm saying?

**V.G.** Right, Right...

**F.A.** Black audiences didn't take no [insert appropriate expletive]...If you weren't playing right, cats would Boo you off the stand... I saw Miles get booed off the stand...<sup>15</sup>

When I spoke to Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, they were in complete agreeance.:

**R.W.** ...it goes back to the Savoy Ballroom, for example. See when Duke Ellington would come in with some new charts, they had the best dancers there to hear the new charts, and they would create a new dance to go with the music. So that's a Black tradition. And the same was true here. Because [in Brooklyn], we'd to to hear Dizzy Gillespie's band at a *dance*. We'd go to hear Art Blakey and Max Roach in a battle of the drums at a *dance*. So we didn't play many clubs, most of our work was for dances. And you better play right, because if you don't.....

**D.S.** Yeah, you had to get out of there (Laughing)<sup>16</sup>

By the early 1930's, the dance band scene was in full swing, and in the time leading up to those years many musicians that had been sidemen in the most popular bands decided to strike out on their own and lead their own organizations. Most often, these bands would secure engagements at Prohibition-era speakeasies, and later, post-Prohibition nightclubs where they would play for a floorshow, but also receive needed exposure in order to establish a following. In some cases these bands were able to eventually record and establish their own fan base, and in others success eluded them, and many times the bandleader would either return to the established band in which he previously played, or join another. In any case, most of the time these leaders never became huge stars in their own right, although they are usually known through their important musical associations. These club dances were one of the ways that these bands led by former sidemen, or by performers who gained a following through theater, recordings, appearances at nightclubs, etc., kept their bands working while trying to carve out their own path to success. Such is the case in

the above clipping with trumpeter Louis Metcalf, who had recorded with Mamie Smith, Bessie Smith, James P. Johnson and others, and also spent a number of years in Duke Ellington's 1920's orchestra, all before forming his own orchestra to play at the Renaissance Casino in 1934. These types of bandleaders and their sometimes short-lived orchestras spent a significant amount of time in Brooklyn playing Social Club dances.

#### **MELODY BOYS:**

The Melody Boys "Echoes Of Rhythm" which will be staged at Sonia Ballroom November tenth featuring Willie Bryant and Gus Carrington's orchestras in a sizzling and blazing battle of jazz which has aroused much interest among the dance lovers....This will be the first time a Brooklyn organization has featured two orchestras at Sonia Hall....An "International Waltz," with representatives from a score of clubs, is now in rehearsal....They will participate in the club waltz on that evening....The Melody Boys rose to their height in the club world and gained popularity following the last subscription affair at Sonia Ballroom when they featured Teddy Hill and his flock of music makers....The affair attracted one of the largest crowds in the history of Brooklyn dances....As usual yours truly will share the honors as M. C.

*The New York Age* 11/3/34

As would be expected, these different local, New York-based bands would also contain a mix of those who would soon be bandleaders



themselves, those who would soon be in the forefront of jazz, those who would be some of the most important sidemen in some of its greatest bands, and also those who were great musicians, but not necessarily known. Willie Bryant's band, which he formed in 1934, was immensely successful and began recording soon after its debut. Cozy Cole was the band's drummer at the time, and Teddy Wilson was the band's pianist and primary arranger in 1934, just a few months before joining Benny Goodman's combo. Both would have been in the group for this Brooklyn performance. Saxophonist Ben Webster, and Benny Carter would record with Bryant in just a few months on May 8, 1935, although it is not known whether they were a part of the orchestra for this engagement. It should be noted also that the Harlem-based orchestra led by Gus Carrington, while not as famous through recordings, movie shorts, and high-profile nightclub appearances as that of Willie Bryant, was hugely popular on the New York scene. They were regularly able to pack to capacity the larger Bed-Stuy ballrooms by themselves.

Another favorite of Bed-Stuy jitterbugs was dancer and singer Cora LaRedd. She had made several appearances in the Downtown Brooklyn theaters as a part of Harlem-themed reviews during the early 1930's, as outlined in the chapter on Brooklyn Theaters. That would be the extent of her participation in those venues, as she was not viewed as being a big enough draw to headline a revue or lead her own orchestra in those places. Her opportunities to perform with her own band came in Harlem nightclubs and at club dances there and in Brooklyn. As shown in the article below, she attracted over fifteen hundred people to a spring dance at Bed-Stuy's Sonia Ballroom in 1933, which prompted a change to the larger Brooklyn Palace Ballroom, which had a capacity of 2500 persons, for this 1934 dance.

## **Tigers Club To Hold Forth On November 2**

On Friday evening, November 2, all roads will lead to Brooklyn Palace where these rip roaring Tigers will feature the very popular Cora La Redd, and her scorching Red Peppers, at their "A Thousand Nights in One" dance. A record crowd is expected and special arrangements are being made by the sponsors to accommodate the huge throng.

Last Spring, Cora La Redd drew an influx of Manhattan and Jerseyites on her appearance here in Brooklyn. Over fifteen hundred people packed and jammed the Sonia Ballroom. Due to the fact that Brooklyn Palace is more spacious and conveniently located the Tigers believe that a much larger crowd will respond to their invitations.

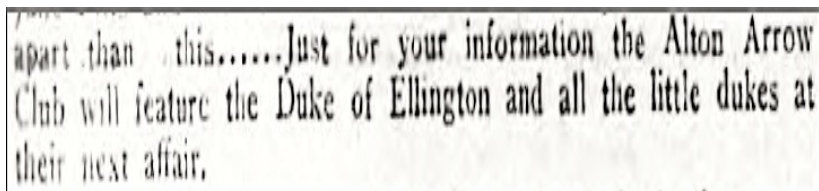
Then too the policy of giving away boxes free with the purchase of ten tickets has been adopted by this group. There is a possibility that the boys will have to exclude their entertainment if the hall is too congested. Tickets are going faster than hot cakes, so if you have not already purchased your ticket, now is the time.

*The New York Age 10/27/34*

LaRedd ended up being too big a draw even for that Ballroom, as two hundred people had to be turned away, after it was discovered that duplicate tickets had been printed and sold for the event. She certainly had quite a following in Brooklyn, as she would be a part of another

Harlem revue at the Brooklyn Majestic theater beginning just a few days after this performance.

As the competition between the clubs escalated near the end of 1934, the clubs began to engage more popular and well-known bands for certain engagements, although they still relied on the established network of dance bands for the majority of them. Although this particular event never materialized, they were definitely shooting in the right direction:



apart than this.....Just for your information the Alton Arrow Club will feature the Duke of Ellington and all the little dukes at their next affair.

*The New York Age* 11/10/34

Within the span of one week in 1935, all of these dances did occur in the neighborhood, including a performance by "Mrs. Louie Armstrong and Her Kings of Rhythm", and more importantly a visit to the

neighborhood by Don Redman and his Orchestra on November 28, 1935.

### LA MAJESTIC GIRLS

Quite a number attended the above club's dance which was given at the Elks Grill last Thursday evening. The anklers enjoyed dancing to the snappy tunes of Mac Boyce and his rhythm aces. During the entertainment programme Eric von Wilkinson acted as master of ceremonies, presenting the La Majestic Girls and their escorts.

### ONE MINUTE TO ONE

A very enjoyable evening was spent by persons attending the above club's affair last Friday evening at the Elks Rendezvous. Tommy Hamilton and his Renaissance aggregation entertained with their own brand of syncopation. Minnie Snyder, noted blues singer, sang two selections on the entertainment program. The sponsoring club and their brother Club, the One Minute After One Boys were introduced by Eric von Wilkinson who officiated as the master of ceremonies. Elsie World is president of this group.

### TWELVE OASES

With plans fully completed the above group are expecting a capacity crowd at their affair given at the new Bedford Palace on Thursday evening featuring Don Redman and his orchestra.

### MONARCH BOYS SCORE

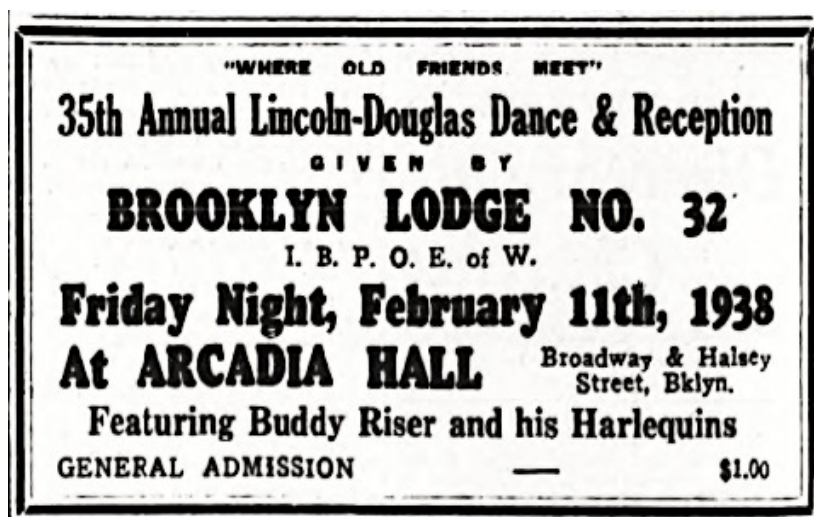
Several hundred clubfolks attended the above club's "Dance of the Century" at the new Bedford Palace on Saturday evening. The featured orchestras were Mrs. Louie Armstrong and her kings of rhythm and Paul Tremaine and his lads from Lonely Acres who entertained with their fascinating rhythms and pleasing melodies. Gilbert Baskerville is the president of the sponsoring club.

*The New York Age 11/23/35*

## **THE BROOKLYN-BASED DANCE BANDS ON THE SOCIAL CLUB SCENE**

At least twelve of these dance bands that played the pre-WWII club dance scene were based in the Bedford-Stuyvesant/Crown Heights area. The instrumentation of these groups was varied. Most were big bands, but there were a couple of smaller ensembles that also participated in the scene. The big bands usually consisted of between 11-13 pieces. Four Brass (3 Trumpets, 1 Trombone), Three Saxes (2 Alto Saxophones, 1 Tenor Saxophone), and a Four-piece rhythm section (Piano, Bass, Guitar, Drums) was somewhat the norm. Although sometimes musicians from other areas of the city would play in these bands, they were made up of mainly Brooklyn musicians, mostly from the neighborhood. Although an exact count is unobtainable, there could have been approximately 80 or so neighborhood musicians filling out the ranks of these bands during the years of the most activity. The older leaders of some of these Brooklyn bands mentioned here are the same musicians that Randy Weston remembers meeting at the "Black Musician's Clubs", modeled after James Reese Europe's Clef Club, that were present in Bedford-Stuyvesant during his adolescence. One such bandleader whom Weston remembers at the clubs was Buddy Riser, who led a group

which was popular throughout the 1930s' on the Social Club scene, "Buddy Riser and his Harlequins". Bands would fall in and out of favor at different times, and every year or so a new band would arrive on the scene and become the hot, in-demand organization, until they were replaced by another.

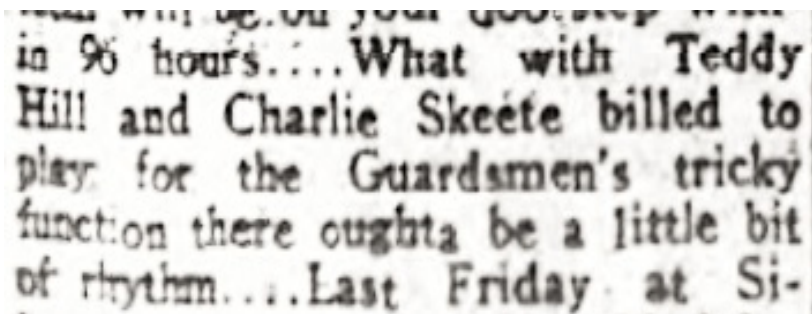


*The New York Age 2/12/38*

The aforementioned Charlie Skeets had one of the most popular bands on the Club dance circuit in the early 1930's. As outlined in the chapter on Theaters and Ballrooms, Skeets had been leading orchestras since the 1920's, and had led bands at the New York chain of dancing schools known at Danceland in Harlem and Downtown Brooklyn. He also had an eye for talent, having had Cat Anderson, Russell Procope,



and Edmond Hall in his groups at times. His original band was taken over by Claude Hopkins in 1930, causing him to form a second aggregation that played for many of the Brooklyn Club dances. Both his and Hopkins' orchestras would participate heavily in that scene. Being one of the more established Brooklyn bands, Skeets' orchestra was often paired with bands from Harlem in "Brooklyn vs. Manhattan" type battles, such at this 1936 dance presented by the "Guardsmen Social Club" with Teddy Hill's orchestra, just a year before a young Dizzy Gillespie would join it.



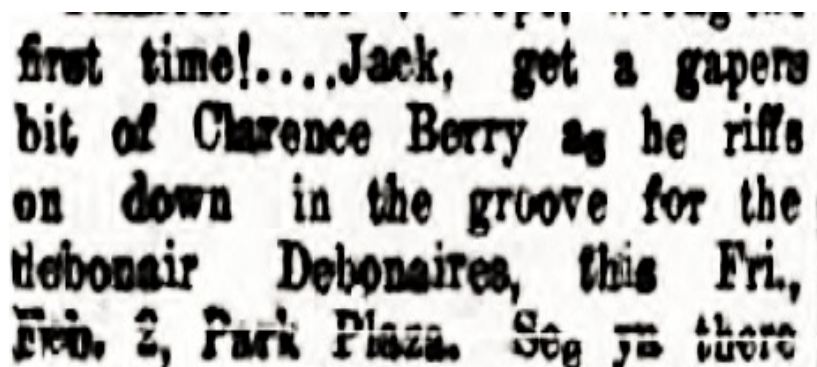
*The New York Age 5/16/36*

Clarence Berry, in 1937 was a student at Boys High School and formed a band with fellow students, Saxophonist Ray Abrams, and Bassist



Leonard Gaskin. Since Berry had access to a place to rehearse, the band became known as Clarence Berry and his band. Ray Abrams, who would go on to become an accomplished Tenor Saxophonist and arranger (he would write for Jimmy Lunceford and others), was the first arranger for the band, and when Berry formed his dance band it quickly rose to become the most popular for club functions and basketball/dance events. Ray Abrams would also soon form his own big band to play functions in the neighborhood, which would later include his younger brother, drummer Lee Abrams. Lee himself would become a very in-demand drummer, playing in Wynton Kelly's first trio and joining Lester Young's band in the 1950's. The Ray Abrams Big Band would not only work extensively in New York City, but being based in Bedford-Stuyvesant it served as a musical school for generations of young Bed-Stuy musicians for the next six decades. It would give, aspiring neighborhood musicians such as, trombonist Robert Trowers, saxophonists T.K. Blue, Jimmy Cozier, and Wessell Anderson III a chance to play with established older musicians such as baritone saxophonist Harold Cumberbatch and trombonist Matthew

Gee in the 1970's and 1980's. It is not known how long Leonard Gaskin played with Abrams initial group, but he would go on to become one of the most versatile bassists in jazz over the next seven decades.



first time!....Jack, get a gapers  
bit of Clarence Berry as he riffs  
on down in the groove for the  
debonair Debonaires, this Fri.,  
Feb. 2, Park Plaza. See ya there

*The New York Age 2/3/40*

Among the other popular local bands for these Club Dance functions was "Mac Boyce and his Rhythm Aces". While not much is known about Boyce, who's real name may have been George, he was very in-demand beginning around 1935 or so. Arthur Herbert, the aforementioned drummer who studied with Sid Catlett while he was teaching in the neighborhood played drums in his group. Recognizing the need for more bands, Herbert would go on to form his own group

(borrowing heavily from the name of his former bandleader) which made the Club Dance scene also, "Arthur Herbert and his Rhythm Masters." Another participant was the orchestra led by saxophonist Kenneth Hollon, "Kenneth Hollon and his Rhythmaires." Hollon was a Brooklyn-born saxophonist who later recorded with Slim Gaillard, Louis Jordan, Buddy Johnson, and Billie Holiday. His association with Holiday is especially significant, as he was the first musician to give her an opportunity to sing professionally in her career at a Brooklyn club at the age of 14, after Holiday moved to the borough with her mother following an incarceration in 1929.

Beginning in the fall of 1936, a saxophonist by the name of Joe Alston began to rise to the top of the local circuit, becoming the chosen ensemble for dances and Basketball games through 1937. Alston was a Brooklyn transplant, born in Savannah, Georgia, but raised in Bedford-Stuyvesant from an early age. He formed his band in early 1936, and after an engagement at the Hofbrau Cabaret on Long Island backing singer "Rubberlegs" Williams and others in a floor-show, he

was determined to keep his band working. He was known as "Brooklyn's Little King of Swing", as he was short in stature, and would go on to have a limited career in music, although he did work with and record with Clyde Bernhardt and his "Blue Blazers" in 1946, and Wynonie Harris in 1950. His brother Albert Alston, who played drums in the band, would also record with singer Betty Mays and Dud Bascomb. After securing tours of the South in 1937, he came back to Brooklyn, and his band became the preferred band of Guitarist/Vocalist Tiny Bradshaw, who would often front it for occasions that called for a large dance band. Alston's band would provide important formative-year playing opportunities for two musicians that would have long careers in jazz, both eventually ending up with Count Basie. Alston's bassist was Norman "Barney" Keenan (everyone in the band had a nickname, and Alston's own was "Shoebooty"), who would soon play bass with Cootie Williams popular swing-era big band, including during the brief time that 19-year old Bud Powell was the band's pianist. Keenan, born in South Carolina, but like Alston a resident of Bed-Stuy from an early age, would join Count Basie's "New Testament" band in

1964, and remain there until 1973. Playing third Alto Saxophone to Allston's lead was Charlie "Pee-Wee" Fowlkes, who like Cecil Payne would begin on alto but make his mark on the Baritone Saxophone. The Brooklyn-born Fowlkes was playing baritone by 1944, when he recorded with Tiny Bradshaw on what would be his and saxophonist Sonny Stitt's first record date (Regis 1010/1011 Rec'd 1944). Fowlkes joined Lionel Hampton that same year, staying with him through 1948. He also joined Count Basie's "New Testament" band at its initial inception in 1951, and remained there until 1979, shortly before his death in 1980.

Special mention should be made here of the last bandleader to claim the top popularity spot among the Bed-Stuy club dance and basketball/dance scene before the onset of World War II. It was a group led by trombonist Steve Pulliam. Aside from being one of my very favorite trombone players, he went on to become a veteran of many big bands, but most notably worked with Buddy Johnson's rocking band from 1947-1957. He would also participate on one of my

personal favorite recordings, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis' "Jaws in Orbit", which also enlisted the services of Brooklyn drummer Arthur Edgehill (Prestige 7171, Rec'd 5/1/1959). He had a rough, but big-toned, swinging approach to playing bebop, texturally the stylistic antithesis of the much smoother J.J. Johnson, although he spoke the same language. In 1939, Pulliam formed his group, "Steve Pulliam and the Manhattan Sextette", and in the continuation of the 1939 Worlds Fair held the following fall in Flushing, Queens, his group triumphed in a two-day long competition of amateur swing bands, held on July 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. The Manhattan Sextette won top honors in the small band division of the contest, which feature thirty bands in total and was sponsored by Swing Magazine. The judges at the competition were Joe Sullivan, Teddy Wilson, Bob Chester, John Hammond, Bobby Byrnes, Lou Brieze, Woody Herman, Les Brown and WNEW swing commentator Bob Bock. It was in this year that the group began its ascent to the top of the Social Club Dance circuit.

## Borough Orchestra Gets Fair's First Prize

### Steve Pulliam's Manhattan Sextette First Prizewinners In Fair Contest



**BOBBY BYRNES**, the bandleader of the hour, presents the up-and-coming Manhattan Sextette with the trophy which they won as the best of the small band division which gave forth at the World's Fair Wednesday and Thursday in SWING Magazine's nationwide contest.

Reading left to right (lower row) the boys are Duke Jordan (holding the trombone which he shouldn't be because he plays piano—and plenty; Steve Pulliam, leader of the Sextette receiving the trophy. Dig the personality smile; Charlie Hawkins, who was the drumminest lad at the

hind him, smiling Vernon Storey, second sax. To the right of Byrnes is Tillman Bolden (Bubba to you) who handles the bass fiddle. In the top row are Clio Batson, first sax and Jimmy Nottingham who is always charged with a lot of outrageous trumpet riffs.

*The New York Age 7/31/40*

After winning the competition, Alfred Duckett, the columnist with the *New York Age* who reported on all of the Brooklyn clubs' doings, became the group's manager. His well connected status with various social organizations helped the group tremendously, and also kept their name regularly in print. The personnel of the Group would feature a couple of Bedford-Stuyvesant musicians that would have significant musical careers. It consisted of:

Steve Pulliam - Trombone

Vernon Storey – Tenor Saxophone

Jimmy Nottingham – Trumpet

Duke Jordan – Piano

Tillman Bolden – Bass

Charlie Hawkins – Drums



**Merry Xmas From America's Biggest Little Band**  
**STEVE PULLIAM**  
 And His  
**MANHATTAN SEXTETTE**  
 Duke (Basie) Jordan, Vernon (Coleman) Storey, Tillman  
 (Bubba) Bolden, Clifford (Dreamy) Batson, Charlie (Krupa)  
 Hawkins and Jimmy (Erskine) Nottingham  
**OPEN FOR CLUB, BALLROOM BOOKINGS**  
 Personal Direction of ALFRED A. DUCKETT  
**504 Macon Street, Call GLENmore 2-1392**

*The New York Age 12/28/40*

Brooklyn-born Duke Jordan would, along with Max Roach, eventually join Charlie Parker's first band in 1947, and remain with him until 1949 or so. Jordan would have a long and varied career, playing and recording for the next 50+ years. His presence in the neighborhood would have an impactful presence on the post-war Bebop movement, as the Brooklyn Beboppers his age and younger would have a large part in the development of that music.

Trumpeter Jimmy Nottingham was to become one of the most recorded and in-demand players on his instrument of all times. He

would join one of Lionel Hampton's early bands in 1945, staying with him through 1948. In that year, he joined Count Basie's "Old Testament" band, and was with them until the breakup of the band in 1950. By then the word was out, and he would be a first call trumpeter for just about everybody from Tex Beneke to the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra until his death in 1978.

Pulliam himself would epitomize the New York City working musician. He was able to work in almost every genre of popular music, and also had a hand in production at various times in his career. He was captivated by Bebop in the 1940's, and living in the same neighborhood with J.J. Johnson in those formative times before both of them were 30 years of age surely had some impact on his playing. Pulliam would make the rounds in the Brooklyn and in Manhattan bands. Panama Francis remembered joining Willie Bryant's orchestra in 1947 which included Steve Pulliam on Trombone. Pulliam was able to go between the swing and Bebop bands with ease, even eventually joining an early Bud Powell sextet in 1947 alongside "Little" Benny

Harris and Rudy Williams for a time at Club Sudan in Harlem. Being associated with Buddy Johnson's early 1950's Rhythm & Blues style band positioned him to be involved with early Rock and Roll, and he was even involved in a few of the early Rockabilly sessions recorded in New York. When Latin music was on the rise in the 1950's, he played first Trombone in Mon Rivera's Orchestra in the latter part of that decade, and was in that chair when a young trombonist named Willie Colón was first aspiring to play in the group. During this same time, he was still able to swing with the best of them, as shown on the aforementioned Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis recording from 1959. When pianist Cedar Walton moved to Brooklyn from his native Texas in 1955, he remembered "a guy named Steve Pulliam who conducted the Jam Sessions"<sup>17</sup>. Pulliam also seemed to be one that bandleaders trusted when recommending musicians for their bands, and musicians held him in high esteem because of it. Historian Phil Schaap remembers numerous people, such as Duke Jordan, and others, who throughout their careers worked with many more well-known jazz musicians who would proudly proclaim when speaking about the well

known musician, "Yeah, that was great, but I worked with *Steve Pulliam!*"



Cecil Layne

WE SWING TOO— Two Metropolitan (N.Y.) chapter Jack and Jill committee members "dig T-Bone sound" of *Steve Pulliam*. Session was held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel when final plans were made for Jazz Civil Rights Part II, held at the Birdland on October 25 for the benefit of the NAACP. At left is Mrs. Marjorie Rochester, with Mrs. LaValla Simmons standing at the right. Talent in the Birdland concert included "Count" Basie, Joe Williams, and Timmie Rogers.

*Crisis Magazine*-November, 1959

**LISTING OF BROOKLYN-BASED BANDS ON THE  
NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB DANCE SCENE**

**(A complete listing of all the participating bands is compiled in  
the Appendices section)**

Clarence Berry and his Orchestra

Joe Allston and his Orchestra

Kenneth Hollon and his Rhythmaires

Charlie Skeete's Orchestra

Buddy Riser and his Harlequins

Mac Boyce and his Rhythm Aces

Fess Gittens and His Phanphanalians

Marty Middleton and his Orchestra

Leon Williams and his crew of Pirateers

Bill World and His Orchestra

Arthur Herbert and his Rhythm Masters

Kenny Watts and his Killowatts

Steve Pulliam and His Manhattan Sextet

## **THE LOCAL BALLROOMS**

### **The Sonia Ballroom**

Further supporting Bedford-Stuyvesant's self-reliant nature, the majority of the functions that were presented by the different social organizations were held at venues within the neighborhood, with the exception of the occasional special event out at Coney Island or Sheepshead Bay. There were ballrooms and theaters of different sizes that were able to accommodate events large and small, many modeled after prominent Manhattan theaters. As the neighborhood developed into an African-American community in the 1920's and the need for venues to support its social organizations became greater, newer venues were built, or older ones were repurposed.

The Sonia Ballroom was located on Bedford Avenue, and spanned an entire block between Madison Avenue and Putnam Avenue. It was a spacious, but not excessively large Roseland or Savoy-type venue in

the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant that held around 1500 persons. As with all of the grand neighborhood ballrooms, different types of functions were held there under the auspices of Schools, Social Clubs, Fraternal Organizations, Businesses, etc. In the 1940's, It even served as the meeting place for a group called "The Centurions", a group of African-American NYPD officers who formed to discuss problems on the police force that couldn't be brought to its attention through normal channels because of discrimination. It was looked upon as an all-purpose sized ballroom, good for the function of average size, although when an organization could afford to, and had gained enough status/following to put on an event on a larger scale, featuring the more famous name bands, they would usually look toward the three 2500-person plus capacity ballrooms in the neighborhood. As shown by this picture of Clarence Berry and His Orchestra at the Sonia Ballroom in 1939, It was an elegant establishment, with ample room for dancing:



*The New York Age* 10/14/39

Of course, with a ballroom of this type at their disposal, the ever-present Big Band battles would also take place at the Sonia:

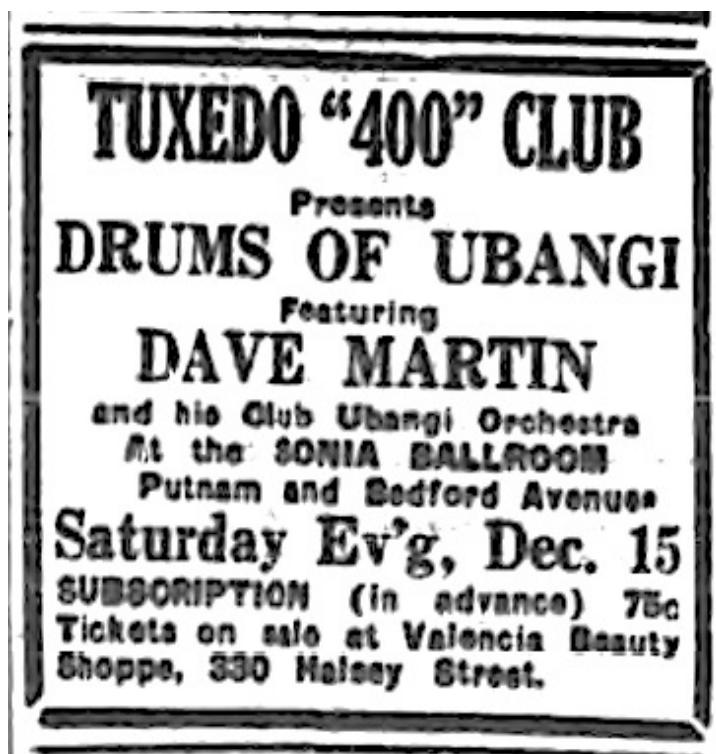


**BROOKLYN ACES**  
 Present  
**. Aces On Parade .**  
 Featuring FESS GITTENS And His  
 PHANPHANALIANS  
 — And —  
 MAO BOYCE And His Rhythm Aces  
**At Sonia Ballroom**  
 Putnam and Bedford Aves.  
**Saturday Eve, Nov. 24.**  
 Admission 75c. — Res. \$3.00  
 Edgar Goddard, 66 Lefferts Place

*The New York Age 11/17/34*

**Echoes Of Rhythm**  
 Presented by  
**MELODY BOYS CLUB**  
 — FEATURING —  
**WILLIE BRYANT**  
 and his Orchestra  
 Va.  
**GUS CARRINGTON**  
 and his Orchestra  
**SONIA BALLROOM**  
 Bedford and Putnam Avenues  
**Saturday Ev'g Nov. 10**  
 SUBSCRIPTION — 25 CENTS


*The New York Age 10/20/34*



***The New York Age 12/1/34***

In 1941, *The New York Age* sponsored a function at the Sonia Ballroom which surely was one of the highlights of the neighborhood happenings. A contest and dance was held to find the city's "Number one Sepia Bathing Beauty". An all star panel of celebrity judges was assembled, and Steve Pulliam, still riding his success of the previous year, was engaged to provide the dance music.

**HEY!! Calling All . . . Bathing Beauties!**



Valuable and Costly  
Awards As Prizes In

**THE NEW YORK AGE'S**

Quest For The City's Number One  
**SEPIA BATHING BEAUTY**  
You Might Be The Lucky One To Win The Title Of  
**"Miss New York City"**  
AND RECEIVE

- 1 A Beautiful Silver Loving Cup  
(THE JESSE L. VARN TROPHY)
- 2 16-Jewel Lady's Bulova Watch
- 3 Complete Beach Outfit

Cash Awards \$10 -- \$5 Cash Awards  
Awarded To Second And Third Prize Winners

CONTEST JUDGES:

**CAB CALLOWAY**  
**CANADA LEE**  
**BILL ROBINSON**  
**JOE BOSTIC**  
**ERSKINE HAWKINS**

Who Will Positively Appear In Person  
AT THE

**Bathing Beauty Contest Ball**

SPONSORED BY

**The New York Age**  
ON THE EVENING OF  
**MONDAY, JULY 21, 1941**  
**At SONIA BALLROOM**  
PUTNAM and BEDFORD AVENUE, BROOKLYN

DANCE MUSIC BY  
1941's Newest Swing Sensation  
**Steve Polliam And His Manhattan Sextette**  
Featuring CAROLE TENNLEY

Advance Tickets: 50c — At Door 65c  
RESERVATIONS \$1.00

For Contest Details: Read The New York Age, Every Blank on  
Page 7. Listen to JOE BOSTIC'S Daily Broadcasts "SEPIA  
SERENADE" Station WC3W (1600 Kilocycles) from 5 to 5:30 p. m.

TICKETS and RESERVATIONS: Brooklyn Branch, New York  
Age, 442 Sumner Avenue, near Decatur Street, SLOAN 6-2811.

The New York Age 7/12/41

**The smaller neighborhood ballrooms:****Grand Central Palace/The Elks Ballrooms/Rose Ballroom**

There were a number of additional venues located in the neighborhood of various sizes which were also utilized often for dances and other events. A smaller hall called Grand Central Palace was located at 506 Grand Avenue, just off of Atlantic Avenue. It was also known as the Grand Royale at different times, and aside from serving as a meeting place for many of the clubs, occasionally a dance would be presented there also. Along with the Sonia Ballroom, three of the most popular venues in which to present dances on a normal-sized scale (for the purposes of this explanation, I am defining "normal-sized" as 1500 persons or less) were located in a single building owned by the local lodge of the Order of the Elks, Elks Home at 1068 Fulton Street between Classon Ave. and Franklin Ave. The Elks rooms for rent were available beginning in 1932, and at the time were largest halls owned and operated by African-Americans in Brooklyn. Later, in 1950-1951

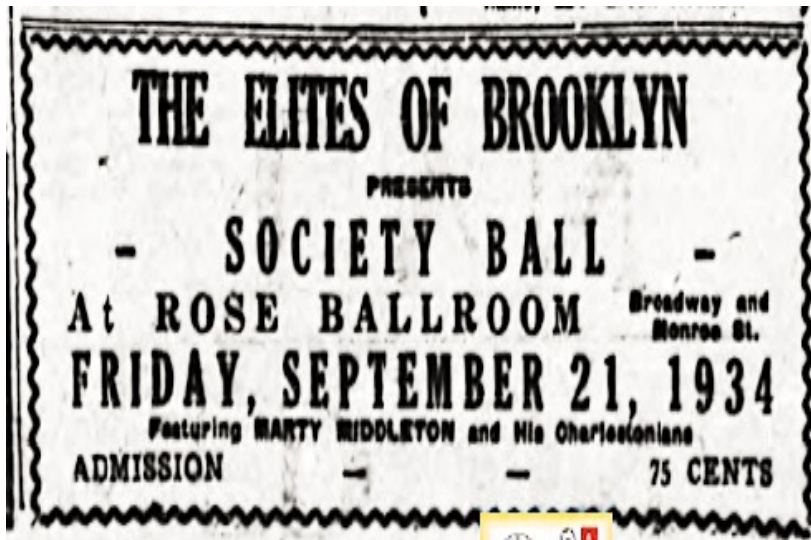
this was also the location of the aforementioned Sunday night engagements of Art Blakey's 17 Messengers, and after Blakey's run at the club ended, Ray Abrams and Brooklyn trombonist Matthew Gee, then going by the stage name "Melody Matt" would both lead the house bands at the club. The Elks home and would present cabaret style floor shows throughout the 1950's, and would be the location of the occasional for-rent jazz concert well into the 1980's. Inside the building owned by the fraternity were a number of different sized multi-purpose rooms that could be rented out for functions, including the Elks Grill, Elks Rendezvous, and the Elks Crystal Ballroom.



*The New York Age 3/2/31*

Also just off of Broadway, the border with the neighborhood of Bushwick, was the Rose Ballroom. It was located in the Brooklyn Shubert Theater building at 850 Monroe Street, and was in use by neighborhood Social clubs as early as 1927. Described as “one of the prettiest and coziest halls in Brooklyn”<sup>18</sup> it was also used often in the early days of the African-American presence in the neighborhood before the building of ballrooms that were more centrally located.





*The New York Age 9/22/34*

### **The Brooklyn Palace**

The Brooklyn Palace was located at 127 Rockaway Avenue, between Hull and Sommers Street, just off of Fulton Street, and near the neighborhood's northeastern border with the Bushwick and East New York neighborhoods. In the 1930's those neighborhoods were predominantly European and Jewish, respectively, and the activity at the Brooklyn Palace reflected usage by all of the surrounding neighborhoods, as opposed to halls such as the Sonia Ballroom and the Bedford Ballroom, both of which were located in the heart of the neighborhood and used predominantly by African-Americans living

there. There were several businesses in Brooklyn operating with the same name, with the first being The Brooklyn Palace (Lanes), a prominent bowling alley which held professional matches in Downtown Brooklyn, which operated from the late 1800's until around 1930 or so. The Brooklyn Palace (Ballroom or Theater, depending on the source) seems to have been in use as a venue for social club functions beginning in 1928 and was intended to be the Brooklyn counterpart of the famous Palace Theater in Manhattan, at the very least through name recognition. It is not certain whether that was an official business affiliation or not. It was a larger hall than the Sonia Ballroom, and as the various events began to draw more and more people, and the African-American presence moved further north up Fulton Street in the 1930's, it became the preferred place for events featuring more prestigious name bands which would fill its larger capacity. Events hosted by African-American Organizations didn't begin to be held there in significant numbers until around 1934 or so.

In the beginning of that period of regular African-American events at the Brooklyn Palace, the band that was able to pack the Brooklyn



Palace was that of Gus Carrington. After throwing events at smaller venues, The Alton Arrow Club took a major leap of faith and decided to host an event there. They were faced with the task of selling a thousand more tickets than needed to fill the Sonia Ballroom and have Carrington's band as the draw, but it turned out to be a huge success and set the stage for even larger events in the future.

**SAT. May 26**  
1 9 3 4

**The Alton Arrow Club**  
Presents an Ace Attraction  
**Dance - -La - Mode**  
- FEATURING -  
**GUS CARRINGTON**  
And his MUSICAL FASHION PLATES  
**At BROOKLYN PALACE**  
Hickway Avenue and Fulton Street  
Reservations FREE with purchase of 10 Tickets  
E. Radman, 52 Lefferts Place; MAin 2-8025

Subscription  
**50c**  
TAX Not Inc.

*The New York Age 5/26/34*



*The New York Age 6/2/34*

It seems that once this even went well, the floodgates were opened, and all of the clubs used the Brooklyn Palace as the benchmark for club dance success. Of course, they tried to outdo each other. Claude Hopkins famous orchestra was brought to the Palace on October 24, 1934, in another huge success. This engagement was followed by two aforementioned events from the beginning of this section, a dance featuring Cora La Redd and her Red Peppers, and another dance

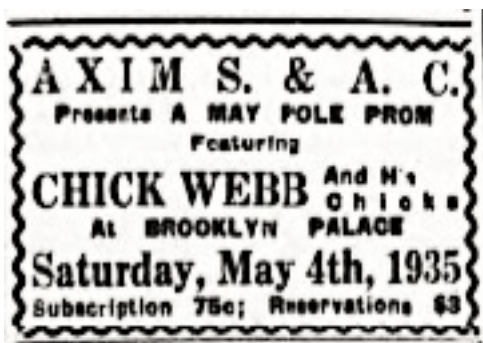
staging the battle of the Harlem Bands with Charley Johnson and his Smalls Paradise Orchestra vs. Louis Metcalf and his Renaissance Casino Orchestra, on November 2 and November 28, respectively.



*The New York Age* 10/20/34

The ante was upped once again when the Axim Social and Aid Club, which would soon be the forerunner in bringing name bands for Bed-Stuy social club events, brought Chick Webb's orchestra to the

Brooklyn Palace on May 4, 1935. Ella Fitzgerald had only recently joined Webb, and was not yet a big enough star to get her own mention in the press, although that would change very soon. The Axim Social Club was also beginning to establish itself as the frontrunner in bringing big name bands to the neighborhood Social Club scene.



*The New York Age 4/2/35*

Within one week of each other in 1936, November 7<sup>th</sup> and November 14<sup>th</sup>, two dances featuring two great bands were featured in Bedford-Stuyvesant ballrooms. The first was at the Bedford Ballroom with Jimmy Lunceford and his Orchestra, and the second at the Brooklyn Palace with Lucky Millinder.

prize for the best dancers and  
 thass what they were....There  
 wasn't enough space to wiggle  
 one's toes in the Bedford Ball-  
 room on Saturday when the so-  
 cially-impregnable Axim Social  
 Club presented Jimmy Lunceford  
 and his Swing Band for the ap-  
 proval and enjoyment of a couple  
 of thousand Brooklynites .... The  
 menu for this week presents a  
 pleasant entertainment in store in  
 the shape of the Falcon's swing  
 at the Ashland Y on Friday even-  
 ing .... The Falcons, ever-gaining  
 in popularity among Brooklynites,  
 promise you an evening you'll  
 never forget. Can't we see you  
 there?....Joining the caravan of  
 big-timers who are favoring  
 Brooklyn with their presence is  
 the clowning and talented Lucky  
 Millinder, whom the Juanita Co-  
 eds bring forth in their dance at  
 Brooklyn Palace this Saturday  
 nite....

*The New York Age* 12/14/36

The first dance mentioned in the previously shown article was the first time that the Axim Club brought Lunceford to the neighborhood, to the newly built Bedford Ballroom in 1936. They seemed to have a particularly good relationship with him, as they would also hire him and his orchestra to play their annual ball in 1936, 1938, 1939, and

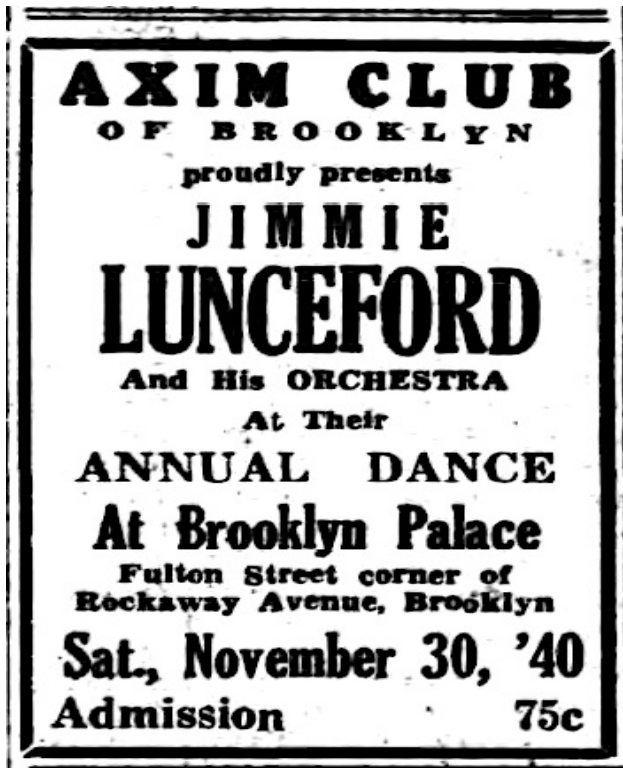
1940. The first two events took place at the Bedford Ballroom, and the last two were held at the Brooklyn Palace.

**Axim Scores Again; Will  
Bring Lunceford To Town**

Jimmi Lunceford, matinee idol of the jitterbugs and the exponents of the "leky" arts, appears here in Brooklyn under sponsorship of the Axim Social Club on Saturday evening, November 11, at the Brooklyn Palace, Rockaway avenue, near Fulton street.

For the past few years Axim has held the spotlight for its presentation of name attractions. Duke Ellington, Andy Kirk and Erskine Hawkins are but a few of these who have played for the club's vast following. Cain Young is president of the organization.

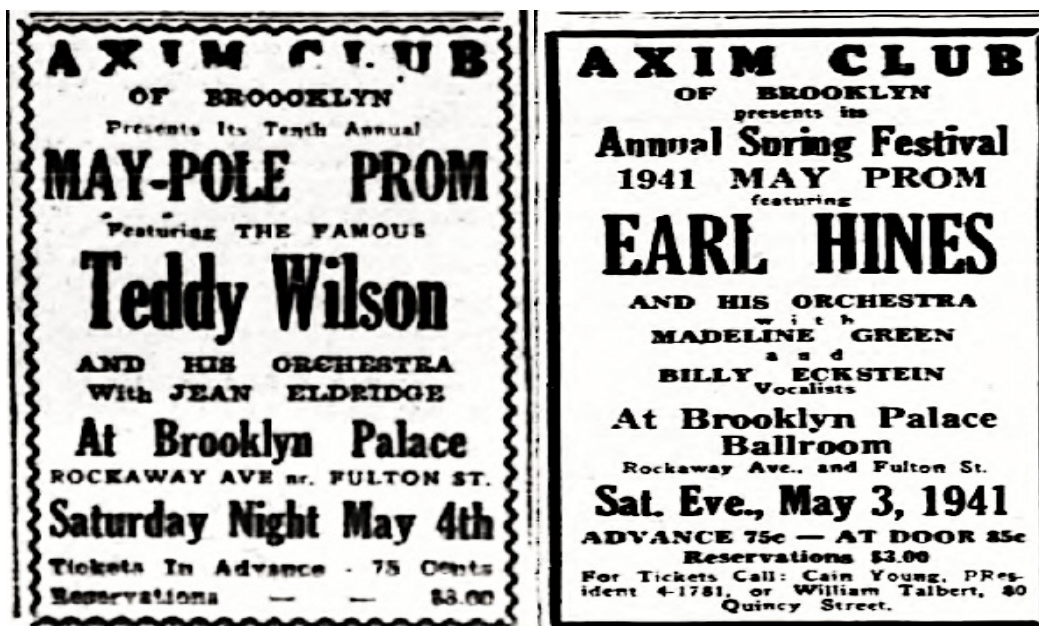
*The New York Age 11/11/39*



*The New York Age 12/30/40*

With the Axim Club on a roll, they continued sponsoring even more dances featuring big name bands. For their annual "May-Pole Prom" also in 1940, they brought Teddy Wilson and his orchestra, and the 1941 prom featured Earl Hines along with his new male vocalist, Billy Eckstine.





*The New York Age* 4/27/40

4/26/41

The Brooklyn Palace would continue being the favorite of this particular club, although it was by no means their private domain, and other clubs would get in on the act in the future. By 1936 another neighborhood ballroom, The Bedford Ballroom was in full swing and as will be seen, began to compete with the Brooklyn Palace for the most anticipated Social Club dances, breaking the Monopoly that the venue held on the hosting the events featuring the most prestigious name bands. In 1943, Count Basie played the Palace, and Billy Eckstine, who had by 1944 formed his own band based on his success with Earl



Hines, brought his highly Bebop-oriented big band to the hall that year along with Dizzy Gillespie and Sarah Vaughan.



### **The Bedford Ballroom(Bedford Palace)**

The Bedford Ballroom was located at 1153 Atlantic Avenue, just across the street from the massive 106<sup>rd</sup> Regiment Armory building, on the second floor of a building which housed an indoor ice skating rink.

Being located 2 ½ miles further south (in the direction of Flatbush Avenue) than the Brooklyn Palace placed it more in the heart of the neighborhood, and when it began operating in November 1935, it began to immediately take some of the Social Club business away from the Palace. Interestingly enough, in what was probably a deliberate attempt to divert attention from the Brooklyn Palace, the Bedford Ballroom was sometimes known as and referred to in print as the "Bedford Palace" during its first year of operation. Its presence also speaks to the amount of demand that was present within Bedford-Stuyvesant, as there were at least seven ballrooms of various sizes in operation in the neighborhood when it opened its doors. The Bedford Ballroom was also not strictly a venue for rent. A little more than a month after its opening, weekly dances held on Sunday featuring two

bands began there, although dances were also presented other dates not reserved for Social Club activity. This allowed for consistent 3-day weekends full of dancing in the neighborhood during the ballroom's existence, as most Social Club dances were held on Friday and Saturday (although the occasional Thursday dance was not uncommon).

It is also interesting to note that the Bedford Ballroom was less than 2 ½ miles away from the Brooklyn Roseland, located on Fulton Street and Flatbush Avenue and was strictly for dancing seven nights a week. But as is also the case in the whole of New York City, travelling 2 ½ miles in Brooklyn is similar to travelling 10 miles in any other American city. Travelling that seemingly short distance in 1935 would have brought you through several white neighborhoods which at the time were fighting to keep African-Americans out, which further isolated the Bedford Ballroom within its own community. Interestingly enough, it was the only ballroom that operated with a policy similar to that of the Brooklyn Roseland in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and could be

seen as an attempt to bring the same type of continuous dancing presence to the neighborhood, whether sponsored by a Social Club or not. In fact its manager, Cain Young, announced in its initial newspaper advertisements that he had plans to feature name bands regularly at the theater. It became the premier spot for dancing in the neighborhood, and caught the attention of jitterbugs from all over the New York City Area. A *New York Age* article describing a visit from skeptical Harlemites describes the scene:

“We haven’t been to Brooklyn in a long while and since promised by [Alfred] Duckett [Brooklyn writer for the *New York Age*] we couldn’t have a Beta time elsewhere we trucked over to the Brooklyn Savoy called the Bedford Ballroom...Now that it’s over we don’t mind admitting we weren’t so sure what with so much competition that it was going to be jam-up...but did we get fooled, oh boy, ‘n’ how!...First thing we looked for, good-looking fellows, and there were plenty there from Brooklyn itself, Long Island, Jersey, Manhattan, everywhere...Where’ll I start! How much shall I tell you...Well, for the benefit of you fellows, there were also gangs of lovely ladies there from the same places mentioned...Especially Jersey City...”<sup>19</sup>

The Ballroom, which opened on November 9, 1935, had originally planned for a grand opening featuring Tiny Bradshaw’s Orchestra six

days earlier, but an unknown delay prevented it from happening on that day. It is not known whether Bradshaw was able to play the rescheduled opening date on the 9<sup>th</sup>, but the first of the Club Dances held there were less than a week away, featuring Blanche Calloway's Orchestra on Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, and another featuring Don Redman's orchestra on November, 21<sup>st</sup>.

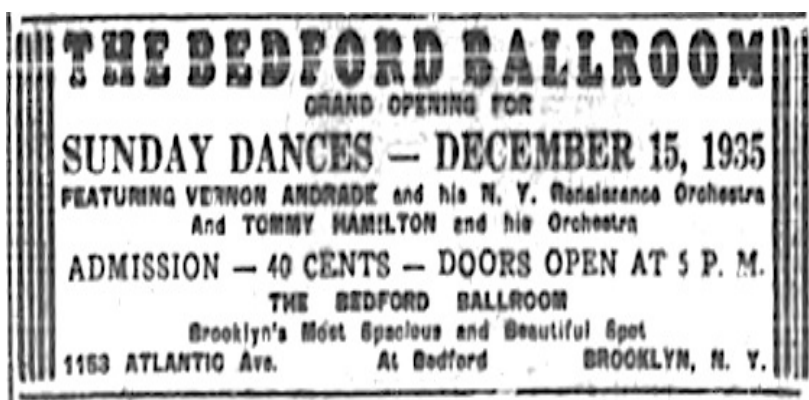
**Entre Nous Bridge Club**  
 PRESENTS **THE QUEEN OF JAZZ**  
**BLANCHE CALLOWAY**  
 And Her RADIO ORCHESTRA  
**FRIDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 15, 1935**  
**At The Bedford Ballroom** 1153 Atlantic Avenue  
 Brooklyn, N. Y.  
 TICKETS, 75 CENTS AT DOOR 25 CENTS  
 Reservations \$3.00 Seating 3-8300

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**Don Redmon** and his C.B.S. Orchestra  
 FEATURED BY  
**THE TWELVE OASES**  
**Thurs. NOV. 21st**  
**At Bedford Ballroom** Atlantic and Bedford Ave.  
 TICKETS \$1.00 — AT DOOR \$1.10  
 Boxes Seating 8 \$5.00. Geo. Miller 115 Bedford St.

*The New York Age* 11/15/35

The Sunday Dances began on December 15, 1935, and within one week, Jimmy Lunceford made his first appearance at the new hall.



*The New York Age 12/15/35*



*The New York Age 12/21/35*

In June of 1936, Bedford-Stuyvesant native Lena Horne (b. 1917) made a rare appearance back in the neighborhood at a Club Benefit Dance presented at the Bedford Ballroom by a group known as the "Debs About Town". They engaged Noble Sissle as master of Ceremonies, and Lena was being featured with Sissle's Orchestra at the time. The Social Club may have pulled the strings of sisterhood to secure the presence of Horne and Sissle, as she was a member of that club going back to her Brooklyn days while growing up on Macon (pronounced MAY-con) Street. The Bedford Ballroom opened up their 1936 Sunday Dance series on November 1<sup>st</sup>, with another Brooklyn vs. Manhattan event featuring Louis Metcalf and his Orchestra, and the local orchestra led by pianist Kenny Watts, "Kenny Watts and his Kilowatts." Also present for that opening were the entire review from Dickie Wells' club, which featured among others, Billie Holiday. The Axim Social club dance mentioned earlier which featured Jimmie Lunceford was held on the following Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, and on Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, the entire grand opening affair was repeated with Metcalf's and Watts' orchestras. The second time however, Billie Holiday, Valda

(the Fan Dancer), and performer Stepin Fetchit accompanied the show instead of the entire Dickie Wells revue.

<p>Grand Opening Of The  <b>Bedford Ballroom</b>          1153 Atlantic Avenue          Brooklyn, N. Y.  <b>Sun. Nov. 1, 1936</b>          FEATURING 2 BANDS  <b>LOUIS METCALF</b>          AND HIS ORCHESTRA  <b>KENNY WATTS</b>          AND HIS KILOWATTS          Also THE ENTIRE REVUE From  <b>DICKIE WELLS</b>          (Harlem Night Spot)          FEATURING  <b>ETHEL FRAY</b>          (Heat Wave)  <b>BILLY HOLLIDAY</b>          (Recording Artist)  <b>VALDA HATTEN</b>          (Sensational Fan Dancer of Chicago)  <b>Admission — 40 Cents</b>  <b>DOORS OPEN AT 7 P. M.</b>  <b>Dancing Every Sunday Nite</b></p>	<p><b>LOUIS METCALF</b>          PRESENTS  <b>STEPIN FETCHIT</b>  <b>Orlando Robeson</b>  <b>Billy Halliday and Valda</b>          At The  <b>BEDFORD BALLROOM</b>          1153 Atlantic Avenue, B'klyn  <b>Sunday, Nov. 15, 1936</b>          Two Ace Dance Bands  <b>LOUIS METCALF</b>          and his ORCHESTRA  <b>KENNY WATTS</b>          and his KILLOWATTS  <b>Admission — 40 Cents</b>  <b>Doors Open At 7 P. M.</b>  <b>Dancing Every Thursday Nite</b>  <b>Ladies Free — Gents 35c</b></p>
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*The New York Age* 10/31/36

11/14/36

The Brooklyn vs. Manhattan format seemed to be popular at the Bedford Ballroom, because in most of the Sunday dances going forward there was almost always a Brooklyn-based orchestra on the bill along with a big-name Harlem orchestra. April 11, 1937 brought a



visit by Andy Kirk and his Clouds of Joy, featuring Mary Lou Williams and Pha Terrill, pitted against local rising celebrity Joe Allston and his Orchestra.

**TO APPEAR IN BROOKLYN**



The personable ANDY KIRK, maestro of the irrepressible Clouds of Joy, who with his famous key-tickler, the charming Mary Lou Williams, will make the customers happy at the Bedford Ballroom on Sunday, April 11. The local little King of Swing, Joe Allston and his Orchestra are billed for the same program. Pha Terrill, vocalist, with the Kirk unit will also be among those present. (Other picture on page 9.)

*The New York Age 4/10/37*

By the time Chick Webb was brought to the Bedford Ballroom in May of 1937, Ella Fitzgerald was also receiving equal billing. This dance was again presented by the Axim Club, which benefited from an "insider" relationship with the ballroom, as its manager, Cain Young, was also a member. This may offer some insight as to why seemingly all of the club's dances were presented at the Bedford during its existence, and some special financial arrangement may have allowed the club to consistently afford big-name bands for their functions.

**SPRING FEVER BLUES**

Two black and white photographs are shown side-by-side. The left photograph is a profile view of a woman, Ella Fitzgerald, looking towards the right. The right photograph is a frontal view of a man, Chick Webb, looking towards the camera. Both images are somewhat dark and grainy, typical of older newspaper prints.

Those Spring Fever Blues will fly away when on May 1 at the Bedford Ballroom the popular Axim Club of Brooklyn will swing out another of its famous swingdingers. Serving up the music will be Ella Fitzgerald and Chick Webb. You know what those names mean in the field of entertainment.

***The New York Age 4/10/37***

In what has to be competition for one of the most swinging two-day periods in history, on November 26<sup>th</sup> a club known as the Beta Boys presented their Second Annual Dance at the Bedford Ballroom featuring Edgar Hayes and his Orchestra, with Kenny Clarke occupying the drum chair. He was not yet well-known by name in 1937, although his unconventional accents while swinging had caught the attention of more than a few dancers and bandleaders. Two days later, for the Sunday Night Dance, Count Basie and His Orchestra, along with Billie Holiday and Jimmy Rushing played the Ballroom. The anticipation must have been too much for *The New York Age*, as in the advertisements for the two events, pictures of Holliday and Clarke were mistakenly switched:



He's the drummer man in the band is the sent above. And the band he's in is the band that will swing out for the Beta Seniors dance on November 26th at the Bedford Ballroom, Edgar Hayes and his sensational masters of swing. See you there.

***The New York Age 11/20/37***



*The New York Age* 11/20/37

The next year Count Basie and his orchestra, along with Billie Holiday and Jimmy Rushing (mistakenly given the name "Billy Rushing" in advertisements for the event) would be brought back to the Bedford Ballroom on June 3, 1938. By this time the Bedford Ballroom, in

existence for almost three years, had become the premier location in the neighborhood for dances, both sponsored by social Clubs, and otherwise. It's convenience in location, spaciousness, and versatility catapulted it to the top of the local event world. The Sunday dances were hugely popular, with reports regularly of near capacity crowds. It was even the location, on June 22, 1938, of the "Gala Championship Ball", presented as event in honor of the Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling rematch being held that evening. It was presented by the Sportsmen Club of Brooklyn, and the Orchestra of Freddie Williams was engaged to keep the feet moving. The dance began well before the fight was to begin, but a break in the proceedings to listen to a radio broadcast of the contest over the ballroom's sound system was scheduled, followed by, of course, more dancing.



## Ball To Be Given By Sportsmen In Honor Of Joe Louis



As JOE LOUIS rooters all over the country writhed in impatience and anxiety for the big evening when the Brown Bomber defends his world championship title against the assault of Max Schmeling, the Sportsmen Club of Brooklyn made final arrangements for a gala CHAMPIONSHIP BALL to be held at the Bedford Ballroom, Bedford and Atlantic avenues, Brooklyn, on the evening of Wednesday, June 22nd. Featuring the music of Freddie Williams and his stellar orchestra, the dance will also have the unique feature of a broadcast of the fight right from the ballroom floor through a complete and clear broadcast system. Officers of the Sportsmen Club are: Bernard C. Freeman, president; Jesse L. Vann, vice-president; Clarence Sherman, treasurer and Alfred A. Duckett, secretary. The dance is slated to begin at 9 o'clock with continuous dancing until three, except for the short fight broadcast during which hundreds of Brooklyn fans will hear the Brown Bomber knock Der Moxie loose from his dental work.

*The New York Age 6/25/38*

In reports from different events held at the Bedford Ballroom, crowds befitting the hall's 2500-person capacity were almost always reported,

with capacity crowds or larger occurring at those functions which featured big-name bands. At one point in 1937, there was even a report that the owners were considering building an extension onto the ballroom to accommodate the overflow that was occurring regularly at its events. It makes little sense that in June 1939 it should close suddenly, with forthcoming club dates and Sunday dances still on the books for the next few months. The only official reason given by its manager was that the corporation which operated the ballroom was in financial ruin and filing for bankruptcy, which seems unlikely given the success of the ballroom. In a moment of pure speculation, I would like to offer one scenario. There had never been an entity in Bedford-Stuyvesant which consistently brought in a mix of the best local bands, the best name bands, and was also able to boast regular crowds of thousands of people every weekend for almost four years. With its ability to take Social Club business away from "for rent" halls of similar size such as the Brooklyn Palace, and its ability to compete with businesses such as the Brooklyn Roseland, while being less than three miles away from either establishment, there would have been ample



reason for those and other entities to want the Bedford Ballroom to be closed.

Just three months after its closing, in a September 1939 *New York Age* article entitled "Wanted: For Local Ickies' One Up-To-Date Dancehall", Brooklyn writer Alfred Duckett was already lamenting the ballroom's tenure as "The Good Old Days. He goes on to say:

"The days of the old Bedford Ballroom were the days highlighted by such outstanding maestro and bandmasters as Jimmy Lunceford, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Andy Kirk, Erskine Hawkins, Blanche Calloway and a host of others.

Those were the days when you could see the latest hops in fast tempo with exhibitionists taking the center of the floor right in front of the bandstand and performing to the delight of an encircling, admiring crowd.

....Gotham dance emporium like Savoy, Renny, Lido, and the rest have profited by the breakdown in available local dance halls. An ambitious few of the dance-lovers, not to be cheated of their terpsichorean capers, trickle citywards as dusktime, but this is "nix" with the majority of the boys and girls who just can't see that extra carfare and "that wee hour cab."

...All the club bookings which were going the way of Bedford are now being taken to New York ballrooms, although there are any number of clubs which are no longer interested in giving dances. They don't feel they could draw their following to the city ad that the risk would be to great."<sup>20</sup>

## **The Arcadia Ballroom/Arcadia Hall**

Arcadia Hall was a massive multi-use complex with an address of 918 Halsey Street. It was located in the northernmost section of Bedford-Stuyvesant, at its border with the neighborhood of Bushwick, at Broadway and Halsey Streets. On its footprint today stands a New York City Housing Authority Senior Center, the Saratoga Square Houses, but by standing at it's front door and looking northward toward Broadway it is possible to understand the full-city-block massiveness of the building when it stood there. It was in existence by 1913, and was the site of huge Tammany regime-era New York City Political Rallies in its early years which were regularly attended by over 4000 persons. It also contained an athletic component which hosted early boxing matches and Basketball games, of the latter pioneering female athlete Babe Didrikson played her first professional Basketball game there in 1933, and it was the home of the "New York Original Celtics" semi-professional Basketball team, before the construction of Madison Square Garden. It also contained a very large Ballroom which presented regular social functions, and for a time seemed to have employed a house orchestra. The two names "Hall" and "Ballroom" were interchangeable, and both nouns were used to describe the venue at different times in its history. At the time of its initial opening and for approximately the first 15 years of its existence, the neighborhood and the surrounding neighborhood were predominantly

European and Jewish. When African-Americans began to form their social organizations in the late 1920's, it was the largest ballroom in Brooklyn, and fittingly was only looked upon to house functions that could fill its capacity. As seen in this photograph from the sheet music cover to a song dedicated to the ballroom, it was spacious and elegant.

DEDICATED TO SIDNEY S. COHEN ESQ.

# THE NEW ARCADIA WALTZ



"THE SENSATIONAL  
HIT" AS PLAYED BY THE ARCADIA  
ORCHESTRA

AT THE  
ARCADIA BALLROOM  
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

PRICE 50 CENTS

In the beginning of African-American activity at the Arcadia, there was the usual mix of local Brooklyn and Harlem bands, as was the practice of most of the Social Clubs at the time. Because of the hall's size, only events that would draw a large crowd, whether because of the band involved, or because of the size of the membership of the organization hosting the event were attempted at the Arcadia. It became a favorite of the local Elks and Masonic organizations as the groups' own memberships along with any extra patrons could easily fill the large space. The Elks also owned a building that was used for Social Club dances, and occasionally after the event ended in the wee hours at the Arcadia, a breakfast dance would be held at Elks Hall. As the years went on, the membership and influence of the Social Clubs grew to be able to also justify presenting events at this larger venue. Most of the non-Brooklyn bands were borrowed from their regular engagements at Harlem nightclubs. Charlie Johnson's Orchestra from Smalls Paradise, and/or that club's floor show were especially popular among Social Clubs, and were engaged for a number of Social Club events in the early 1930's.

**GRAND CHARITY BALL**  
 Under the Auspices of  
**DE HOSTOS DEMO-  
 CRATIC CLUB**  
 Incorporated  
**FIRST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT  
 KINGS COUNTY**  
 to be held  
**At Arcadia Hall**  
 Halsey Street near Broadway, B'klyn  
**Thursday Eve'g, Oct.  
 23rd, 1930**  
 Music By  
**JAZZ KINGS HAVANA ROYAL  
 ORCHESTRA**  
 Admission — — \$1.00  
 Reserved Box — — \$2.00

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**EXTRA:**  
**BREAKFAST DANCE  
 AT EIKS' GRILL**  
 Featuring Chas. Skeets and His  
 Grill Orchestra  
 3—Sensational Entertainers—3  
 Reservations can be secured at Eiks'  
 Home for Breakfast Dance and Ball—  
 Phone, Prospect 9181.  
 Grill under personal direction of  
 Walter Purdy.

*The New York Age 10/18/30*



*The New York Age 2/16/35*

On December 24, 1934, a Christmas Eve Breakfast Dance was presented by the Monte Carlo Boys Social Club featuring three big name bands in what must have been one of the hippest Christmas mornings in recent years. A Battle of the bands featuring the

orchestras of the ever popular Gus Carrington, Louis Metcalf, and Luis Russell raged into the early morning hours.

## Monte Carlo Boys Score At First Breakfast Dance

Approximately 1,500 celebrated Christmas morn at the Monte Carlo Boys "Le Danse Du Matin" a mammoth breakfast dance given at the Arcadia Ballroom Christmas eve night. It was the first of its kind in Brooklyn. The dancers began to arrive in large numbers at an early hour, and by 3 a. m. Christmas morn the dance was in full swing.

Gus Carrington and his aggregation started the battle of jazz agoing and righ behind his heels the dashing Louie Metcalf and his boys and the featured band. Luis Russell and his Ole Man River crew starring Sonny Woods and Rex Stewart, alternated.

*The New York Age* 1/5/35

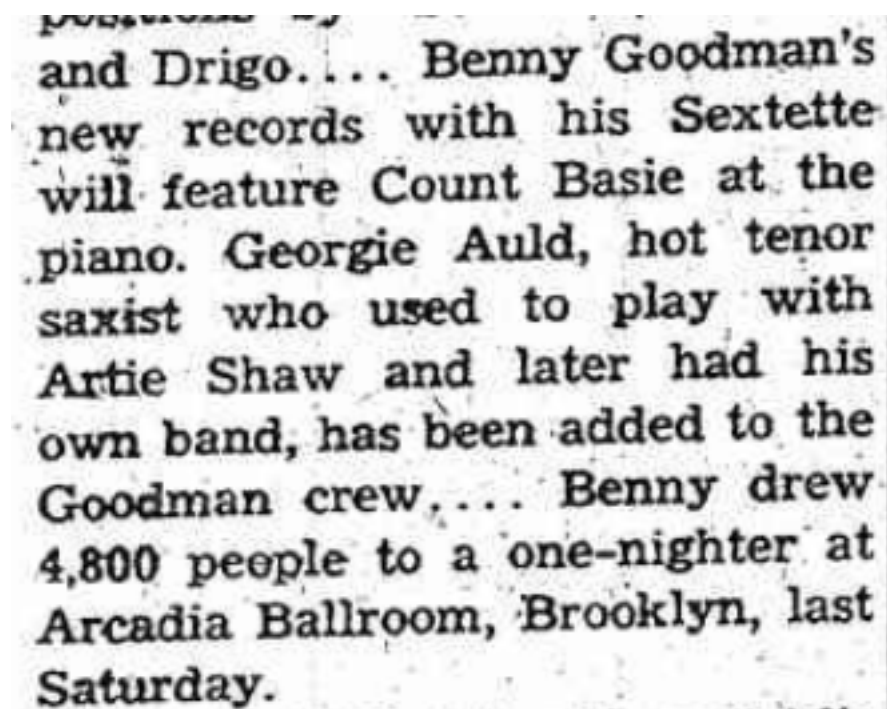
In the fall of 1935, *The New York Age* reported that the Twelve Oases Social Club was to present Duke Ellington and his Orchestra at Arcadia Hall, although it is not known whether that dance ever took place.



The Arcadia Ballroom would also occasionally present dances under their own auspices, and by the middle of the 1930's, along with the Brooklyn Roseland and the Bedford Ballroom, it became part of the circuit which bands could count on to fill in holes in their schedules, which may have come about because of a lull in the touring schedule, or even in the hours after an earlier Theater, Hotel, or Nightclub engagement had ended. Actor Jackie Gleason, born in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn in 1916, used to dance there when he was a teenager. (New York Magazine, September 23, 1985, P.41) While Fletcher Henderson's band was in residence at the Roseland in Manhattan, drummer Kaisar Marshall remembered:

"We were in the money then, with a location job, plenty of recording dates, and other things. Sometimes after we finished at Roseland we'd go up to Harlem and play from 2 to 3 in the morning; it meant twenty-five dollars a man just for that hour of playing. We'd go to the Manhattan, Renaissance Casino, or over to Brooklyn to the Arcadia. We all lived high; we were a top band and we had top wardrobes. The boys used to wear English waling suits that cost a hundred-ten dollars, seven-dollar spats, and eighteen-dollar shoes. Things were good in those days."<sup>21</sup>

In the years leading up to World War II, the Arcadia Ballroom would continue to present this type of activity in the same way as the Bedford Ballroom, dotting one-nighters for dance bands into their hall-for-rent schedule. Jack Teagarden and his Orchestra played the Arcadia on January 6, 1940, and on August 10<sup>th</sup> of that year, Benny Goodman reportedly drew a huge crowd to the hall.



and Drigo.... Benny Goodman's new records with his Sextette will feature Count Basie at the piano. Georgie Auld, hot tenor saxist who used to play with Artie Shaw and later had his own band, has been added to the Goodman crew.... Benny drew 4,800 people to a one-nighter at Arcadia Ballroom, Brooklyn, last Saturday.

*The Fredonia (New York) Censor* 12/8-14/40

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from Article *Brooklyn, home of soul, hosts bad Black show*, by Charles Hobson, *New York Amsterdam News*, 12/4/71.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/2/10, 16:06.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/2/10, 10:22.

<sup>4</sup> Phone Interview with Gene DiNovi, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/10/10.

<sup>5</sup> Phone Interview with Gene DiNovi, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/10/10.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/2/10 7:50.

<sup>7</sup> Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1985), 80.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/2/10, 8:38.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/2/10 7:50.

<sup>10</sup> Randy Weston, Willard Jenkins *African Rhythms: The Autobiography of Randy Weston* (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2010), 16.

<sup>11</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 11/26/10.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/2/10 15:34.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/2/10 13:11.

<sup>14</sup> From the article "Famous Brooklyn Flashes Have Interesting Basketball History", *The New York Age* 12/23/39.

<sup>15</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 6/24/12, 17:11.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/2/10, 13:11.

<sup>17</sup> Cedar Walton Interview, Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program NEA Jazz Master Interview, conducted by William A. Brower, 10/23/2010, P. 49 of Transcript.

<sup>18</sup> From the Column "Brooklyn Notes", *The New York Age* 4/30/27

<sup>19</sup> *The New York Age* 12/4/37.

<sup>20</sup> From article, "For Local Ickies, One Up-To-Date Dancehall", *The New York Age* 9/9/39.

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas J. Hennesey, *From Jazz to Swing: African-American Jazz Musicians and Their Music 1890-1935*(Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1994), 94.

## Bedford-Stuyvesant

### The Neighborhood Scene 1945-1970

"When the rest of the Boro tucks away for the night, the Bedford-Stuyvesant area comes alive with Jazz, Bop and jive. This section is vast, it's ugly, it's mean. It's crowded and risky—but it jumps, Believe me, it smoulders by day and burns by night. A place where music and murder, vice and violence, dope and delinquency, intoxicating beverages flow. Backed up by poverty, hope, disease, frustration and hate. A place where life is a song and living conditions tough, difficult, and dangerous, a poverty stricken, racket ridden, rat, roach and bedbug infested slum that is Bedford-Stuyvesant Section to City Hall but "home" to more than 10,000 people—and me."

*New York Amsterdam News* column, "Willie Saunder's Jamburee Jive", by Willie Saunders, June 25, 1949

After WWII, as was the case with the entirety of the Jazz world, huge changes would come to Bedford-Stuyvesant as far as how they would hear their music. The Big Bands were in a noticeable decline, and the combination of the impact of the war, the decline of their activity in the downtown theaters, and with a more local focus the closing of the Bedford Ballroom, they were not seen in the neighborhood nearly as frequently as they were before the war. The Club scene was also still reeling from the 1944 Federal Cabaret Tax, which levied an additional

20 percent tax (reduced from its original 30 percent) against Ballrooms and Clubs if the patrons danced. This, combined with the other wartime restrictions on travel, gas rationing, usage of raw materials, etc., helped to facilitate the closing of many of the city's large ballrooms, and Bedford-Stuyvesant was equally affected. Many of the neighborhood ballrooms either closed or were forced to repurpose a part or all of their space, some never to recover. Those that did survive were to present dances on the large scale of the 1930's much more infrequently. In their place a number of nightclubs, bars, and smaller halls with dance floors opened up in the neighborhood in the years following the war. Many of them would come to be located on Fulton Street, which was the main artery through the neighborhood, and was the street under which the lifeblood A and C lines of the NYC subway ran. It's combination of an intense concentration of nightclubs and accessibility would cause it to become the main entertainment focus of the neighborhood, and of the Borough for that matter. When Manhattanites came to Brooklyn for entertainment after WWII, they simply got on the A train and got off

at Nostrand Avenue and Fulton Street. "You could hardly walk down Fulton Street during the summer", Pianist Ed Stoute (b.1935) remembered, "It was like Broadway used to be." Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, who would move to the neighborhood in 1958, thought enough of the musical activity at the corner that he immortalized it in an original composition, "Nostrand and Fulton", recorded in 1962 for Blue Note Records (Freddie Hubbard, *Here To Stay* Blue Note BN-LA496-H2, rec'd 12/27/62).

Of the nightclubs, much of their entertainment format would be patterned after the Harlem nightclubs and would feature vaudeville-inspired, multi-act floor shows, albeit with smaller house bands than were fashionable before the war. Eventually, many of the bars would also institute music policies, creating an amazing concentration of clubs within the neighborhood borders. The same dances that were given at larger ballrooms in the 1930's were now frequently given at these smaller venues in the post-war years. In many of these instances, emerging members of the just-formed Bebop movement

would play their music for these dances, which gave them important opportunities not only to hone their craft, but also to learn to reconcile the more esoteric qualities of their music with the ability to connect with a local audience that still expected to dance as if the big bands never left. Contrary to many early descriptions of the music, Bebop *was* quite danceable, and the current young generation of African-Americans not only danced to the music, but developed new dances to go along with it. Brooklyn-born saxophonist Jimmy Cozier (b.1954) remembers how close the jazz fans in Bedford-Stuyvesant were to the music of Dizzy and Bird. "At a dance," he said, "when a Charlie Parker record was put on, *most* of the people there could sing the melody, and at least part of the solo."

### **THE INTERSECTIONS OF THE MUSICIANS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD WITH EACH OTHER AND NON-MUSICIANS**

Following the same motivation to find inexpensive housing as many would after them, great musicians from other places, both aspiring and established, moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant from the 1930's going



forward.. Many of these people were destined to bring about new innovations in jazz music, or make important contributions as sidemen in some of the most pivotal groups in jazz. Their intersections with many of the young Brooklyn native musicians resulted in partnerships that would produce important offerings to the music of their respective times. Brooklyn native Fred Anderson, while growing up on Hancock Street between Marcy Ave. and Nostrand Ave., participated in the entire scene in Bedford-Stuyvesant and the rest of New York City through the 1980's or so. He recalled going to dances at the age of 13 or 14, and getting into some other places accompanied by his older sister. He also remembered that in the 1950's Kenny Dorham lived on his block for a time, Tommy Potter lived around the corner on Jefferson Avenue, and Duke Jordan lived on the next block (Jordan, who's given name was Irving, was given the nickname "Duke" as a young man in the neighborhood because of his reputation of being handy with his fists). While speaking to me, he would say things quite nonchalantly such as, "Kenny's [Kenny Dorham] been to my house quite a few times...Jackie McLean too (while visiting or playing at a

neighborhood club; McLean never lived in Brooklyn)."<sup>1</sup> He describes Bedford-Stuyvesant of those days, for a musician, as a place where you might bump into famous musicians, or those who were up and coming at any time, The type of place where you could go to the 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday party of a friend in 1946/47, and Wynton Kelly would be there playing Erskine Hawkins hit song "After Hours" on the piano for hours, as he remembers occurring at an apartment building on Hancock Street.

He also remembered that beginning in 1949, Miles Davis was living on Troy Avenue, and by 1951 or so, Trombonist J.J. Johnson moved to Stuyvesant Avenue. Miles may have become familiar with Brooklyn a few years earlier through his band mate in the Charlie Parker Quintet, Max Roach. In his autobiography *Miles*, he says:

"After I started playing with Bird's band, me and Max Roach got real tight. He, J.J. Johnson, and I used to run the streets all night until we crashed in the early morning hours, either at Max's pad in Brooklyn or in Bird's place."<sup>2</sup>

Davis also noted that the Brooklyn scene was a part of his early development:

"But it was the jam sessions, all over Harlem and Brooklyn, where we had a lot of fun just sitting in with other musicians our own age. I had mostly been around guys who had been older than me and who had something to teach me. Now, in New York, I had found a group of guys who were about my age and who I could both learn from and share my shit with."<sup>3</sup>

Today, among other things, Davis is known for his fashion sense, so at a time when most of American society had a much higher everyday standard of dress than in contemporary times, one would think that Miles would be on top of his game. But it would seem that during these early Brooklyn years, that he still had a ways to go before he developed the high style that he would be known for. J.J. Johnson, on the other hand, seemed to have it together during that time. Fred Anderson remembered:

**F.A.** - ...You know, J.J. was a sharp cat...he was a dressing fool, man.

**V.G.** - Oh Yeah?

**F.A.** - Yeah man, he was one of the sharpest cats that ever was in jazz, you know when he cleaned up his act. You know, J.J. was a very sharp cat, man...beautiful clothes he wore. He was about the sharpest cat in jazz at that time.

**V.G.** - He was sharper than Miles at that time, huh? Because Miles had that reputation...

**F.A.** - Oh, Miles wasn't sharp. Miles wasn't sharp....Miles was a raggedy motherfucker, man(Laughing)...Excuse my language...Miles was a raggedy motherfucker, man he wore one suit for about two years straight...we called it a rug....we called it a rug...He wore a brown tweed suit.

**V.G.** - (Laughing)

**F.A.** - Miles wasn't sharp *at all*...Miles didn't get sharp until maybe around the time that he got with Philly [Joe Jones] and them [his mid-late 1950's Quintet]...and he [still] wasn't *that* sharp...but he was clean. Cause we used to run into the same bathroom or something...We're in the bathroom together, you know...and he'd say..."What y'all know Gangsters," because *WE* were sharper than a motherfucker, you know...But Miles wasn't sharp...he started wearing that other stuff later, you know...<sup>4</sup>

Not only did the community have great teachers in religious and western classical music such as Edward Boatner, but older jazz musicians that moved to the neighborhood also began to teach the young native musicians. This created a dynamic that kept the standard of playing with young musicians very high, and gave those whom they taught the motivation to continue to hold the following generation in the neighborhood to that same standard. By the time I moved there, you were *expected* to be able to play if you came from Brooklyn. One person that helped to perpetuate that was the drummer Sid Catlett. In the early 1930's, he moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant, and opened up a

drum school in the neighborhood, run out of his house. Although a complete list of musicians that studied with him is unobtainable, many of them did not necessarily go on to make a name for themselves in jazz, and became local musicians that benefitted from having a master in the midst. Fred Anderson remembers a friend of his named Steve King, about 6 years or so older than himself, that studied with Catlett during this period and was "one of the first cats in Brooklyn that played Bongos...but he was a drummer at one time."<sup>5</sup> of the exceptions would be drummer Arthur Herbert. He was a Brooklyn-born drummer who would record with Sidney Bechet and Henry "Red" Allen, but is probably most noteworthy for being the drummer on Coleman Hawkins seminal 1939 recording of "Body and Soul". Another young drummer at the time that may have studied with Catlett is Arthur "Trappy" Trappier. A transplant from South Carolina who lived in the neighborhood, he was a very in-demand drummer who later recorded with Fats Waller, Edmond Hall, and worked with just about everybody in between. Max Roach, who would have just started playing drums as an adolescent during or soon after the opening of Catlett's school, is

not on record as having studied with him, but said of Catlett, as he told Don Gold in *Down Beat*, that he was his “main source of inspiration”. Although not an official record, it is interesting to note the statement by guitarist Barney Kessel in Ira Gitler’s book *Swing to Bop*, “I think of Sid Catlett as being the last of the swing drummers. Max Roach, to me, is the first bebop drummer. Kenny Clarke was the bridge.”<sup>6</sup> It is hard to fathom that a young Roach and instructor Catlett would not have crossed paths at some point while living in the same neighborhood.

Another musician that made Bedford-Stuyvesant his home was the great clarinetist and soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet. Sometime in 1945, Bechet bought a house at 160 Quincy Street, near the corner of Bedford Avenue (Coincidentally, I used to travel up this one-way street and pass this address for over a year, unknowing of it’s significance when I lived nearby, although the house has long since been torn down). As Bechet says in his colorful Autobiography, *Treat It Gentle*:

"Well, I began to collect royalties which were heavy then, about 1945, and I bought a house in Brooklyn because I sort of intended to take life easy and get away from all this hunger, this greed....[in the Music Business]"<sup>7</sup>

His reasons for choosing Brooklyn are interesting and offer a view into the way that the neighborhood was viewed, in feeling that he could take life easy in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and also "get away" from things just a few miles from Manhattan. Surprisingly, his presence in the neighborhood was not recognized by many of the young, aspiring musicians or neighborhood residents at the time. In 1945, Bedford-Stuyvesant was Swing Dancing/Bebop crazy, and notification of the presence of Bechet within it's borders caused astonishment in those who would have been teenage or pre-teen jazz fans such as Randy Weston, Pianist Ed Stoute, or Fred Anderson. When I spoke to them, none of them knew that Bechet was there in 1945. In a move similar to Sid Catlett a little earlier, Bechet opened up the "Sidney Bechet School of Music" at his home, planning to make his mark on the next generation of musicians. Marketing was not Bechet's fort , as recalled by clarinetist Bob Wilbur, who would eventually study with him, "His idea of opening a school of music was he got a sign painted that said 'Sidney Bechet School of Music' and tacked it up outside the door and sort of waited for something to happen."<sup>8</sup> According to Wilbur, Bechet eventually had four additional students, besides himself. "None of

them went on to become professional musicians”, he would recall<sup>9</sup>. Bob Wilbur would become the primary source of information on this period in Bechet’s life, because of an amazing series of events that occurred for the 18-year old clarinetist. He recalls:

“In the spring of 1946 I started studying with Bechet. I had got to know [clarinetist Mezz] Mezzrow quite well by this time. One day, when I was hanging out in the office of the King Jazz record company on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, he told me that Bechet was opening a school of music and was looking for pupils. Naturally, I was very interested.”

“After arranging an appointment for me with Sidney, Mezz gave me directions and I took the subway out to Brooklyn. After changing trains four times I eventually arrived at Sidney’s place on Quincy Street. It was an old, ramshackle, three-story wooden house with French windows that Sidney said reminded him of New Orleans. He owned the property and rented out the top two floors, while he occupied the ground floor and the basement. Hanging beside the front door was a modest sign the read “Sidney Bechet School of Music.” We arranged for lessons by the hour. I was his first and, for a while, his only pupil. He was very interested in teaching and wanted to write a book on jazz improvisation because he felt that so many young musicians didn’t understand what it was all about

...My studies with Bechet were everything I had hoped for. He was a marvelous teacher and a wonderful man. Having by this time resigned from my job with the Textron Company, I was short of money, so Sidney suggested that I move in with him at the house on Quincy Street. My parents came down from Scarsdale to see Sidney at Ryan’s to satisfy themselves that I was in good hands, and, quite unknown to me, they came to a financial arrangement with him.

...So it was that I moved into Quincy Street to join Sidney, his mistress Laura and Butch, the Great Dane I had seen at the Pied Piper, who by now had grown to a gigantic size. Bechet was a great teacher.”<sup>10</sup>



Wilbur lived and studied with Bechet at his Quincy Street home for 8 months, moving out in the early spring of 1947. He also mentioned that Bechet was also working hard on a ballet during that time, called "Voice of the Slaves." He has supposedly been working on the piece for 20 years, but Bechet was not skilled in orchestration. Wilbur remembered that James Tolliver, the pianist and arranger, used to come over and help him with that aspect of the piece, as did Wilbur. Unfortunately, Bechet would not live long enough to see a performance of it. It also seems that the clubs in Bedford-Stuyvesant were not amenable to the "New Orleans Revival" that was going on in Jazz during this time, as he and Bechet did not make an attempt to play at any of the neighborhood establishments. In fact, none of the neighborhood halls or clubs that I have been made aware of featured New Orleans jazz. For Bechet and Wilbur, Quincy Street was solely a place to learn and rest, and they made their way to Midtown Manhattan for their musical adventures. Describing the scene while living there, he said,

"... we would practice with the two horns and study and fool around all day and at night we'd hop on the subway and go over to 52<sup>nd</sup> Street where he was playing at Jimmy Ryan's and I'd play on the stand with him."<sup>11</sup>

Although Bechet would not participate in the Bedford-Stuyvesant scene, he did have a number of memorable times at the house on Quincy Street and elsewhere in the Brooklyn. Wilbur would also have many memorable times in Brooklyn, as he describes in his autobiography *Music Was Not Enough* that on one occasion Bechet left him alone with Laura, Bechet's mistress, and she promptly seduced him. Also in his autobiography, Wilbur states that besides music and gadgets, Bechet had a great love of Motor Boats, and he supposedly had a plan to travel from Brooklyn to New Orleans by sea. After locating a vessel for sale by a Russian owner in Sheepshead Bay, he invited him to the house on Quincy Street, and in an extraordinary scene of Vodka and singing of folk songs, in both New Orleans Creole Patois and "warbled Russian Caucasian", a sale price was reached. A launching ceremony was planned, and after having radio DJ Fred Robbins announce it on his show, the event took place at the Brooklyn

boatyard. The boat was christened with the name *Laura* after his mistress, but the nautical Laura had her own ideas, and the boat, after having been toasted to and launched in the water, failed to start and went nowhere. The guests all left, and soon after Bechet went looking for the Russian, to no avail. According to Wilbur,

“Once he came to terms with the fact that *Laura* wasn’t going anywhere, our Sunday afternoons settled into a routine of rowing out to the boat with a bag of shrimps and some six-packs of beer. We’d stretch out on the deck and enjoy our little feast. Then, in a pleasant and relaxed frame of mind, we’d row across the bay to the seedy little yacht club, where Sidney would sit down at the upright piano and in no time at all the joint would be jumpin’, the whiskey flowing and Sidney’s fellow yachtsmen and their ladies dancing happily around.”<sup>12</sup>

Although Bechet would only live at the house for a few more years, he did think highly enough of his experiences there to commemorate his Bedford-Stuyvesant home with a song, “Quincy Street Stomp”, recorded for Blue Note Records on February 2, 1946. In actuality, the song is a 1914 Charles Cooke composition, “Blame It On The Blues”, with the exception of an arranged 2-bar break played by Bechet and clarinetist Albert Nicholas. Bechet was known for appropriating other

peoples compositions during his lifetime, and on subsequent re-issues of the performance on 10-inch and 12-inch LP, the title is changed to that of the Cook composition.

### **ART BLAKEY'S 17 MESSENGERS**

In 1947, drummer Art Blakey joined the Muslim Brotherhood, which was affiliated with the Ahmadiyya Movement, a radical Islamic sect which had gained a following in Harlem by 1940. Blakey adopted the name Abdullah Ibn Buhania, and would be known by the nickname "Bu" by musicians for the rest of his life. He was introduced to this form of Islam by trumpet player Talib Dawud (formerly known as Barrymore Rainey), who had previously worked with Andy Kirk, and also played in Dizzy Gillespie's 1946 Big Band which debuted at the Spotlite Club on 52<sup>nd</sup> street the previous year. In that same year, Blakey formed a rehearsal band known as the 17 Messengers. It was made up partially of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and partially

of non-members, occasionally including Thelonious Monk on piano.

Monk would draw from it's ranks for his own debut recordings on Blue Note, which would be recorded in 1947. At different times, Sonny Rollins and Bud Powell even played in the band. Of even more interest is the fact that Monk was writing Big Band arrangements and for the 17 Messengers, his only known dalliance with Big Band writing. Fred Anderson remembers hearing this band on a number of occasions in Manhattan and in Brooklyn, and he singled out Monk's arrangement of the "Little" Benny Harris composition *Ornithology* as being particularly memorable. Interestingly enough, Monk doesn't seem to have arranged any of his own tunes for the band.

Around 1952, the 17 Messengers had established a presence in Brooklyn. They rehearsed at Hancock Hall, a local for-rent establishment in the neighborhood. They also performed a regular engagement at the Elk's Lodge, located at 1068 Fulton St. near Clausson Ave. The engagement was on Sunday nights, and as Fred Anderson remembers, "It might have cost about a buck to get in."<sup>13</sup>

Because the band didn't work steadily, the personnel was constantly changing, but at the Elk's lodge the lineup included:

Idrees Sulieman, Ray Copeland—Trumpets, Sahib Shihab—Alto Sax,  
Alva "Beau" McCain—Tenor Sax and Vocals, "Fletcher"—Baritone  
Saxophone Ibrahim Ibn Ismail (Howard Bowe), Rasheed (Given name  
unknown)—Trombone, Sabu Martinez—Percussion, Gary Mapp or Gene  
Ramey-Bass, Adrian Acey/Horace Silver—Piano, Art Blakey—Drums.

According to Blakey, "The Seventeen Messengers was a good band; there were a lot of great players in it....but economically the band was a disaster, so we had to break it up."<sup>14</sup> This economic factor could possibly explain what became a humorous event among the jazz fans in Bed-Stuy during this engagement at the Elk's Lodge. Printing was not inexpensive by any means, and it would seem that Adrian Acey was the name of the pianist that was working in the band at the time of the printing of the flyers that were used for the Brooklyn

engagement. In his autobiography, *Lets Get to the Nitty Gritty*, Horace

Silver recalled :

"In those days, you had to show proof of residence for six months in New York City before Local 802 would issue you a union card. During that time, you could only play one night a week. I had a little money saved up for this, and I was lucky enough to get a gig in Carteret, New Jersey, at a little hole-in-the-wall black club with a guitar player named Billy Avant. We worked weekends, and the gig paid ten dollars a night. I made thirty dollars a weekend. Billy took two dollars of that from each band member for gas. He drove us from Manhattan to Carteret and back, with a tenor player named Bow McKane and a drummer named Chink. We had to play floor shows. Billy did the comedy and emcee bit, and we had a singer and an exotic dancer. This little bit of money kept me from having to dig too deeply into the money I had saved to get me through the waiting period.

Bow McKane was working on and off with Art Blakey's little nine piece dance band. He came to me one day and said that Art was looking for a new piano player for the band and that he had told Art about me. I was very nervous at rehearsal, so nervous that I was sweating. In later years, whenever I'd work with Art, he's tease me about this."<sup>15</sup>

The advertising posters that sell on eBay today for ridiculous amounts were common modes for advertising in 1952, and were plastered on every light post, and put in every store, barber shop, restaurant, etc., that would allow them. Adrian Acey is the pianist that Silver is

referring to as “goofin’ off” in the interview above, and apparently the neighborhood posters advertising the event all had this unknown pianists’ name printed on them. The Bed-Stuy jazz fans, who always knew the names, faces, and musical identities of the players were waiting to see and hear this piano player was that was playing with the great Art Blakey, who had a huge following in the neighborhood. This is during the time when Max Roach, the neighborhood hero, was studying classical percussion at the Manhattan School of Music, and although he recorded often during these years (1950-1953), he may not have been on the scene as much. Fred Anderson, a drummer/vibraphonist himself who admits that he and his friends followed drummers more than any other instrumentalists says, “We saw Blakey quite a bit...We saw Blakey more than we saw Max at that time. Blakey was all over the place.” (Fred Anderson Interview 6/4/12)

When he and his friends went to the Elk’s lodge to check out Blakey’s 17 Messengers, and not being huge followers of Stan Getz, whom Horace Silver was playing with at the time, they assumed that the pianist, Silver, was “Adrian Acey”. Anderson says of the debacle:



"I could never find out...but we called this cat Adrian Acey but it actually was Horace Silver and we didn't know his name. But on the billing it had "Adrian Acey", so when we saw him we figured that was Adrian Acey, but it actually was Horace Silver."<sup>16</sup>

Silver played with the 17 Messengers off and on during 1952. When he ended up playing at the club called the Continental in Bed-Stuy 3 years later with his own quintet, some of the audience members may have still referred to him as Adrian Acey, Art Blakey's former pianist. Silver also referred to the band as a "nine-piece group" although Anderson remembered that the Blakey band was a full big band on the numerous occasions in which he saw and heard it, it is possible that because of the band's irregular working schedule, sometimes the members of the band took more regular, better-paying gigs, and occasionally left the 17 Messengers short-handed certain engagements in which Silver played.

## **The Eastern Parkway Arena**

A large multi-use building known as the Eastern Parkway Arena used to sit just on the outskirts of Crown Heights. It was located at 1435 Eastern Parkway near Howard Avenue, in the Crown Heights neighborhood near the border with Brownsville. Capable of holding four thousand persons, it was built as an indoor skating rink, but eventually was used for dances and professional boxing matches. As mentioned before, Heavyweight Boxing Champion Floyd Patterson fought his first professional fights there. A New York City dance promoter named Cecil Bowen was very active presenting events all over the city geared toward the African-American community. They would be held in places such as the Audubon Ballroom, Rockland Palace, Chateau Gardens, The Bronx's Hunts Point Palace, and Eastern Parkway Arena. Of significance is that Bowen regularly engaged the beboppers to provide the dance music, during a period when dancing to bebop was supposedly nonexistent. Anderson remembers going to dances given by Bowen all over the city between 1949-1952 and hearing Charlie Parker, J.J. Johnson, Jackie McLean, Milt Jackson, Miles Davis, and many other musicians playing and battling on the stage. A relatively obscure trumpet player who is held in high regard by Anderson and other musicians such as Jimmy Heath named Lowell Lewis was remembered "running Miles off the stage" at a New Years Eve Dance in 1950.

On June 23, 1951, a particularly memorable dance took place at the Eastern Parkway Arena featuring Charlie Parker and his quintet. An amateur recording of the concert was made, and existed solely among Parker collectors for quite some time, until being released commercially on the Philology Label. With Parker that day was bassist Teddy Kotick, pianist Walter Bishop, Jr, and drummer Roy Haynes. The identity of Parker's trumpeter that day has been speculated upon as being either Red Rodney or "Little" Benny Harris, based solely on the audio evidence from the recordings. Anderson, who attended the concert, confirms that the trumpeter was in fact Harris. He also remembers that popular Bed-Stuy vocalist, Billie Stewart, also performed with Parker on the concert, although the selections that include the vocalist are a part of the surviving recordings.

Another particularly memorable event involving Art Blakey's Seventeen Messengers took place on April 13, 1952, at Eastern Parkway Arena. At this particular event on Easter Sunday, 1952, Cecil

Bowen presented the battle of Manhattan vs. Brooklyn, in the form of Max vs. Art: Art Blakey and his Seventeen Messengers vs. Max Roach and his big band. Roach, in actuality was fronting an existing big band, that of Brooklyn musician George Hall, a trumpeter. In another illustration of just how interconnected things were in Bed-Stuy, George Hall, like Randy Weston's father, owned a neighborhood Candy Store/Luncheonette (those two words seem to have been interchangeable during that time) known as Melody Inn, located on Tompkins Ave. between Macon St. and Halsey St. There were many of these places in the neighborhood, and they were usually strategically opened up near Public Schools. As a result they were common gathering places for kids either playing hookey, or for them after school ended for the day. The *real* draw was their juke box, which always kept the most popular hits of the day spinning, and fierce competition as to which Luncheonette had the best tunes raged among the neighborhood kids. George Hall's band was made up of the best Bedford-Stuyvesant musicians available. A complete personnel list has alluded me, but for the battle against Art Blakey, the band included

Alto Saxophonist Ernie Henry, the trumpet player named Billy Cooper who was a friend of Gene DiNovi, Trombonist Bruce Carmichael, and Randy Weston on piano. This wasn't the first battle between Blakey and Roach, as the promoter Bowen had also presented the same Max vs. Art. Battle at the Chateau Gardens, located on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Manhattan on New Years Eve of 1949. The Brooklyn crowd proved to be fair and impartial judges, as they turned against their homeboy on both occasions, and judged Art Blakey and his Messengers to be the winners of the battle.



*The New York Amsterdam News 3/10/51*

## **THE ARMORY DANCES**

In the days when Brooklyn was still relatively inaccessible and undeveloped as an urban center, two large military Armories were built in the area that would become Bedford-Stuyvesant. These two massive buildings, a city block long each, are still in use today, and as a neighborhood full of Brownstones and Churches began to take shape around them, they continued to dominate their immediate area.

Coincidentally, just around the time that they began to be used less frequently for military functions, the social dance craze took hold of America, and before the large ballrooms were built, the various armories were among the preferred locations for dances because of their immense space. The two buildings in Bedford-Stuyvesant are the 106<sup>th</sup> Regimental Armory on the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Bedford Avenue, and the 13<sup>th</sup> Regimental Armory, which spans almost the entire block bound by Sumner Avenue (Marcus Garvey Blvd) and Lewis Avenue to the East, and Putnam Avenue and Jefferson Avenue to the North and South, respectively. Both buildings are capable of holding

upwards of 5,000 persons, and to this day the 13<sup>th</sup> Regimental Armory it is still the largest in New York State, and the second largest in the country.

Although Military and Society dances were held in the Armories going as far back as the post World War I years, at that time the neighborhood was still populated largely by European immigrants. It wasn't until persons of color began to move to the neighborhood that the spaces were used for swing dances. Most of these occurred after World War II, at least partially because of the demand created by the decline of many of the pre-war neighborhood Ballrooms which were forced to close. Because of their immense size, "Battle of the Bands" concerts were almost a necessity, and only those featuring most popular name bands capable of filling its space were attempted there. Still, the Armories were more than twice the size of the largest ballrooms available in the local area, with the possible exception of the Arcadia Ballroom, and there had never been a single local dance attempted in the in a venue capable of holding so many people. To

even attempt such a function posed a great financial risk for the presenters, but in the same way that the Social Clubs of the 1930's took the leap of faith of moving from hosting dances at the Sonia Ballroom to the larger Brooklyn Palace or Bedford Ballroom, organizations believed that Bedford-Stuyvesant would show up in force and fill the larger halls. They were correct.

Much has been written about the changing of musical tastes during the post WWII years (Swing vs. Bebop, Moldy Figs vs. Modernists, etc.), but in this climate there was a battle of the bands at the 13<sup>th</sup> Regimental armory which, for the African-American community, easily forecast things to come. On January 5, 1946, the NAACP decided to host its "Annual Popularity Contest and Dance" at the 13<sup>th</sup> Regimental Armory. To handle musical duties, the bands of Jimmy Lunceford and Billy Eckstine were engaged. Lunceford was still immensely popular within the African-American community, and was consistently competing with Ellington, Basie, and Calloway for the number one spot in the hearts of African jazz fans. Billy Eckstine was the up-and-coming



star. His barnstorming Bebop band which had contained at times Dizzy Gillespie serving as musical director, Charlie Parker (although he and Dizzy had left the band prior to the Brooklyn concert), Gene Ammons, Art Blakey, and Dexter Gordon among others, was aligned the young generation in the African-American community at the time, and was favored by those looking to identify with a new, different kind of swing than that which their parents listened to. In an upset victory, Eckstine's band came out as the clear-cut winner over the more established Lunceford, and it would be remembered by all involved, especially to the members of Eckstine's organization, to whom it helped solidify the fact that the winds of musical change had finally blown their way. Walter "Gil" Fuller remembered of that night:

"Jimmie Lunceford was on one side of the stand, the bandstand was in the middle of the Brooklyn Armory, and Billy Eckstine was on the other. And that was the night I knew that the whole thing had turned around. Because Lunceford was the boss, say, from 1936 to roughly 1944. Every time Lunceford would play, that sucker would sound bad. And after a while the people would be around Eckstine's side of the stand when Lunceford was playing. When Billy Eckstine's band was playing, everybody ran around to that side. And you could see the whole crowd moving, shifting around. After a while the shift stopped. The people stopped going back around to Lunceford's side and stayed on this side with Billy Eckstine. Diz was *the*

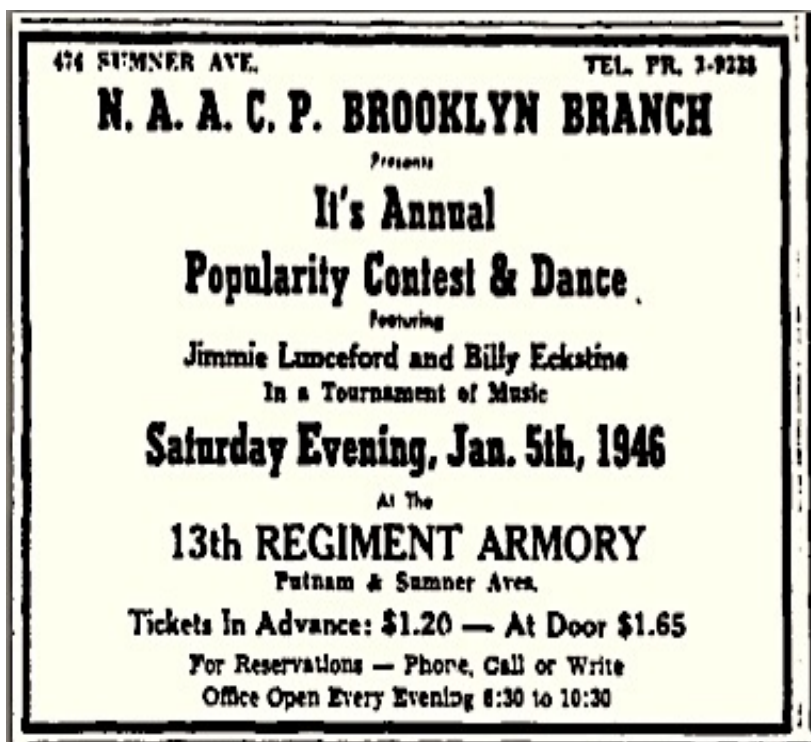
musical director, right then and there [meaning the musical course set forth by him before his departure-V.G.] . So that's the first time that I got the inkling that the real change had taken place...That was the first night that we knew. Jimmie Lunceford wasn't doing anything."<sup>17</sup>

Being the leader of the band, Eckstine himself made it very clear how important it was to triumph over a heralded figure such as Lunceford:

"...we played against Jimmie Lunceford at the Brooklyn Armory. Jimmie Lunceford, big star of the thing, and we were the second band. We ate his ass up like it was something good to eat, so much to the point. I'll never forget this, Freddie Webster, God rest his soul, was with Lunceford at the time, and Freddie wrote a letter to a buddy of ours in California, and all he wrote on the letter was, Did you hear about the battle of jazz?" He says, "Billy Eckstine," no, "B and his band, life; Jimmy Lunceford," in very small letters, "Jimmy Lunceford and us, death" [Laughter]. That's what he wrote on this thing"<sup>18</sup>

Six Thousand people were jammed into the 13<sup>th</sup> Armory that evening, with another 1,000 people turned away after the Fire Department ordered the ticket booths closed. Among the huge crowd were many of the up-and-coming musicians who would make up the new Brooklyn Bebop scene. Bedford-Stuyvesant-born drummer Morris Fant (b. 1920's) was around 20 years of age when he attended the dance , and being a young musician on that instrument himself in a neighborhood where Max Roach was king, he made a point to check out Eckstine's





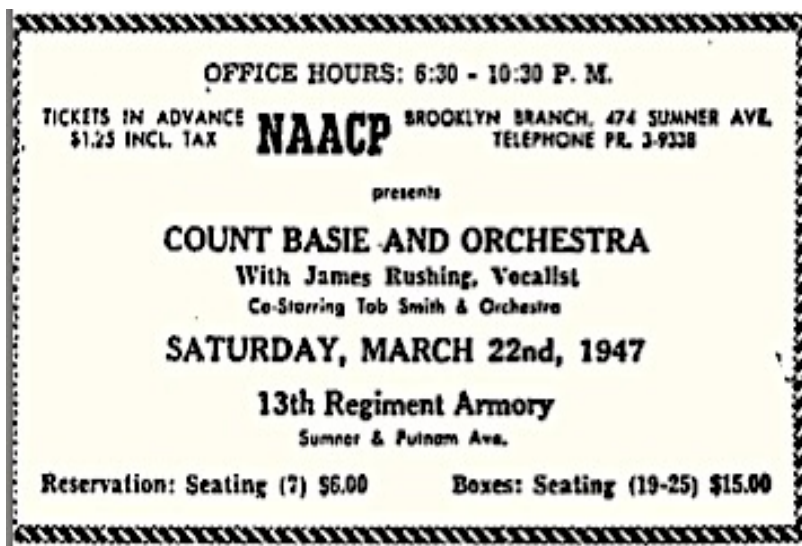
*The New York Amsterdam News 12/17/45*

The Armory Dances would become huge annual events after the success of the January 1946 event, and the next year Lunceford and his band were given a chance to redeem themselves against Luis Russell and his Orchestra, although a rematch was either not wanted or not possible, as Eckstine's band was in its last month of existence, and would disband in February 1947. As an added attraction, Billie Holiday was also included on the show, performing with her own trio. This time a local Social Club took the leap and presented the concert

at the Armory, which must have been the largest event for a social club to date in Brooklyn, and a huge act of faith for an organization which surely didn't have the financial resources of an organization as large as the NAACP. Not to be outdone, the NAACP returned just two months later and presented a dance at the 13<sup>th</sup> Armory featuring the orchestras of Count Basie and Tab Smith.



*The New York Amsterdam News 12/21/46*



*The New York Amsterdam News 3/15/47*

After 1947, it was clear that the Armories could be used for successful dances, even hosting them twice in the same year. Their profitability had been proven in the following years, and other entities were eager to get in on the act. 1949 brought two more large dances, the first one of the year was also the first event held at the other armory in the neighborhood, the 106<sup>th</sup> Armory located on Atlantic Avenue. It took place on February 26, and was a joint venture between the NAACP, the Carlton Avenue YMCA, and the Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Center. This dance packed the massive building with a lineup of Dinah Washington, the vocal quartet "The Ravens", with whom Washington

had been frequently paired with since 1947, and vocal group "The X-Rays". Also present again was Jimmy Lunceford's band led by Saxophonist/Vocalist Joe Thomas, who co-led the organization (with pianist Eddie Wilcox) after Lunceford's untimely death in 1947. They battled that evening against the newly formed Bebop Band led by Saxophonist Rudy Williams. Also featured was Tenor Saxophonist Harold Singer, who's 1948 hit record for the Savoy Label, "Cornbread", was burning up the charts.

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 ALL THESE GREAT STARS IN PERSON!  
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 The RAVENS I I I  
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 ("I'll Always Be In Love With You")  
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*The New York Amsterdam News 2/26/49*

The second Armory dance of 1949, was held on Oct. 15. Dinah Washington and The Ravens must have surely been a hit a few months earlier, as they were also brought back for the second dance. The switch in the musical tastes of the African-American community toward Rhythm and Blues was also beginning to show itself by this time, as a battle of the backbeat blues was on display with pianist Sonny Thompson and his band vs. Joe Thomas and his group, just after he left the Lunceford fold to form his organization.



*The New York Amsterdam News 10/8/49*

They began to fade out after 1950 for an unknown reason, it is plausible that the spaces were re-dedicated to serve a more military purpose as the looming Korean conflict began to come into focus. However, that year did bring Lionel Hampton's rocking big band to the



13<sup>th</sup> Armory for a battle of the bands against Brooklyn bandleader Jimmy Simmons and his orchestra. This dance was presented by the Round Robin Association, a group of Brooklyn Bar Owners who presented a weekly social outing, and will be written about in a forthcoming section.

**Brooklyn Bar Owners**  
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 LUCKY SPOT ..... Greene and Grand Avenues  
 JEFFERSON BAR ..... Tompkins and Jefferson Avenues  
 SUMNER BAR ..... Sumner and Gates Avenues  
 AMSTERDAM NEWS OFFICE ..... 1650 Fulton Street

*The New York Amsterdam News 3/11/50*

**The Post WWII Clubs:**

Although the small club/cabaret scene in Bedford-Stuyvesant didn't fully develop until after World War II as it had in Manhattan, there were a few known clubs which offered floor shows in the neighborhood as far back as the late 1920's. One of them would provide the first professional singing experiences to a troubled young woman named Eleanora Harris (she was born Eleanora Gough, but changed her last name as a result her mother's short-lived marriage), who would soon be famous the world over as Billie Holiday. In May of 1929 Eleanora and her mother were both arrested for prostitution and sentenced to serve 100 days in a workhouse. After being released in October of 1929, she and her mother moved to the Phyllis Apartments at 7 Glenada Street, in Brooklyn (located near Throop Avenue and Fulton Street, this street no longer exists). Her mother took work as a domestic servant, but 14 year old Eleanora had different ideas. She changed her name around this time to Billie Holiday, the last name being that of her guitar-playing father, Clarence Holliday. She begins

to be associated musically with Kenneth Hollon, a Brooklyn-born saxophonist who led a dance band which was active on the late 1930's Social Club dance scene, who was just beginning to play his horn at the time. Author/Historian Robert O'Meally for his book *Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday*, interviewed the saxophonist. Hollon recalled:

...all Billie wanted to do was sing. I was just learning to play my clarinet, and I used to take my saxophone around to her house. And I used to try to play melodies while she sang along with me. An opportunity came where we got a job out at this cabaret. And I took Billie along with us and once we were going good I asked Billie if she wanted to join in. "Yeah," she said, she did. And at that time I remember the old-timers used to throw money out on the floor for singers. And the tunes she sang that night were "My Fate Is in Your Hands" by Fats Waller and "Oh, How Am I to Know?" and "Honeysuckle Rose." And that night she collected over a hundred dollars in tips."

O'Meally would go on to write:

"As Hollon told it, she performed on that first night out with a piano, drum, trumpet, and Hollon's sax. The place was in Brooklyn and was called

the Grey Dawn. It attracted a hardened crowd of sportsmen and gamblers, a fast living group that could drop large bills on the floor and not miss them as they drank their bootleg gin and dug the music. Just as the Gray dawn actually arrived outside the club, the place was raided. Everybody on the bandstand was locked up, he said, except Holiday. Somehow in the confusion of the bust, she managed to trip away. After that night, Holon and Holiday gigged in after-hours places all over Brooklyn and Queens for about 2 years.<sup>20</sup>

### **Farmer John**

One of the earliest clubs to have an impact on the local scene began from rather humble beginnings, and harkens back to the town of Bedford's rural beginnings. In communities all over the United States, local farmers would grow crops, and sell their produce in those communities by way of push-wagons, usually accompanied by a song or call advertising the item that they were selling. These calls would even make their way into jazz music through songs such as Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man", a reference that will have strong relevance to the club being discussed here, although it is purely

coincidental. Although the farms were largely gone from Bedford-Stuyvesant by the 1930's, the produce peddler and his push-wagon were not. One such businessman named "Farmer John" used to sell watermelons throughout the neighborhood using such a wagon, until eventually he was able to purchase a street-side stand on Bedford Avenue in front of an abandoned store. The store had once been a beer garden during the days when the neighborhood was populated by European immigrants. The produce seller was successful enough to eventually purchase the store behind his stand to sell his produce, and then to ultimately convert it in 1945 to a soul food restaurant and bar. Within a couple of years, it had in place a regular music policy. The bar was appropriately named "Farmer John", and was located on the corner of Fulton Street and Bedford Avenue, with two entrances, the main one being on Fulton Street and the back one on Bedford. Fred Anderson remembered while an adolescent in the days before Air Conditioning was prevalent in small bars, he was able to hang out by the back entrance of Farmer John's and hear the music because both of the doors were open to provide ventilation.



*The New York Age* 10/29/49

Farmer John would become one of the many post-WWII Bed-Stuy clubs that became part of the gig circuit which brought many musicians living in Manhattan to Brooklyn as a part of their regular in-town work. Saxophonist Gene Ammons played a regular gig at Farmer John's in 1947 or 1948, before moving to a regular engagement at another Bed-Stuy club which will be discussed, The Arlington Inn. After Ammons left Farmer John's, the gig was taken over by Rector Bailey. Bailey was a Brooklyn-born multi-instrumentalist who's name will be mentioned frequently in discussions of these years. He was most well known as a guitarist, although he was equally adept at playing Bass, Organ, and Vibraphone, and at different times would have regular engagements at different neighborhood clubs on various instruments.

He was one of the most talented musicians that most people never heard of, although all of the musicians knew of him. On a personal note, I had to learn to ask which instrument he played at a certain engagement because of his prowess on all of them. Bailey was a favorite of guitarist Kenny Burrell, and whenever possible Burrell would make the trek to Brooklyn to play with him at his Eastern Parkway studio.

Although Farmer John's and the other Bed-Stuy clubs were fertile musical environments, they were located in the heart of a tough neighborhood, and business in those clubs could become dicey at times. In one instance, fear of not being paid made for a tense, albeit humorous environment at Farmer John's. Doc Pomus (b. Jerome Felder, 6/7/25) was a rotund, Brooklyn-born Jewish singer who was struck with polio at a young age, and shouted the blues while standing on crutches. He would later become a successful Rhythm and Blues songwriter, writing hits such as *A Teenager in Love* for the Doo-Wop group "Dion and the Belmonts" and *Lonely Avenue* for Ray Charles. In the late 1940's, he was earning his stripes singing for the tough Bedford-Stuyvesant club scene, many times as the only white face in the club. He described an eventful gig at the bar:

One Day I was working a matinee dance with Pete Brown at Farmer John's. Now, The show consisted of Ruth Brown, the great Atlantic Records star, on vocals, George Kirby, the famed comedian, was the MC, and I was hollering the blues. There was a door prize-A huge phonograph and radio combination. When you paid admission to the show you received a stub, and at the end of the afternoon there was to be a drawing and the winner was to receive the door prize.

Well, at the conclusion of the affair, the winning number was announced and when the winner came forward to accept his prize, the huge box was opened and there was nothing inside but rocks and paper. Somebody had "swung" with the "piccolo" [the door prize]. Pete and yours truly beat a hasty retreat to the street. We listened to the sound of the beer bottles breaking, the glasses smashing, and the thuds of the bodies bouncing off the floors and the walls. A bad time was had by all.

Many years later I bumped into George Kirby and I reminded him of the mayhem at the matinee. He cracked up and whispered to me, "you know what really happened that day? Me and my barber buddy from Harlem stole the door prize and sold it for a few coins. This way I had myself covered if I was gonna get stiffed out of my pay when the gig was over. You know how some of those gigs went in those days. And I really was low on loot. Each coin was crucial and I couldn't afford to split with empty pockets.

Well, after all those years I found out what really happened to the "piccolo" at Farmer John's matinee. I guess a bad time was really had by all, except, of course George Kirby and his barber buddy from Harlem.<sup>21</sup>

## **The Krulik Brothers-Owned Clubs:**

### **The Arlington Inn**

The Arlington Inn was located at 1263 Fulton Street, on the corner of Arlington Place. Opening its doors in 1944, it was the first bar in



Brooklyn owned by a pair of business-oriented siblings, Jack and Frank Krulik. As was the case with many of the nightclubs opened in Bedford-Stuyvesant after the war, the Arlington Inn was affected by the Federal Cabaret Tax, and rather than try to impose the twenty percent tax on its customers in this hard-working neighborhood with people of mixed incomes, it initially opened without a music policy, and operated as such for the first five years of its existence.

It wasn't until around 1949 or so that music began to be featured at the Arlington. Around this time and into the early 1950's, Alto Saxophonist Pete Brown, who lived on Macon Street between Nostrand Avenue and Arlington Place just behind the club, had a steady engagement at the club. Soon afterwards, or possibly during periods when Brown was on the road, Rector Bailey began playing regularly at the Arlington. Brooklyn-born Pianist Joe Knight, who is immortalized by John Coltrane in his composition "Mr. Knight" (From the LP *Coltrane Plays The Blues*, Atlantic 1382, Rec'd 10/24/60), also had a steady gig at the Arlington for a time in the early 1950's.

When the Arlington and the Verona were the only two clubs owned by the Krulik Brothers, if one was playing at the Verona and a name act came in with a band of their own, often the band which was in residence would be sent to the Arlington to play until the name act left. From the end of the war until the closing of some of the Krulik-owned clubs in the 1970's, this arrangement provided steady employment for local musicians, and places for young musicians to sit in.

The neighborhood's nightclubs such as the Arlington Inn were also occasionally rented out to hold special functions, taking the place of the many neighborhood Ballrooms that served the same function before World War II. On Thursday December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1949, *The New York Age* presented a charity benefit for the Carlton Avenue YMCA at the Arlington Inn. It was another star-studded event held within the neighborhood, although most of the performers involved had either already performed at Bed-Stuy clubs, or would do so in the near

future. Sarah Vaughan was the headline attraction, and she took off from her engagement at the Manhattan Paramount to join the festivities. Other performers included Savannah Churchill, Erroll Garner, Jimmy Breedlove, Babs Gonzales and his 3 Bips and a Bop, Art Hodes, Sammy Price, Chippie Hill, Doc Pomus, and Wild Bill Moore.

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*The New York Amsterdam News 12/10/49*

It wasn't until after the opening of the Krulik-owned Brooklyn Baby Grand in 1951, which was less than a block away, that multi-act cabaret shows began to appear at the Arlington Inn. By this time, the Krulik Brothers had established a network of clubs, and they would often keep musicians working by rotating them between the different establishments. The smaller clubs such as the Arlington were also used to try out acts, gauging their acceptance by the public before placing them in their more high-profile clubs. By June of 1951, the house band was comprised of an Organ Trio led by Alto Saxophonist Burnie Peacock, and later that year a review led by impersonator "Manhattan "Oh Please" Paul" was brought into the Arlington Inn. The organ would be a mainstay at the Arlington until its closing, and after the floorshows ceased it was still known as an organ bar. Over the next few years, the house band would rotate between Peacock, Clint Smith, Al Lyle, Eddie Martin and Organists Sarah McLawler (who was highly praised by Randy Weston during one of our interviews) and King Solomon, who was hugely popular, and after beginning to play the

club in December of 1952 would be a fixture there in long-term stretches until 1955.



*The New York Age* 10/25/52

Rector Bailey began playing there on Organ in the late 1950's, after leading the house band while playing Guitar some years earlier. Organist Al Jarvis also had a lengthy engagement at the Arlington around 1957 or so. Playing with him was drummer Ronnie Cole, the son of the aforementioned saxophonist/clarinetist Rupert Cole. In an example of the interconnectedness of the Krulik-owned Brooklyn clubs, the exposure led to a lucrative partnership for Cole, and his first opportunities to play extensively outside of Brooklyn. In June of 1957, pianist/organist Ram Ramirez was working with saxophonist King Curtis' group at the Brooklyn Baby Grand. After their show was over

he walked down the block to the Arlington Inn and heard Cole playing with Al Jarvis. He asked him to join him on the spot for a new group he was putting together, and the Ram Ramirez-Ronnie Cole duo was born. The group, with Ramirez on Organ, was a popular 1960's ensemble, and he and Cole would work together frequently in many different settings during the next few decades.

### **The Verona Café**

The Verona Café (or Café Verona) was located at 1330 Fulton Street, just off of the corner of Fulton and Verona Avenue. It would be the second Brooklyn nightclub owned by the Krulik brothers, and was located only two blocks down from the Arlington Inn. It opened its doors on July 13, 1945, and at the time it was reported as "The most beautiful tavern in our neck of the woods."<sup>22</sup> Unlike the Arlington Inn, it quickly instituted a music policy, through some means able to do so despite the Federal Cabaret Tax.

There was an even larger multitude of musicians living in Bedford-Stuyvesant within the first few years after the end of the war than before it. Many former Harlemites had established a new presence there, and the young Brooklyn musicians who were attending High School before the war, people of the age of Max Roach, Cecil Payne, and Randy Weston were now coming of age and beginning to work professionally in the neighborhood and beyond. The Verona began using local talent to lead its house bands, and would bring in big name acts at different times, mainly as singles, to work with them. The intersection of local musicians with these big name acts that came in to the Verona and other clubs also offered many musicians important exposure which led to the launching of their careers well beyond the borders of Brooklyn, or New York City, for that matter. By December 1945 the Verona was featuring elaborate, multi-act floor shows, weekly Jam Sessions, and Amateur nights. It became one of the first to set a precedent for having such involved performances in a neighborhood establishment, and many others would soon follow. During his pre-High School years, Fred Anderson remembers seeing

Nat "King" Cole and Louis Jordan at the Verona. Also in 1945 the house band was led by Tenor Saxophonist Ray Abrams.

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NY Amsterdam News 12/1/45



Ray Abrams' band would begin the year 1946 at the Verona, and on January 19, Dinah Washington was brought to begin a lengthy engagement at the club. Just five days earlier she recorded her first sessions for Mercury under the supervision of Norman Granz, who had secured her talents from the smaller Apollo Label. Aside from her Apollo and earlier Keynote recordings, she had been the featured vocalist with Lionel Hampton for a little over three years. Initially she was backed by Abrams' group, and this may have been where she first heard a fourteen year old Wynton Kelly, who was already working in with local R&B groups, and occasionally sitting in with Abrams band. In a few years he would be Abrams' regular pianist, and by 1951 he would be the pianist in Washington's band. By the end of January and in the middle of Washington's engagement, Don Byas was brought in to lead the house band at the Verona. With him were bassist Leonard Gaskin, drummer Vess Payne, vocalist Warren Evans, and 22 year old Bud Powell. Powell and Payne had recently worked together in Cootie Williams Orchestra. Powell had never lacked confidence in his own playing, and although his winding excursions into Bebop harmony were cherished by most modernists at the time, they could be hard on some vocalists according to Gaskin:

"Bud would make the most beautiful introductions. [One] time, he's supposed to provide a [brief] intro for Evans. And he makes a *looonnng* intro, which he ends with an elaborate arpeggio. And when he gets to the end of the keyboard, he just keeps going and walks right off the bandstand. *Gone*.

And the singer's standing at the mike." But he didn't treat all vocalists the same. This same Byas group also backed Dinah Washington and, Gaskin says, "Powell was terrific behind her."<sup>23</sup>

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NY Amsterdam News 1/19/46

In May 1946 Tenor Saxophonist Hal Singer worked the Verona Cafe. In his band was the young, but already very individualistic pianist Herbie Nichols. Singer would have an early R&B hit in 1948 with his recording of "Cornbread", but as Nichols put it, "This was before [those] days, when he used to emulate Don Byas."<sup>24</sup> Singer seemed to have an ear for pianists, as Brooklyn-born pianist Wynton Kelly's first recording

session would be that same one which produced Singer's 1948 hit for Savoy, which also could have been a result of the exposure that Kelly was getting by sitting in at the Verona. The length of Singer's engagement at the Verona is not known, but his band along with Nichols may have also backed up Billy Eckstine, who performed at the Verona Café on Sunday, June 30.

In the late 1940's, Herman Chittison, the pianist remembered by Randy Weston as being able to play anything in any key, formed a trio with Rector Bailey. Bailey, after hearing white blues shouter Doc Pomus at the Pied Piper in Manhattan, invited him to join the group for a date at the Verona Café. In Alex Halberstadt's biography of Pomus', *Lonely Avenue: The Unlikely Life and Times of Doc Pomus*, a description of the 1940's scene at the Verona is given which also describes the acceptance of the white, disabled blues singer working in the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant:

[Rector] Bailey made good money playing clubs in Brooklyn and New Jersey to nearly all-black, ghetto crowds. Forget the Greenwich Village

hipsters, he told Doc. The outer-borough clubs would show him a whole other level of appreciation. The idea intrigued Doc. [He] showed up at that first gig at the Verona Café, a dark, shabby room on Fulton Street, a bustling thoroughfare in poor, dangerous Bedford Stuyvesant. It was a casual, throwaway week-night show. Chittison played piano in the florid style of Art Tatum; along with the rhythm section, Bailey laid in a driving, muscular groove. Even before he stepped up to the microphone, Doc noticed the alert, hard-drinking audience eyeing him. In Bed Stuy, you'd sometimes spot a white face or two in the back of a room, but never onstage. Doc soon learned that on most nights the joints were 100 percent sepia—loud black entertainment for a good-time black clientele. Nothing in common, he thought, with the polite, "integrated" rooms on Fifty-second Street, where the tables were jammed with recent Princeton grads in Charvet ties nursing their Scotch and milks and nodding to each other with heavy-lidded eyes in a kind of Confucian approbation.

The blacks watched Doc with rapt curiosity. Who was this rotund ofay poseur with his crutches and braces? Doc could tell they didn't know whether to expect imitation or homage or all-out comedy. No audience had ever watched him so intensely, so interested in what he'd do. It hadn't occurred to him then that they'd never seen a white man on this stage—or any stage—singing their music. Doc stepped onto the bandstand, grabbed the mike like it was a sputtering torch and shouted the first note, coming down hard on top of the beat. The room blew up. It was all Doc could do to keep his voice above the hollering and wailing around him; when he was done, they received them as though he'd just punched Max Schmeling into a coma. Rector Bailey was grinning a "told-you-so" grin. He'd been right.<sup>25</sup>

The Verona discontinued their large floor show policy sometime in the late 1940's, and began to feature small groups. Alto Saxophonist Pete Brown had a regular engagement there in the early 1950's, and after he moved to the Arlington Inn, another neighborhood club also owned

by the Krulik brothers, Rector Bailey took over leadership of the house band. By the mid 1950's the Verona and the surrounding area had begun to suffer a noticeable decline, especially to those who remembered its glory days immediately following the war. "The Verona was a plush joint at one time when I was a kid, and then years later it became a bucket of blood, you know. They used to fight in that joint every night! But they always had an organ player", Fred Anderson remembered.

### **Brooklyn Baby Grand Café**

The Brooklyn Baby Grand was located at 1274 Fulton Street, just off of the Southeast corner of Fulton and Nostrand Avenue. It was the borough counterpart to the Baby Grand Café on 125<sup>th</sup> street in Harlem, which opened in 1946, and along that Harlem establishment was also owned by the Krulik brothers. It was the third nightclub opened in Brooklyn by the brothers, with all three being located within a two block area of Fulton between Arlington and Verona Place. As with each

successive opening by the enterprising brothers, each club was more lavish than its predecessor, and in Brooklyn the Baby Grand was to be their current flagship. Of great importance is that with its opening, the Krulik brothers created a four-club network in which to offer plenty of rotating, long-term work to its entertainers. The fees of larger name acts could be justified by offering them work at both the Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant clubs, which also ensured that Brooklyn patrons once again didn't have to cross the river to see the biggest acts. They would soon add another club in Brooklyn, The Town Hill, and a club in Jamaica, Queens, The Galaxy Supper Club to their network. On March 30, 1951, the Brooklyn Baby Grand opened its doors, and unlike other clubs which opened initially without a musical policy or direction in place, the Baby Grand was a full-scale cabaret from its inception. Along with the house band, the components of the show would include two vocalists, usually one Jazz vocalist and one Blues shouter, a Comedian, and a Shake-dancer. Jazz never comprised the majority of its programming, although it did have a continuous presence. The musical focus was on Jump Blues/Rhythm and Blues, and later Soul

music, which the owners knew would cater to the neighborhood's African-American working-class patrons from their previous experience with clubs in Harlem and Brooklyn. However, its policy of continuous music from 8:00 P.M. to 4:00 A.M. seven nights a week offered steady work for many neighborhood musicians who led its various house bands through the years, most of whom at its opening were reared strictly on Bebop and Hard Bop. Those that fell under the good graces of the owners were allowed to rotate almost continuously in the house bands of all four clubs either as leader or sideman. It gave some of them their first experiences playing music other than jazz during the times when those genres began to replace jazz as the popular music in the Black community. For some musicians, the experience solidified the transition from aspiring to become jazz musicians to becoming primarily Rhythm and Blues musicians, and for others it helped to simply make them more versatile musicians while they continued to be focused on playing jazz.

Opening night featured singer/bandleader Willie Bryant as emcee, who by then had a huge following in Brooklyn, and blues singer Albinny Jones, who was the headliner the first recurring show at the Baby Grand. Early on the house band was under the leadership of Tenor Saxophonist Morris Lane, and he was in place in May of 1951 when blues singers Delores Brown and Brooklynite Mildred Anderson co-headlined the show at the Baby Grand. Lane was an early Rhythm and Blues saxophonist who had, just a few years before, participated an early Bebop Sessions co-led by Gil Fuller and Fats Navarro for the Savoy label in 1946. By July 1951 local drummer Eddie Coombs would lead the house band and would do so for the next two years.

Eventually, local organist Dean Oliver, who received high praise from Randy Weston when I spoke with him, was enticed to leave his long-term engagement at the Kingston Lounge and join the show at the club. During this time the Brooklyn Baby Grand began to establish itself one of the "Go-to" nightclubs for all of New York City. Comedians such as Nipsy Russell and Dick Gregory would become regular performers at the Baby Grand, while celebrities such as heavyweight



champion Ezzard Charles (who also was a competent bass player and may have sat in with Lane's band during his visit) began making appearances in the audience of the Baby Grand, to the delight of Brooklynites. Blues singers such as Doc Pomus and Big Joe Turner would perform there over the next year.



*NY Amsterdam News 9/20/52*

During one of the multi-week runs at the Baby Grand, the Jazz vocalist component of the show was handled by none other than Betty Carter,

then still going by her nickname given to her while in the Lionel Hampton Orchestra, "Betty Be-Bop". By the time she played the club for the second time in February of 1953, she had enough of a reputation to have her full name printed without any mention of Hampton.



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*NY Amsterdam News 6/28/52*

When Blues shouter Jimmy Rushing was playing at the Brooklyn Baby Grand with Shake-dancer Chinky Grimes in 1955, it offered an opportunity for one of the most interesting publicity shots to date:



Robert Blake

**■ Rib Teaser:** Teasing shapely Chinky Grimes with a platter full of barbecued ribs, roly-poly blues singer Jimmy Rushing tempts the dieting dancer with a choice piece. Chinky, on a strict diet, managed to hold out. The pair is appearing at Brooklyn's Baby Grand Cafe.

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A policy of Wednesday night jam sessions was implemented around 1965, and at the time the stellar line-up of the house band included Pianist Joe Knight, Tenor Saxophonist Frank Haynes, Bassist Ernie Farrow, and Trumpeter Vincent Pitts. Pianist Ed Stoute was in the house band at the Baby Grand around 1960, at the time when it was led by Saxophonist Jimmy Chisolm. He described the experience as the “first time that he was pressed to play music other than jazz.” Rhythm and Blues hits of the day dominated the musical selections, and Stoute had to immediately learn songs by Sam Cooke, Lloyd Price, and others to satisfy the patrons.

He also had never played for vocalists before being hired at the Baby Grand, and he described the lineup of the nightly show as still being comprised of the same two vocalist/Comedian/Shake-dancer format.

He recalled:

“As a matter of a fact one of my first gigs, where I first learned to play for singers, I started working at the Baby Grand in 1960 or so. All we wanted to play was bebop—we were young, we didn’t play for no singers! So I got this gig at the Baby Grand with bass and drums. The set up was they had a comic

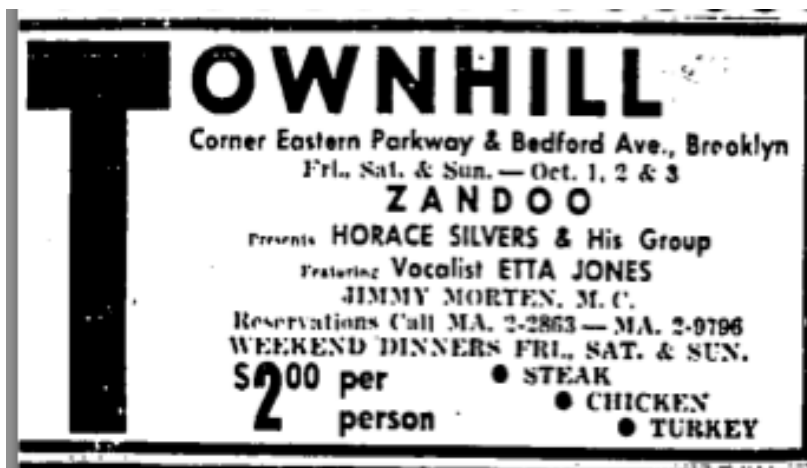
MC and a shake dancer; the girls didn't take off all their clothes, they just did a little dance and took some clothes off, and that was quite sufficient for the times [laughs]"<sup>26</sup>

## **The Town Hill**

The Town Hill was another nightclub located in the Crown Heights neighborhood. It was the fourth nightclub opened by the Krulik brothers in Brooklyn, and was a swankier place, along the lines of the two Baby Grand clubs and the Tip Top. It had an address of 391 Eastern Parkway, and was situated on the corner of Eastern Parkway and Bedford Avenue. It opened on Sunday, April 18, 1954, and like the other Krulik-owned clubs, it was centered on multi-act, variety show-type entertainment, but jazz would comprise a small part in the programming, at least for a time. They did start off on the right foot though, as the inaugural jazz band at the Town Hill was a group led by Don Gordon, featuring Pianist Duke Jordan, Bassist Percy Heath, and Saxophonist Cecil Payne. Gordon's group served as the house band at the Town Hill for the first two weeks of its operation.

The nightclub immediately became an important part of the Krulik brothers network. Now an artist that was a hit at one of their clubs was almost certainly guaranteed work at one or more of the others. It was quite common for the more popular artists to open at the Brooklyn Baby Grand, move to the Harlem Baby Grand, then to the Galaxy in Jamaica, and then back to Brooklyn to the Town Hill. The local musicians comprising the house bands from all of the involved boroughs would also be moved around throughout the clubs. It became a profitable business venture for the owners, and for those in the neighborhood it comprised an important social component to their experience living there. "Every weekend the adults would get dressed up and go to clubs such as the Town Hill, which was close to where I lived. My mother saw Dinah Washington and Della Reese there", Jimmy Cozier remembered. Again, the significance is that people in the neighborhood could go *around the corner from their houses* and see stars such as Dinah Washington and Della Reese, instead of going to Manhattan.

In that first year 1954, for at least part of the time the line-up consisted a number of popular Jazz instrumental stars, paired with popular vocalists.



*New York Amsterdam News 10/2/54*

The presenter of the engagement featuring Horace Silver, Etta Jones and Jimmy Morton, known by the show business name Zandoo, was a Brooklyn-born dancer, poet, philosopher, and all around Jazz aficionado named Vincent Jones. He was a childhood friend of Randy Weston, Max Roach, and other musicians of that generation. Jones was the person who introduced the music policy at another club which will be discussed, Tony's Grandean, and coincidentally this entire musical package including Jimmy Morton, who was the first M.C at

Tony's had performed at that club prior to the opening of the Town Hill.

Of course, if you could play the trumpet and sing, the club could kill two birds with one stone. Such was the case when Trumpeter/vocalist Valaida Snow performed at the Town Hill a few weeks after Silver's group.



New York Amsterdam News 10/30/54

By October, the Town Hill installed an Organ at the club, and organist Vin Strong was hired as the club's first organist. Strong would also record his only session as a leader for the Regent label within a month of his playing at the club, alongside bassist Charles Mingus, and drummer Jimmy Smith, among others. By April of the 1955, Herman Chittison and his trio were playing at the Town Hill, although the club was already beginning to favor vocalists as their featured attractions.



One reason for the Chittison's presence at the Town Hill was that he may have had a staunch fan in the current manager of the club. In 1948, pianist and Bandleader Luis Russell disbanded his big band and opened a Luncheonette in Brooklyn. That business began to fail at some point, and around 1955, Russell became the manager of the Town Hill. It was there that he met his wife to be, Pianist/Vocalist/Guitarist Carmine Ray, described in an interview with Russell's widow:

*"We had formed a trio: Edna Smith, bass, Pauline Braddy, drums, and myself on piano," she said. "Mr. Luis Russell, who was managing a room called Town Hill, came to the Village Door where we were playing. [He was] looking for a group to fill in while another of his groups was held over elsewhere. He hired us sound-unheard because he liked our press photo. The drum kit, the bass, and we piled into my car, and we made it for opening night. We had never laid eyes on Luis Russell prior to that."* Carline related an occasion when a police precinct captain paid Russell a visit. *"They went into Luis' office scowling. When they came out they were both smiling. I said right there that I had to get to know Mr. Russell better."* The Town Hill gig that was originally booked for two weeks lasted six months. Being a pianist himself, Russell kept the piano well-tuned for Carline and always asked her if *"everything was all right."* Soon, she was dining at his house, where she sampled his native Panamanian cuisine. Things got warmer. *"He took me to Basin Street East, where I got to meet Louis Armstrong for the first time," she said. "We became engaged on New Year's Eve 1955-56, which was my final year of my Masters at Manhattan School of Music."*<sup>27</sup>

By 1957 the formula for the Town hill was set, and vocalists were in. January of that year brought an All-Star vocal revue featuring Arthur Prysock, and Erroll Garner's piano-playing brother, Linton Garner.

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*New York Amsterdam News 1/26/57*

During the daylight hours of the first week of October 1957, Dinah Washington was in a Manhattan studio recording what would become the album "Dinah Washington Sings Fats Waller" (EmArcy MG 36119) on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> of that month. During the evenings, she was performing at the Town Hill. One night, when she was under the weather, her friend Billie Holiday performed a favor for her by filling in

at the club. Unfortunately this act prompted a police investigation, because Holiday's Cabaret Card had been revoked because of an incident involving drugs. She was able to perform though, and the sometimes limited reach of the Police department and other entities into an entertainment world quite intertwined with organized crime at the time may have played into this scenario. Aside from the musical presence at the club, there was also the presence of the Italian Mafia at the Town Hill and the other Krulik-owned clubs, remembered well by musicians and patrons alike, along with the presence of Prostitution and occasional Gambling. As the programming at the Town Hill ventured more into Rhythm and Blues in the upcoming years, the gangsters that were associated with the new superstars at the club made more frequent appearances there. As the club leaned more toward the new popular music of the late 1950's and 1960's, entertainers such as Roy Hamilton, Ben E. King, and Jackie Wilson became the preferred type of headliner at the Town Hill. It is even said that it was at the Town Hill where Chubby Checker first performed "The Twist", although Manhattan's Peppermint Lounge ended up

getting the credit. The Club did still hire a full time house band which either backed up the headliners, or played in-between sets. For a time in 1963, the house band was led by Bill Cobham, the father of drummer Billy Cobham, who had just graduated from high school a year earlier.

## **OTHER NEIGHBORHOOD NIGHTCLUBS**

### **The Kingston Lounge**

Just across Atlantic Avenue, On the corner of Kingston Avenue and Bergen sat the Kingston Lounge, with a street address of 120 Bergen Street. At it's inception it was owned and operated by Cain Young, who had experience operating nightclubs in the neighborhood, as he had also been the manager of the hugely popular Bedford Ballroom during

its existence. The Kingston Lounge opened its doors in March of 1944 as a restaurant and bar without a music policy. After the club expanded its space twice within the first three months of operations, the stage was set to compete with the Arlington Inn, and later the Verona Café as the swankiest nightclub in the neighborhood. All that was needed was the music, which would take almost four years to arrive at the lounge. On December 19, 1947, the Kingston Lounge opened its Musical Cocktail Lounge, with the Rhythm and Blues vocal group "The Ravens" as headliners. The club's initial policy was to bring in headliners as singles for three days only, Friday through Sunday, and not to have a house band during the week, although that would change as the club's popularity and profile increased. Female vocalists became the preferred attraction at the Kingston during its first few years, although a few male crooners would also make appearances. Rhythm and Blues would also have a presence at the Lounge, but it was clear that the music was to be primarily jazz as time went on.

They would start their first year with an impressive lineup. In the beginning of that year, bassist Eddie Williams began a multi-week engagement leading the house trio which accompanied each headlining performer during the weekend engagements at the Kingston Lounge. Williams, who may have been living in the neighborhood at the time, was the bassist with guitarist Johnny Moore's popular group, "Johnny Moore's Three Blazers", which had a hit record in 1945 with "Driftin' Blues" featuring pianist/vocalist Charles Brown. His group also included bassist/pianist/trombonist Johnny Drummond, who had recorded on Bass with Tab Smith and Skeets Tolbert. More than likely he was playing piano with the group, although his tenure in the group would be cut short by his untimely death from a stroke near the end of April.

January 16-19 saw vocalist Gwen Tynes performing at the Kingston Lounge, just off of her engagement being featured with Charlie Barnett's orchestra. She would become a favorite of the club, playing there multiple times in 1948, and fairly regularly over the next couple of years. A couple of weeks later, Sarah Vaughan was the featured

performer from January 30-February 2. The *New York Amsterdam News* reported that "the incomparable song stylist filled the club to its full capacity"<sup>28</sup> during her engagement . This event was also remembered years later by many in the neighborhood. Saxophonist Jimmy Cozier remembered that his parents told him with pride that they were among the patrons during Vaughan's stay at the Kingston. Although his mother also attended, his father had a special insight into the events going on at the Lounge, as he was working there as a waiter during the time when Vaughan was wowing the audience.



*New York Amsterdam News* 1/31/48

Vaughan was followed by vocalists/pianists Una Mae Carlisle and Hadda Brooks. March 12-14 saw the first of many appearances of Dinah Washington at the Kingston Lounge. Washington would perform at the lounge for two consecutive months, returning also for the weekend of April 9-11.



*New York Amsterdam News 3/13/48*

The following week after Dinah packed the Kingston Lounge for the third consecutive time, vocalist Helen Humes began the first of her many visits to the club. She played the Kingston during the weekend of May 14-16. The male vocalists began to establish a presence at the lounge during that summer also, with notable events such as a double



bill featuring vocalists Al Hibbler and Willie Bryant during the weekend of June 11-13, which was enough of a hit to be held over for a second week. The high point of that summer was undoubtedly a birthday celebration held for crooner Billy Eckstine's at the club. Eckstine played the club from July 3-9, and although his birthdate, July 8, fell on the Thursday during his engagement, his party at the Kingston Lounge was held on Friday July 9, which was the last day of his engagement. Celebrities from all over the city made their way to Brooklyn to celebrate with Eckstine, including Oscar Hammerstein, Sugar Ray Robinson, Fred Robbins, and others.



**ECKSTINE'S CELEBRATE**  
**HERE:** At the birthday party for Billy Eckstine held recently while the famed singer was appearing at the Kingston Lounge, many notables were on hand to join in the festivities. The event planned by Cain Young, amiable proprietor of the nitery, lacked little in gaiety. Shown in the above photo are Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Padrom, Billy and his wife, the lovely June Eckstine and standing in the rear, Willie Bryant and Roy Carroll. Photo by H. Parker.

*New York Amsterdam News 7/17/48*

Helen Humes made a return visit to the lounge from July 30-August 1, the first of many appearances at the Kingston Lounge. It was around August of 1948 that the Kingston began to incorporate organists into

their programming, although they would not yet invest in a permanent Hammond organ for their lounge. In what was probably a try-out before making a substantial investment into the larger Hammond "B" series organs. The smaller Hammond Solovox organ was purchased. The Solovox was a smaller, portable instrument which consisted of a miniaturized 3 ½ octave keyboard, attached just underneath the keyboard of a standard piano, and connected via cable to a tone cabinet which contained speakers, vacuum tubes, and other electronics. The tone cabinet also had a pitch control knob on the side in order to adjust the intonation of the instrument to the piano with which it was being paired. Because of the placement of the keyboard, pianists were able to incorporate both sounds into their performances, in much the same way that pianists with synthesizers do today, although the Solovox was too limited in range and capability to replace the piano.

During that month the house trio duties were taken over by the versatile Gene Redd and his Trio, featuring pianist/organist Henry

Moore. He was present for a weekend featuring Gwen Tynes and Earl Coleman from September 9-11. Redd recorded on Trumpet and Vibraphone during his career, and at the time of his playing at the Kingston Lounge, had just left the trumpet section of Cootie Williams big band. He primarily played vibraphone at the Kingston Lounge, and within a couple of years would be a member of Earl Bostic's band, alongside Brooklyn pianists Cliff Smalls and Joe Knight, and a young John Coltrane. Redd would soon go on to become musical director at King Records, and produce and perform on some of James Brown's early hits for that label.

In October of 1948, the house band duties were taken over by the Jackie Paris Trio, consisting of bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Mal Middleman alongside the pianist/vocalist. In Paris, the Kingston had found a more than capable entertainer to perform on weeks when the desired headliner couldn't be obtained. October 15-17 found the Delta Rhythm Boys performing at the Kingston Lounge with Paris' trio. This event was made even more significant because of a visit by Brooklyn-

born vocalist Adalaide Hall, visiting her hometown after spending the previous 13 years living in Europe. As expected, the Brooklyn crowd celebrated her homecoming with extreme fervor, and wouldn't allow her to leave before she performed with the trio. During the weekend of October 22-24, Helen Humes returned to the Kingston Lounge alongside crooner Earl Coleman along with the Paris group, and the following weekend saw the return of Billy Eckstine to the club, still backed by Paris. The next month brought vocalist Maxine Sullivan to the club for her first performance in Brooklyn in quite some time.



*New York Amsterdam News 11/13/48*

To close out the year, Helen Humes was brought back for the weekend of December 31 through January 2<sup>nd</sup> along with Saxophonist Teddy McRae's Trio. Earlier in December, the Kingston had a permanent Hammond organ installed, and with that the writing was on the wall. Although headliners would still be brought to the club, they would begin to appear with less frequency going forward. The availability of talented, local organists would ensure that that instrument would be a staple at the club, and the management took notice of the organists' ability to entertain on weekends when no headliner was present. With the instrument gaining such popularity, the competition between the neighborhood clubs for the best performers between the neighborhood clubs was heated. By the time the Kingston Lounge instituted its music policy, the Arlington Inn, and the Verona Café were in full swing, and both had Organs installed. Within a few years, night clubs such as the Brooklyn Baby Grand and the Tip Top, and other smaller bars such as Brownies, Cross Road Bar, and Turbo Village would also fuel the local competition for top performers on that instrument. Organist Charlie Stewart began playing at the Kingston almost as soon as the

instrument was plugged in, and was the house organist for seven months before he moved on to an engagement at Harlem's Wells Music Bar. Before leaving to return to Europe from her hometown visit, Adalaide Hall performed with Stewart at the lounge during the week of February 6-12. By September 1949, Brooklyn-born Dean Oliver would take over, and would be the organist at the Kingston Lounge for almost three years, until he was enticed to move to the rival Brooklyn Baby Grand around August of 1952. Beginning in November of 1952, the composer of "Lover Man", Ram Ramirez took over the organ duties at the Kingston Lounge for a couple of months. After the Kingston Lounge underwent a change in management and renovation around 1954, upon re-opening the multi-talented Rector Bailey took over the regular engagement at the Kingston on the Organ.

GIFTS TO THE LADIES

GIFTS TO THE LADIES

**GRAND OPENING**  
(Under New Management)

The New  
***Kingston Lounge***  
Restaurant Bar and Cocktail Lounge  
120 Kingston Ave., cor. Bergen St., Brooklyn

Mon., Nov. 1—Through Thurs., Nov. 4,  
— Featuring —

• **RECTOR BAILEY**  
(AT THE HAMMOND ORGAN)  
*Serving the Finest Foods, Wines and Liquors*

• **Bobby Nickens • Al Weeks, Bartenders**  
• **Randolph Scott (Scotty), Chef**  
• **Ida Hill-Barmaid • Harry Jupiter-Mgr.**  
• **Edward Beldegreen, Prop.**

*New York Amsterdam News 10/30/54*

Also in 1949, the Kingston Lounge began to become a popular place to hold for-rent social events, such as parties Honoring a person/event, and Benefit concerts/galas. The members of the neighborhood Social Clubs, which used to hold dances while teenagers before the war, were now “all grown up” and instead holding the popular “Cocktail Sips” in



the neighborhood lounges which made themselves available. There would always be plenty of entertainment at these events, either by hiring the performers in residence at the location of the event, or sometimes bringing their own, made up of the great local talent. On one such occasion at the Kingston Lounge, one of the groups employed consisted of a trio made up of 17-year old Wynton Kelly, Saxophonist Benjamin "B.T." Lundy, and Bassist Franklin Skeets. B.T. Lundy and his bass-playing brother Al Lundy were Bed-Stuy residents from Toronto, Canada, and B.T. would join Tadd Dameron's band, recording with him for the Capitol label, and also participating in the group's engagement as the house band at the Royal Roost in Manhattan. Lundy has proven to be a historically elusive figure, and seems to have abruptly returned to Canada in the 1950's for some reason.

**RAMBLER'S NOTES:** The first cocktail-sip given by The Modern Women S. C., at the Kingston Lounge, Mother's Day, will long be remembered by this Borough's

smart set. The Lounge was packed tighter than a drum with glamorous chicks. And, as the saying goes, where you find pretty girls you will find men. In fact, just about everybody turned out for the gala affair. B. T. (The Kid) Lundy. "Sax."



Franklin Skeets Willie Saunders, "bass" and Wynton Kelly, "plano." made up the trio and the trio made the place rock. The show, which will long be talked about, was M.C.'d by yours truly who brought on show-stoppers James Nelson, pianist, Carmen Taylor, comedian singer, James Johnson, Harold Carney, Marilyn Satherswaite accompanied by David Carter, Lloyd Mayers Trio, Alfred Orange accompanied by Nat Jones, Carol Gambrell and Danny Daniels and Lay Caylipso. The highlight of

*New York Amsterdam News 5/14/49*

The Kingston and the neighborhood's other lounges, aside from becoming places to imbibe and entertain, began to attain other social significance. They became the places for civic organizations and celebrities to reach the people, and their pocketbooks. Organizations such as the NAACP, The Urban League, the Red Cross, the YMCA and others would all use the Kingston Lounge to host fundraising parties,

utilizing the house organist and either a current or former headliner at the club to bring in patrons. African-American sports figures would also use the Kingston Lounge to hold fundraising parties for their own charitable organizations. Both Roy Campanella in 1948, and Don Newcombe would hold charity events at the Kingston Lounge, with Ella Fitzgerald serving as “Honorary Chairman” for Newcombe’s 1949 event, and Organist Dean Oliver providing the entertainment.



*New York Amsterdam News 9/10/49*

### **Club LaCaille, George’s Riviera, The Bamboo Lounge, The Tip**

#### **Top**

It seems that after the opening of the Brooklyn Baby Grand in 1951, others decided to get in on the cabaret business, realizing that the demand for Brooklynites to have local places to see a good show,

without always scurrying across the river was as strong as ever.

Beginning in the early/mid 1950's, enterprising club owners began opening elaborate cabarets, further away from the Fulton Street and Nostrand Avenue "Strip", and deeper into the neighborhood. Most of these places would not be able to sustain maintaining a continuous floor show policy throughout their existence, but they would have them at different times. It is also possible that the Krulik brothers and their organized crime connections may have somehow played into the decision of many new club owners to not open competing businesses so close to the area of Fulton Street near Nostrand Avenue where the brothers owned three cabarets (Baby Grand, Verona, Arlington Inn) in a two-block area.

Club La Caille was one of two lounges in the neighborhood that bore the last name of the owner, one H. La Caille. The other of his establishments, La Caille's Lounge, at 1023 Fulton Street between Grand Avenue and Downing Street was only a bar with no music policy, but Club La Caille, at 588 Gates Avenue on the corner of

Throop Avenue, maintained a house band and also various dancers and Emcees at times. They did have an organ in the club, played mainly by an organist named Eddie Steede. For a time circa September 1955 a trio led by Brooklyn saxophonist Harold Cumberbatch, and featuring fellow neighborhood residents drummer Al Harewood, and pianist Lloyd Mayers was engaged at Club La Caille. The nightclub opened around 1954, and seems to have been closed by 1960.

<b>VISIT LA CAILLE'S FAMOUS SPOTS</b>	
<b>CLUB LA CAILLE</b>	<b>LA CAILLE'S Lounge</b>
Cor. Throop & Gates Ave.	1023 Fulton St.
<b>EASTER WEEKEND</b>	<b>SPECIAL</b>
<b>EDDIE MARTIN AND HIS TRIO</b>	<b>EASTER COCKTAIL HOUR</b>
Plus ETTA JONES	<b>4 P.M. UNTIL . . .</b>
Continuous Music For Dancing	<b>THE MOST INTIMATE PLACE IN TOWN</b>
All Prices Reduced	Stop and see our Lounge
	Everything for Your Comfort
W. La Caille, Prop.	

*New York Amsterdam News 4/9/55*

Cumberbatch, who was a contemporary of Max Roach, Randy Weston, and Cecil Payne, would be a strong influence on the Bed-Stuy jazz

scene until his passing in the early 1990's. He and Cecil Payne, both starting out on Alto saxophone and later switching to the Baritone, had a friendly rivalry throughout their lives. Both were Brooklyn Beboppers extraordinaire, and would constantly try to "cut" each other when in each other's presence. Historian Phil Schapp, curator of Jazz at Lincoln Center, and deejay on Columbia University's WKCR Radio since the 1970, recalled one eventful night in 1974 or '75 when Payne performed a live broadcast at the station playing solo Baritone Saxophone. It was early one morning after Payne had played an entire engagement at Manhattan's West End club, where Schaap was in charge of the music policy. While in the middle of a number around 3:30 A.M., there was a call at the station. When Schaap answered the phone, it was Cumberbatch. "I hear Cecil Payne fucking up the changes to *All The Things You Are*...tell him to stay there. I'm getting on the number two train and I'm coming up there to show him how to do it," he said, before abruptly hanging up the phone. Schaap, after Payne was finished, played a record, and while it was filling the airwaves he relayed the message to the saxophonist using much more

selective language, but clearly conveying the intent. About 5:30 A.M. or so, Cumberbatch arrived at the station, but he found that upon hearing the details of the phone call, Payne had packed his horn up and left.

Cumberbatch's daughter, Tulivu-Donna Cumberbatch, is a wonderful jazz vocalist whom I had the pleasure of working with more than once when I lived in the neighborhood. She is still a staple of the jazz scene there, and inspires and teaches the next generation of young Bedford-Stuyvesant jazz vocalists.

Brooklyn-born drummer Al Harewood(b. 1923), who was raised on Halsey Street in Bed-Stuy, was another of the talented young musicians that would make a name for himself well beyond the neighborhood borders. His parents were Caribbean immigrants from Barbados, where Harewood still maintains a residence and visits regularly. Although originally a tap dancer, he began playing drums after his older brother, Eustis Harewood went into the Army. "The

drums were just sitting there, so I started to play them. By the time Eustis came back from the Army, he was surprised at how well I could play them, and I became the drummer in the family.”<sup>29</sup> In 1959, he first played with pianist Horace Parlan, and by the next year, along with bassist George Tucker, the Horace Parlan Trio came into existence. They also were engaged as the house band for Blue Note records for the next few years. Aside from recording a number of recordings under the leadership of Parlan, they also backed musicians such as Lou Donaldson, Ike Quebec, Grant Green, and Stanley Turrentine on classic Blue Note recordings. On May 6, 1961, they recorded with saxophonist Dexter Gordon for the first time, on a session under the saxophonist’s leadership and featuring 23-year old Freddie Hubbard, also a Bedford-Stuyvesant resident at the time. The resulting album, *Doin’ Alright* (Blue Note 4077), would become one of Gordon’s seminal recordings, and one of Harewood’s personal favorites. He would participate on fourteen recording session with the Horace Parlan Trio either as a separate unit or accompanying other



artists, and on Twenty-seven sessions for Blue Note in total between 1959 and 1965.

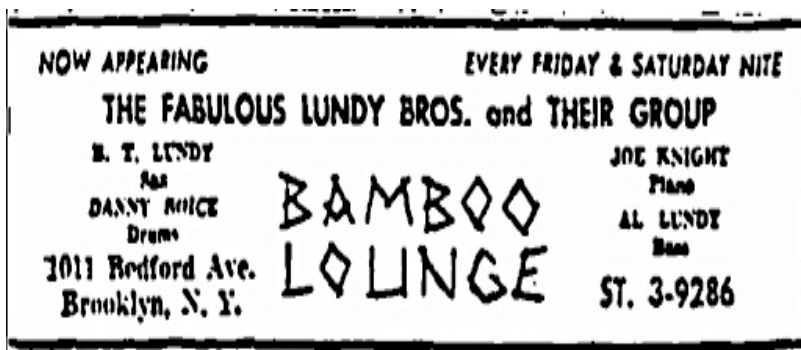
Another nightclub, of which a distinction was made by Jimmy Cozier as being "a *nice* place", was George's Riviera, located on Bedford Avenue and Brevoort Place, and a little closer to "The Strip".



*New York Amsterdam News* 4/9/55

The Bamboo Lounge was another short-lived nightclub, located at 1011 Bedford Avenue, on the corner of Lafayette Avenue. The lounge

was open by the summer of 1954, and had a Hammond organ installed, played by an organist named "King Arthur". The house band for most of 1955 was led by the elusive Lundy Brothers, along with pianist Joe Knight, and drummer Danny Boice.



*New York Amsterdam News 4/9/55*

The Tip Top, which opened its doors in 1952 was probably the club with the longest running floor show policy, lasting regularly into the 1970's, rivaling the Brooklyn Baby Grand in longevity. It was located at 1750 Fulton Street, on the corner of Utica Avenue, where Boys and Girls High School is located today. A Hammond Organ was installed from it's inception, and Sarah McLawler was hired as the first organist at the club, a job she would keep for a number of years. At the time of this writing McLawler is still somewhat active playing, and can be

heard every Sunday at "The Jazz Church", St. Peter's Cathedral on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan, and elsewhere. Also present at the Tip Top was her husband, jazz violinist Richard Otto. They also lived in the neighborhood. By 1954, the Tip Top was known as "The Birdland of Brooklyn", and offered yet another local top-shelf nightclub for the enjoyment of Brooklynites.



*New York Amsterdam News 2/13/54*

Later, in the 1960's, Brooklyn Tenor Saxophonist Trevor Lawrence had a steady engagement at the Tip Top. Lawrence would end up making his mark after moving to Hollywood and becoming one of the most in-

demand Saxophonists, Producers, and arrangers in the R&B field, and is the saxophone player on classic recordings such as Marvin Gaye's *What's Goin' On*, and Stevie Wonder's *Songs in the Key of Life*, among others.

The Tip Top would even include among its performers, forward-thinking pianist and bandleader Sun Ra and his orchestra, who's 1963 engagement at the club was recorded and released as *Sun Ra live at the Tip Top* on his own Saturn record label (Saturn 408).

### **The Round Robins**

Another popular social event which took place at the neighborhood clubs and Bars was one known as the "Round Robin". This short-lived weekly event was originally a collaboration of eight Bed-Stuy Bar owners, and the African-American newspaper *The New York Age*. The idea behind the event was that the closed group of bar owners would combine resources (not limited to money, connections to alcohol

makers/distributors, connections to the entertainment industry) under the auspices of popular *New York Age* columnist Larry Douglas. The event would rotate weekly on Wednesdays between the selected bars, ensuring profits for all, and of course, every detail would be covered in the popular newspaper.

Originally a Charitable Fund was intended to be formed using all or part of the proceeds from the evenings "to carry out beneficial plans"(NY Age 10/22/49), but it is uncertain whether that ever happened. What did happen was that for a few years, on every other Wednesday night beginning on November 2, 1949, one of the ten or so bars in the Round Robin Association would host these events, inviting other bar owners, liquor dealers, neighborhood patrons, and celebrities to come to their establishment and drink, socialize and be entertained. The celebrities were paid to appear only and not necessarily to perform, but of course were free to do so if inclined. And that is what usually happened, with eager patrons and alcohol at an endless supply. For the first few months, the headliner at the Round Robins were almost exclusively jazz musicians, although as time went on Actors and Athletes began to be featured. The participating bars formed an official "Round Robin Association" to keep control of the

name of the event and the profits. Although the participating bars would fluctuate a little, the bars involved were:

Turbo Village

Jefferson Bar

Lucky Spot

Sumner Lounge

Berry Brothers

Farmer John

Topside Tavern

Kingston Lounge

It seems that after the event proved to be profitable, the Krulik brothers wanted in on the act, and the original bar owners were “persuaded” to allow the Arlington Inn, and later the Brooklyn Baby Grand to become a part of the Round Robin Association. After a few months, and much political mayhem within the entities in charge of the events, many of the other Bedford-Stuyvesant bars would take part in the Round Robins, some more regularly than others.

For the first few months, the headliner at the Round Robins were almost exclusively jazz musicians, although as time went on Actors and Athletes began to be featured. At the first event, held at Turbo Village, Billie Holiday was invited, but for some reason she was unable to attend. At the second one held on November 9 at the Jefferson Bar, new hit sensation Ruth Brown was the special guest, to the delight of the over-flowing crowd, and after much enticement, she sang one of her current hits recorded for Atlantic Records, "It's Raining". Her accompanist was Issac Royal, who had previously held the same role with Billie Holiday.



**SEAGRAMS APPROVES:** Last Wednesday night, as the nation's top female singer, Ruth Brown, appeared, as guest artist at the Jefferson Bar, Brooklyn, for Larry Douglas' second N. Y. Age Round Robin, Bob Lindey, one of Seagrams top field men, gives Miss Brown much praise, as a ready one for Broadway's Capitol Paramount Theatres. The "Round Robin" will back her up. (Photo by Dave Turpin.)

*The New York Age 11/19/49*

The next event was held on November 16 at the Lucky Spot Bar, located at 307 Grand Avenue, between Lexington and Greene Avenues. Over 1000 people were packed into the bar for the event, in which local-girl-made-big Savannah Churchill and "new local discovery" vocalist Jimmy Breedlove entertained the patrons. Pianist



Issac Royal and his group, the "Royal Clef Trio" accompanied the two vocalists and also played for the evening.

The fourth Round Robin was held at the Kingston Lounge on November 23, and with the success of the previous events, the Kingston, which had already established itself as the top lounge in the neighborhood to date, had to attempt to outdo the other bars. The entertainment included Saxophonist Buddy Tate and his Trio, Bassist Cedric Wallace (former Fats Waller bassist) and his trio, Saxophonist Teddy McRae, and former Don Redman vocalist Delores Brown. Also in attendance were Brooklyn Dodger Don Newcombe, Ruth Brown, Blanche Calloway, Bob Scipio (manager of the Manhattan Paramount, and former Coney Island club owner in the 1920's), actor Bill Greaves, and other personalities. Reportedly over 1500 people were in attendance that evening.

**Vocalist Delores Brown and Saxophonist Teddy McRae at the  
Kingston Lounge Round Robin, November 23, 1949**



*The New York Age 12/3/49*

Billie Holiday made up for her absence at the first Round Robin by participating at the fifth event, held at the Sumner Lounge on November 30, 1949. At the last minute she replaced Erroll Garner as the headliner, although he would appear at a future Round Robin. She was accompanied by her ever-present lap dog, and her manager John

Levy. The Round Robins had become so popular that arrangements had been made for a live broadcast on WLIB, hosted by Disc Jockey Hal Jackson. The broadcasts would continue weekly through the next year.



**JACK AND BILLIE ON AIR:**Hal Jackson, WLIB's landlord in "The House That Jack Built" brought beautiful Billie Holiday into the airwaves from the Brooklyn Round Robin held at Sumner Lounge last Wednesday night. Disc Jock Jack is shown at extreme left; at center is Bill Comer of Frankfort-Dodge Distillers, and at right is the Lady Day herself—in person.—(Lido Studio Photo.)

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*The New York Age* 12/10/49

The Round Robins became so successful, regularly drawing a thousand or more people, depending on the capacity of the venue, to a location on a mid-week evening, that even Harlemites couldn't ignore it.

"...few things hopped down in Brooklyn as did Larry Douglas' first edition of the New York Age "Round Robin" at Dick Simon's ultra-swank Turbo Village at Halsey and Reid. They were out on the sidewalk trying to get in for hours. The cute toots came out of the mothballs or whatever they hide 'em in over there and balled back as the liquor dealers and local bar owners joined in for Brooklyn's first good deal. McNeal, hear me spiel!"

*The New York Age 11/12/49*

Harlem Bar Owners most certainly couldn't turn a blind eye to the drawing power of the Wednesday night event, and a little more than a month after its Brooklyn debut, on December 6, 1949 the first Round Robin was held in Harlem. The Manhattan event would take place on Tuesday, and later be switched to Thursday, both choices allowing for patrons from either location to attend the other's event. The Round Robin would soon be duplicated in the Bronx, and on Long Island, all under the auspices of *The New York Age* on different week-nights.

The next Round Robin was held on December 7 at the Berry Brothers Bar, at 1714 Fulton Street, which is a part of the location of Boys and Girls High School today. It was owned by the famous tap dancing brothers, Warren and James Berry, and was opened in 1946.

Pianist/Organist Milt Buckner was the special guest, along with a few members of his band. Errol Garner, after being either replaced or substituted for by Billie Holiday a few weeks earlier, was the guest star at the following event on December 14, held at the Topside Tavern, located at 224 Bainbridge Street, at the corner of Ralph Avenue.

Garner had just arrived in town from an out of town job, travelling to Brooklyn directly from Grand Central Station, and contemplated skipping the event. Persevering through his exhaustion he attended the event, "stressing the fact that he didn't want to let the Age or the Round Robin members down by not showing up. He was in such a hurry from the train station that personal grooming had to be sacrificed, and asked reporters at the event to not take his picture, explaining, "I need a shave, excuse me this time." (*The New York Age* 12/24/49)

The next Round Robin, held at Farmer John on December 21, featured Sarah Vaughan and her husband/pianist at the time, George Treadwell. Vocalist/Emcee Willie Bryant was also there, although he arrived early so he could make it back into Manhattan by the beginning of his broadcast on WHOM radio. It also happened to be Treadwell's birthday, and he was promptly serenaded by his wife, along with the Farmer Johns Choir:

**VAUGHAN UPLIFTS ROBIN**

Last Wednesday night at the Round Robin held at Farmer John's, the enchanting Miss Sarah Vaughan (who has just finished a stretch at the Paramount Theatre and who is now currently appearing at Cafe Society) held the Round Robin crowd spellbound. Sarah sang four numbers (in her top-notch fashion) for the Round Robin followers. As Miss Vaughan

sang, one couldn't hear a pin drop . . . as she finished, the crowd roared . . . over and over again. Miss Vaughan arrived at 9:45, along with her husband George Treadwell, and her pianist. On this Round Robin night, at Farmer John's, it was the birthday of Sarah's handsome spouse, so Sarah and the Round Robin crowd sang "Happy Birthday To George."

*The New York Age 12/31/49*

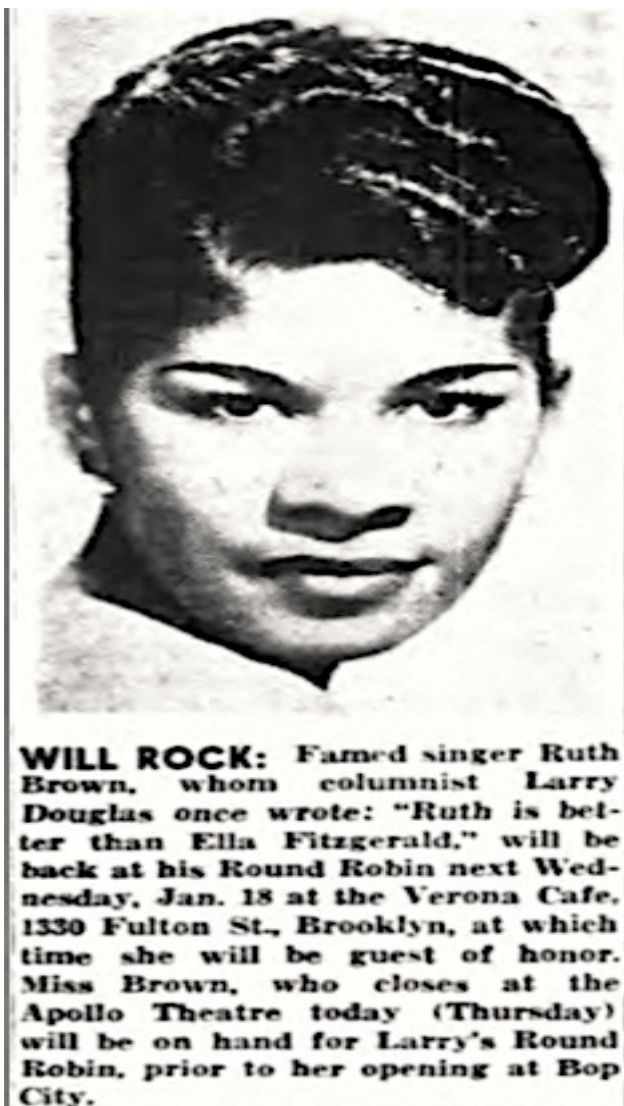
According to accounts of the event, Vaughan “arrived early and stayed late”, and even got a new set of dishes out of the deal, after having them presented to her as a gift from a local Home Appliance Company.

The final event of the year was held at the Arlington Inn on December 28, and featured Savannah Churchill, who was always supportive of the clubs in her hometown. This performance was only one week after the aforementioned benefit for the local Carlton Avenue YMCA at the Arlington Inn, which featured Churchill, Sarah Vaughan, Babs Gonzales, and others. Brooklyn pianist Kenny Watts accompanied her that evening, in which two thousand people reportedly attended. Among them was World Welterweight Champion Sugar Ray Robinson, whose presence would forecast the change in the Round Robin policies. From 1950 forward, the headliners at the Round Robins were not dominated by jazz musicians, although they did make infrequent appearances. Instead, aside from the athletes and actors, vocalists that were associated with the new sounds of Rhythm and Blues began



to replace the Jazz vocalists that were favored just a few months earlier.

Ruth Brown was brought to the Verona Café on January 18, to the delight of 2500 patrons. Brooklyn saxophonist Bruce Hinkson, who was leading the house band at the club, played for the occasion. Larry Douglas, the columnist for *The New York Age* and creator of the Round Robin events, was certainly a fan of Miss Brown, calling her “better than Ella Fitzgerald.”



*The New York Age 1/21/50*

The following Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup> brought double star-power, with bandleader Buddy Johnson, and Heavyweight Ezzard Charles to a Round Robin held at Frank's Caravan Lounge. March 1<sup>st</sup> brought drummer J.C. Heard as the headliner to an event held at the Rex Bar.

Over 1200 people were packed inside the bar, as Heard “bounced out terrific beats on the drums”<sup>30</sup>, while also playing for a rhumba-dancing team.



**HEARD IS HEARD:** Last Wednesday night at the Larry Douglas-club fame. In top photo are Bob bottom photo is a portion of the N. Y. Age Round Robin, more than Lindey of Seagrams; Anthony and more than 1,200 Robin followers 1,200 folks swamped the Rex Bar Mike, owners of Rex Bar, Robin of Larry Douglas and the New York to listen to featured guest artist admirers, and at extreme right Age.—Staff photos by Dave Turpin.

*The New York Age 3/11/50*

Pianist/Vocalist Nellie Lutcher was the special guest at a Round Robin held at Farmer John on March 29. After repeated requests, she sang her hit from the previous year, "Fine Brown Frame".

Many of the smaller bars that didn't have regular music policies, found themselves in need of bands in a hurry to play for the Round Robin events. The young Bed-Stuy musicians took notice and answered the call all over the neighborhood. They put together groups that sometimes persevered and turned into regular outfits, and that sometimes were popular enough to secure regular engagement at the bar in which they were playing. In this picture, 23-year old Brooklyn-born bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik is seen playing with a group of local musicians put together especially for this Round Robin at the Rex Bar on May 31, 1950.



*The New York Age 6/10/50*

The Round Robins would largely discontinue in Brooklyn after 1950, and continue in Harlem in 1951, also fizzling out there in a couple of years. A second incarnation of the event would take place in the 1970's, but by then incorporating music into the weekly series was an afterthought. Left in their wake in Bedford-Stuyvesant was the realization that many of the local bars that had never had a regular music policy would now be seen as bar/jazz clubs, and many would now begin to at least have infrequent music on a regular basis, and

others would become known as full-time jazz bars. Bars such as Ben's, the K&C Lounge, Paul's, and others who had not committed to the presence of music in their establishments when they opened for business would now find their patrons expecting it after participating in the Round Robins.

### **The Bars with off-and-on Jazz activity:**

Almost too numerous to properly document were the many smaller bars that were located in the neighborhood. Whereas the larger nightclubs were concentrated on the main thoroughfares of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Atlantic Avenue or "The Strip" on Fulton Street, the majority of the bars were located mainly on the streets that cut into

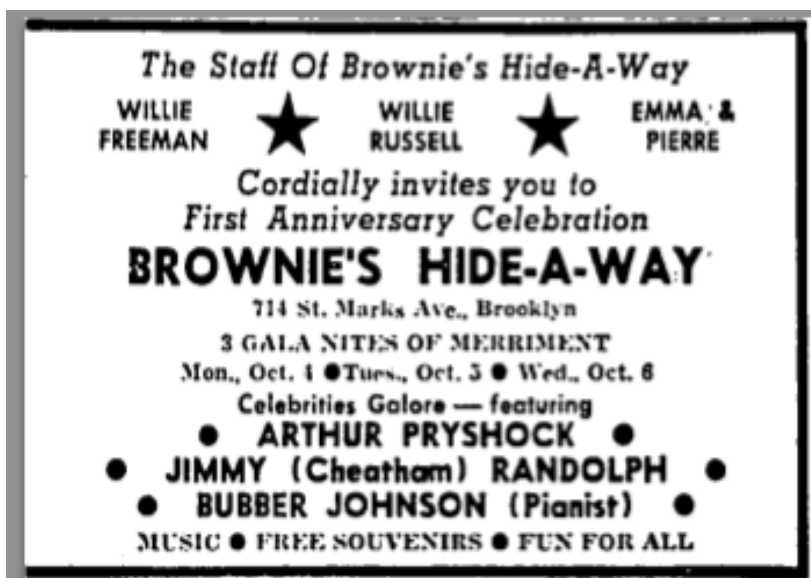
the heart of the neighborhood. Because of the versatility of the Organ and its ability to fill the role of the entire rhythm section on its own, many of these bars featured that instrument beginning in the 1950's until the 1970's or so. Sometime in the mid-1970's some of the clubs began a return to having small jazz bands. They would also open and close, and discontinue their music policies in unpredictable intervals, making them all the more difficult to document effectively. There are some 30 or so neighborhood bars that were reported to have had music at some point or another from 1945 until around 1980, and there were still a few with roots back to the 1940's in operation with regular jazz when I began visiting Brooklyn in the early 1990's. In actuality, many of these bars and the more lavish nightclubs opened on equal ground as far as entertainment was concerned. Many of them began their existence just after World War II strictly as bars/lounges without entertainment, and at different times some turned into cabarets. Some toyed with maintaining a music policy, and others made it a permanent presence, becoming known as Jazz clubs or nightclubs. Of great importance to the local scene, besides providing

work to the more established resident musicians, is that these smaller, off-the-beaten-path bars places gave the young musicians in the neighborhood a place to sit in and play with the older musicians, and as soon as they gained a level of proficiency which was acceptable to either the musicians or the proprietors of the bar, they began playing professionally at these places before beginning to work regularly in Manhattan or on the global jazz scene.

Some of the more significant bars to open during this period that would eventually feature music included Brownie's Hide-A-Way, which was located at 714 St. Marks Avenue between Nostrand and New York Avenues, just a few blocks into Crown Heights. Brownie's opened in late 1953, and was named after the nickname of a popular policeman in the neighborhood. Although it and most of the other bars would not have the elaborate floor shows of the bigger nightclubs, they would occasionally pull an entertainer away from the nightclubs after their engagement had ended there. Local musicians made up the majority of the bands at these bars, and although the salaries were sometimes



not the greatest, the work was steady. Pianist Ed Stoute worked often at Brownies in the late 1960's and 1970's, along with musicians such as drummer Wes Anderson, Jr, the father of saxophonist Wes Anderson III. And when the elder Anderson's saxophone playing son began to show promise, he gained considerable experience sitting in on his father's and other musicians gigs at Brownies and other Brooklyn bars. Brooklyn pianist Gil Coggins, who recorded with Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Jackie McLean, J.J. Johnson and others in the 1940's and 50's, also played at Brownies in the 1970's and early 1980's. He had been a fixture in the neighborhood since those days, although he had been largely absent from the music scene since embarking on a career in Real Estate in 1954. He made no recordings between 1957 and 1990, but kept active playing in the Bedford-Stuyvesant clubs and elsewhere throughout that period.



*The New York Amsterdam News 10/2/54*

When Farmer John, the club that sprouted up from Watermelon seeds on the corner of Fulton Street and Bedford Avenue closed, it was re-opened by new ownership in 1951 and re-named "The Cross Roads Music Bar". Alto Saxophonist Pete Brown had the first engagement there when it opened, but within a few years the Organ and its reduced economic impact on clubs began to take over, the bands were discontinued at the Cross Roads, and Organ players began to be featured in place of bands. It doesn't seem as if the Cross Roads Bar ever installed a full size Hammond Organ, instead opting for adding the Hammond Solovox to the piano already present at the club (for

description see Kingston Lounge section). Local players such as Norman Lester, Marlowe Morris, and Reggie Ashby performed at the Cross Road before it closed down.



*New York Amsterdam News 4/7/51*

The Moulin Rouge was a bar located at 344 Sumner Avenue (renamed Marcus Garvey Blvd.) on the corner of Putnam Avenue. It was a small, neighborhood bar that for a time featured big-time jazz stars. It didn't necessarily advertise, information about who was playing there was strictly word of mouth, but somehow the neighborhood knew. It was, as many of the Bedford-Stuyvesant bars were, the kind of place where musicians such as the sidemen in Miles Davis' band who might not have been big enough names in the early 1950's to led their own

engagement at Birdland or another of the more high-profile Manhattan clubs, could work multi-week engagements in the time off from touring with their regular groups. It was the kind of place that caused a musician to play multiple sets for a hard-working, blue-collar crowd. The nightly music began around 9:00 P.M., and there were at least four or five sets per evening, lasting until around 3:00 A.M. Ed Stoute remembers the Moulin Rouge well. Aside from playing there himself, he recalled,

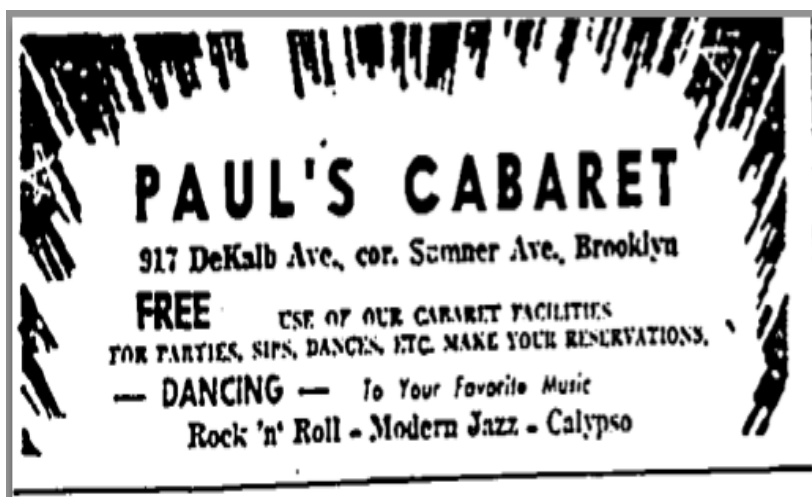
“Everybody played in there, including Miles Davis; Walter Bishop, Red Garland I remember...This was a place that had a long black bar and the back of the bar was a long bandstand; they had a white grand piano in there. The places were kept in fairly good shape, especially the places that war jazz clubs. The Moulin Rouge was a good place. [It didn’t] even had a cover charge; you could go in there, nurse a beer and stay all night. Sometimes, if we had a little more money we didn’t buying a couple of things, but I didn’t drink at that time.”<sup>31</sup>

As with most of the bars in the neighborhood, when the musicians with more well-known names weren’t available, the wealth of local talent, including musicians like Ed Stoute, played at the club. In the late 1950’s, trumpeter Cal Massey’s quintet played the Moulin Rouge very

frequently. His group included saxophonist Roland Alexander, pianist Sadik Hakim (who was the pianist on Charlie Parker's first recording), bassist Roy Sattard, and drummer Scoby Stroman.

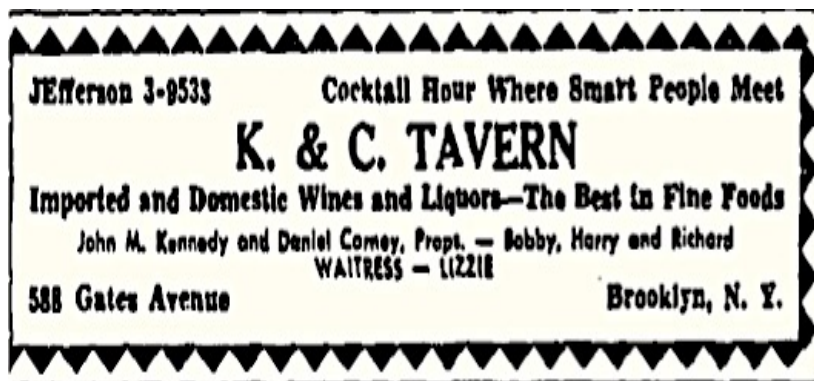
Other bars such as the Carroll Bar on Fulton Street between Verona Place and Nostrand Avenue (where Brooklyn Alto Saxophonist Al Doctor held a long term engagement), The Palm Garden on Sumner Avenue and Decatur Street, The Kit Kat Inn on Gates and Sumner Avenues, the Jefferson Bar on Jefferson and Tompkins Avenues, The Ful-Reid on Fulton Street and Reid Avenue, and many others would also have music at times throughout the years. The Pleasant Lounge was located at 1763 Fulton Street. Ed Stoute remembers that in the early 1950's when he was a teenager, bassist Franklin Skeete ran a jam session there. Stoute, a beginning jazz pianist at the time, tried to sit in but was kicked off of the stage because he wasn't quite ready yet to play with musicians of Skeete's caliber.

Later, Stoute worked with baritone saxophonist Harold Cumberbatch at Ben's, located on Sumner Avenue (Marcus Garvey Blvd) and Lexington Avenue, and also at Paul's.



*New York Amsterdam News 5/4/57*

Stoute also remembered playing at the K&C Lounge, located on the corner of Gates and Throop Avenues. It was also a dedicated organ bar for a time in the 1950's, and when pianist Bill Doggett was interested in developing his organ technique, he took an extended gig at the K&C lounge in order to get his chops together.



*The New York Amsterdam News 8/11/45*

The Flamingo Lounge was located at 259-A Kingston Avenue between St. Johns Avenue and Lincoln Place in Crown Heights. It opened its doors in 1952, and was still open and hosting gigs for local musicians when I began visiting the neighborhood in the early 1990's.

## **THE JAZZ CLUBS**

### **The Putnam Central Club**

The ever present spirit of self-service and self-reliance in Bedford-Stuyvesant was hardly on display any more than when the Putnam Central Club opened it's doors at 65 Putnam Avenue (between Classon Avenue and Irving Place) on December 28, 1944. Fifteen years prior, it's president Frederick Eversley, envisioned an African-American club

which would have a centralized location in the neighborhood in which to “promote the social welfare and community spirit of Bedford-Stuyvesant”<sup>32</sup>. After organizing a group of 12 men and purchasing and renovating a huge five-story building which had been abandoned, they finally had their home base. Aside from residential rooms for rent, bowling alleys, billiard rooms, and meeting rooms, there was a jazz club in the building that would present regular entertainment seven nights a week throughout its existence. It would be made clear in the following years that Eversley and the Putnam Central membership understood how deeply that jazz was interwoven into the fabric of the neighborhood, and any efforts toward uplifting the neighborhood around them had better include swinging. It would be a Bed-Stuy Jazz presence for over 10 years, and in the early 1950’s would even present the best of the Bebop generation. The music was a presence at the Putnam Central from the start, as a six-piece band called the “Brooklyn Swingsters” played for the dedication ceremony, held on January 19, 1945.



Almost immediately, the members of the Putnam Central began using their new home base to hold benefit dances for worthy causes. Benefit variety shows/dances were held in June to benefit the Little Flower Orphanage on Long Island, and in July to benefit wounded Soldiers stationed overseas in World War II. By December, the music policy at their club was in place. Brooklyn Drummer Ray Nathan and his quintet were engaged as the house band, a regular engagement that would continue nightly for the next year. On Fridays, special "Celebrity" guests would be invited to perform with Nathan's group, this one featuring trombonist Trummy Young.

Brooklyn's Finest Show Place and Membership Club  
**THE PUTNAM CENTRAL CLUB, Inc.**  
 65 Putnam Avenue  
 GOOD FOOD CHOICE LIQUORS  
 Proudly presents  
**The Ray Nathan Quintette Nitely**  
 Featuring  
 Rector Bailey (guitar) concert star of Town Hall; Jimmy Brown (tenor sax) former Tiny Bradshaw star; George Thompson (piano) recording artist; Carol Waldron (bass) former "Club Downbeat" star; Ray Nathan (drums) recording artist and former Pete Brown star.  
 Every Wed. night, Opportunity Night; Celebrity Night, every Fri. night. All star show Sat. and Sun. Guests: Fri. Nite: Trummy Young, America's ace trombone player; Douglas Daniels, formerly with the "Spirits of Rhythm"  
 — Don't Forget "Star Gazing" On Nov. 26, 1945 —  
 Bowling Alleys Billiard Room

*The New York Amsterdam News 12/1/45*

The Putnam Central continued to host benefit concerts for worthy causes supported by the residents of the neighborhood, including a concert to build a library in Trinidad held in February of 1945, which would have resonated strongly with the huge Caribbean population in the neighborhood, of which Eversley and many of the membership of the club were part of. On September 13, 1946 a concert was held to benefit for the families of the victims of a lynching, which took place the previous July near Monroe, Georgia. Ray Nathan's band was the house band for all of these events, and would be responsible for backing up all of the celebrity performers at them.

At that particular event, Louis Jordan and vocalist Delores Brown were the headliners, along with popular local vocalist Billie Stewart, of whom it is said that it was her stylistic similarities to Billie Holiday, and not her talent, which kept her from really hitting the big time (In fact, she was billed often as "The Brooklyn Billie Holiday). The intermission band at the benefit was led by none other than 23-year old entertainer

Redd Foxx, who at the time was singing more than performing comedy. Kenny Watts, the popular Brooklyn pianist performing with Ray Nathan's Quintet, was an in-demand pianist and bandleader in his own right. He had been working regularly at the Harlem Baby Grand, and rotating often between the other clubs owned by the Krulik brothers. He was also beginning to record often during this period, and had already made records with Pete Brown, vocalist "Cousin Joe" and Don Byas for the Savoy record label. His first record as a leader, under the title of "Kenny Watts and his Jumpin' Buddies", was recorded a little over a month earlier for Savoy on August 9, 1946 (Savoy 618 and 629), using the personnel of the Ray Nathan Quintet along with the addition of Brooklyn saxophonist Kenneth Hollon (the same person that was associated with early Billie Holiday). It was probably at this benefit concert where he was first exposed to Foxx, and decided to make a recording with him. He was able to arrange a date for Savoy later that same month, on September 30, 1946. The session, which was comprised of six songs and was released under the title "Redd

Foxx with Kenny Watts' Brooklyn Buddies", was Foxx's first recording (Savoy 630, 631, 645, Recd. 9/30/46).

Beginning in October 1946, Jam sessions were also held at the Putnam Central on Monday Nights, also backed by Nathan's group. Although most of the clubs in the neighborhood held jam sessions on one weekday night or the other, which provided for almost countless opportunities for young local musicians to play, those at the Putnam Central became some of the most well attended. One could regularly find neighborhood regulars Max Roach, Cecil Payne, Pete Brown, Duke Jordan, and others at the weekly sessions. It was an environment that was open to all who could play. Vibraphonist Terry Gibbs (b. 1924), was born and raised in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Brownsville, just a short distance away. He remembered going there during his early playing years, approximately 1946-1948, and that word had travelled among his circles about the weekly session in which Charlie Parker's drummer could be heard while not working with Bird.

"I didn't really know anybody[at the Putnam Central]...I was kind of young [then], and I used to just go there whenever I got a chance, so I could just hear whatever I could hear, and I was glad to be there. Max Roach may have been a little ahead of us and some of the [other] guys learning Bebop, you know. He was with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Bud Powell, and after that, we were all learning. Everybody else in the world was learning, I don't care how good they became later..."<sup>33</sup>

Gibbs also remembered that at the time, Wynton Kelly, who was between the age of 15 and 17 at the time, was playing Bass while sitting in at the Putnam Central as much as he was playing piano.



*The New York Amsterdam News 10/12/46*

The club would also soon implement a series of Sunday Matinee concerts, pulling musicians from the prominent Manhattan clubs to play in Brooklyn and still give them time to get back to Manhattan if

they were working that evening. The connection was easy enough to make, as a number of the musicians working on 52<sup>nd</sup> street and elsewhere were living in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

*Sunday Afternoon, October 20 — 3:00 - 8:30 P. M.*

## **The Putnam Central Club**

"Presents"

Brooklyn's first appearance of the  
wizard of the Electric Guitar.

### **TINY GRIMES**

Direct from the Down Beat Club  
on 52nd Street

**His Sensational Sextette**

Featuring

### **JOHN HARDEE**


(Tenor Sax.)

And Other Star Musicians  
in a Matinee Dance.

Subscription \$1.20, Tax 30c  
**Total \$1.50**

All Tables Reserved

**IKE McFOWLER, (Promoter)**



*The New York Amsterdam News 10/19/46*

Ray Nathan and his band were such a hit that they were lured away from the Putnam Central by The Elks Club 78, where they began performing regularly in 1947. Brooklyn pianist Kenny Watts, who had been the pianist in Ray Nathan's band, took over the duties as house band at the Putnam Central in Nathan's absence. His band, "Kenny

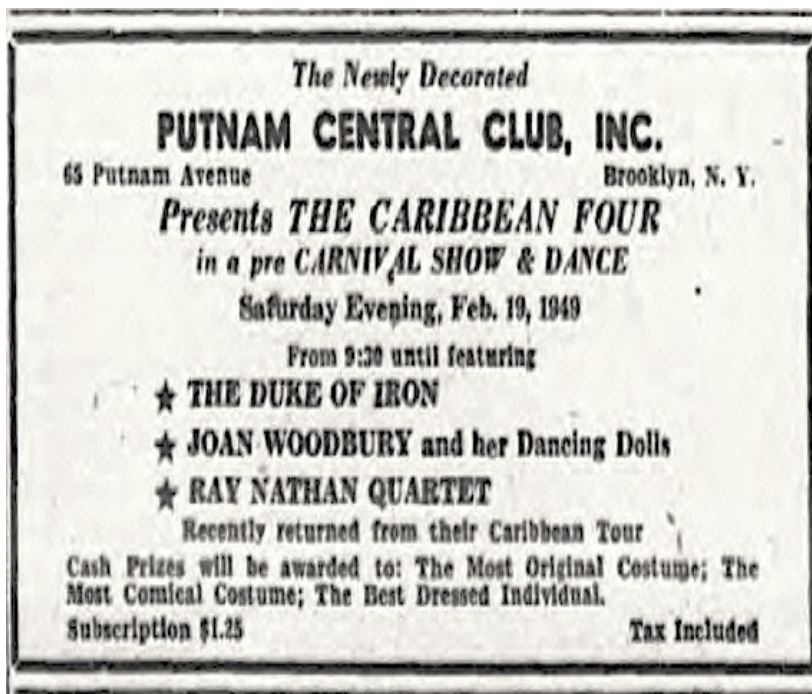
Watts and the Killowatts", was comprised Saxophonist Wilbur Dozier, Drummer Hayward Jackson, and Bassist Franklin Skeete. Watts would play the Putnam Central until December of that year, when Trombonist Matthew Gee, going by his stage name, "Melody Matt" and his group took over as the house band. He would stay until April or so of 1948, when he was enticed to lead the house band at the Elks Grill, and Ray Nathan and his new group, without Watts on piano, was brought back in to assume his former position.

By 1949, the acceptance of Bebop in the neighborhood was evident in the Putnam Central's programming, as they had largely done away with their multi-act variety shows/revues, and in its place more instrumental performances were held. A Wednesday night show and jam session called "Progressions in Bop", was held and hosted by the Ray Nathan Quartet. In 1950, Fred Anderson remembers seeing Bud Powell at the Putnam Central as a part of one of the Sunday "Special Guest" concerts. He also remembered that drummer Arthur Taylor was there all of the time around 1950, when he was still getting his own

playing together. As he put it when I asked him about how his playing was during that time, "He wasn't the [same] A.T. that I saw when I came back from overseas [in 1956], you know. He was just coming along...I mean he was playing, but he wasn't...PLAYING, you know?"<sup>34</sup>

In fact, it would seem that one of the high-ranking officials in the Putnam Central Club was Taylor's uncle, and once he realized that his nephew from Harlem was showing some promise as a musician, he was free to sit in at the club as much as he desired. The majority of the Putnam Central membership, Taylor, most of the management of the club, and Anderson all had West Indian roots, as did a large percentage of the neighborhood, causing the club to be constantly aligned with its Caribbean heritage. They would occasionally present cross-cultural shows which combined Caribbean music and jazz. This one took place in February of 1949, featuring hugely popular Trinidadian performer, "The Duke Of Iron", along with Ray Nathan's group.





*The New York Amsterdam News 2/12/49*

The Putnam Central would also uphold its purpose of community enrichment, hosting benefit concerts for worthy causes. In the 1945 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article which covered the dedication ceremony of the Putnam Central, Frederick Eversley, the president of the organization, mentioned among the several plans of the club, his idea to “purchase a home, through membership dues, in which war working mothers can place their children.”<sup>35</sup> By 1950, although World War II was over (and the Korean conflict looming), plans for the nursery were

underway. Bill "Bojangles" Robinson was a presence in Bedford-Stuyvesant off and on while spending time with his eventual wife, Brooklynite Elaine Plaines. He had just recently passed away from a Heart Attack on November 25, 1949. Eversley and bandleader Noble Sissle soon after formed a committee for the establishment of a "Bill "Bojangles" Robinson Memorial Free Day Nursery, to be built in the neighborhood, and the first benefit dance was held at the Putnam Central on March 26, 1950 to raise funds for the venture. Noble Sissle's Orchestra, among other performers, provided the entertainment.

In 1953, after spending the previous three years studying at the Manhattan School of Music, drummer Max Roach was contemplating his next move. During the previous year, he and Mingus had come to a decision to find a solution to the constant challenges faces while dealing with the recording industry. He and Mingus co-founded a record label, Debut Records, in an attempt to circumvent normal record-industry challenges, and to have more artistic control over the

music being presented. Although the labels on the Debut Records releases had "New York, NY" printed on the bottom of them, a more accurate location would have been "Brooklyn, NY", as the label was run out of the Putnam Central for most of the time. Roach and Mingus had established a recording studio in a room upstairs above the club, and were using it to record and master Debut's releases.

On May 15, 1953, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, Bud Powell, and Charlie Mingus participated in a concert at Massey Hall, in Toronto, Ontario. Billed as "The Greatest Concert Ever," Max Roach made arrangements to record the concert, and after it was over, he and Mingus took the tapes, with plans to release it on their label.

According to Brooklyn Jazz Aficionado/Emcee Jimmy Morton, who attended the events at the Putnam Central regularly, knew all of the participants and also was the emcee at Tony's Grandean and the Town Hill in Brooklyn,

"...when Mingus heard the original recording [of the Massey Hall concert] he felt that the bass line was underplayed—he didn't hear the bass enough. So he took the masters to his studio [at the Putnam Central] and when you hear that record now, the bass line is refined; they were able to that because they had their [own] studio."<sup>36</sup>

Aside from launching Debut Records the previous summer, Roach and Mingus also began a series of summer concerts at the Putnam Central. At different times, the personnel would include Thelonious Monk, Thad Jones, Art Blakey, J.J. Johnson, Jimmy Knepper, Kenny Clarke, John Lewis, Saxophonist and record producer Teo Macero, and Saxophonist John La Porta, many of which would go on to participate in Debut Records earliest recordings. It was this series of concerts that eventually became Mingus' Jazz Composers Workshop, one of his important early groups known for collaborative jazz composition, collective jazz improvisation, and among other things, a showcase for Mingus' sometimes volatile personality while on stage.

Aside from eventually becoming Mingus' celebrated Workshop, these concerts would bear other important fruit. On September 18, 1953, Mingus and Roach would also make their only recording at the Putnam Central Club, this time using an unconventional front line of four trombones, all of which had participated in the Summer Workshop concerts at one time or another. The personnel couldn't have been better: J.J. Johnson, Kai Winding, Willie Dennis, and Bennie Green, along with the rhythm section of Mingus, John Lewis, and Art Taylor. The resulting 10-inch LP, "Trombone Rapport" (Debut DLP-5), was not only significant because of its original instrumentation and personnel. It was only after this concert that J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding, who had known each other from 52<sup>nd</sup> street, but had not recorded together, began to give serious thought to forming a band featuring numerous trombones as the front line. They decided on only two, themselves, and the resulting group, Jay and Kai, would take shape over the next year, with their first recording for the Savoy label on August 24, 1954. They would also both lead and record with multi-trombone groups over the course of their careers.

The Putnam Central, or "P.C." as it was known by locals, would continue to play a role in the development of Jay and Kai. Brooklyn-born Al Harewood was an up-and-coming drummer in 1953, and also would hang out and sit in at the Putnam Central regularly. He received his first true encouragement from another Brooklyn drummer, Arthur Edgehill. On one occasion at the Putnam Central, Edgehill was playing a multi-night engagement with Dinah Washington, and he was unable to make one night of the engagement. He asked Harewood to substitute for him that evening. J.J. Johnson, who was living in the neighborhood on Stuyvesant Avenue at the time, happened to also come to the club that evening. As a result of hearing Harewood with Washington's group that evening, he asked him to join the new two-trombone group that he and Winding were putting together. Harewood would be the band's first drummer, although Teddy Reig at Savoy did not think that he had enough of a name at the time to be on the groups debut recording, so Kenny Clarke was substituted for Harewood on that inaugural LP.

By that Fall, the Putnam Central management, noticing the crowds of young musicians and patrons that were surrounding the Bebop movement, put Max Roach in charge of the music policy at the Putnam Central. He began to play a number of consecutive Friday night concerts beginning on July 31, 1953, bringing in the best musicians that he had been associated with, and then he began to book other musicians in the club with he and Mingus accompanying them most of the time, unless either of them had other engagements. For a few months, the line-up at the Putnam Central rivaled that of 52<sup>nd</sup> street a few years earlier. And of course, there was dancing at every concert.



*The New York Amsterdam News 8/7/53*

**Putnam Central Club**

**THE PUTNAM CENTRAL CLUB** is on the move again, and has been for the last couple of Friday nights. This Friday at the club, **MAX ROACH**, who is still rated as the tops on the drums is bringing into the Putnam the very best around when it comes to jazz.

Dig the line-up that he has had in the past and the stars that is

yet to appear, **J. J. Johnson**, **Charlie Parker**, **Charlie Mingus**, **Thelonius Monk**, **Walter Davis**, **Kenny Durham** and **Miles Davis**.

These masters of modern jazz along with Max on drums makes for better listening and dancing pleasure than one could ask. Pick-up this Friday and you will see what we mean. **Spaulding Gibbens** will be on piano during the intermission. You will have to dig real deep to find one that can do more with the 88s.

*The New York Amsterdam News 8/8/53*





*The New York Amsterdam News 8/15/53*

On August 21, both Art Blakey and Thelonious Monk were brought to perform at the Putnam Central. This was also during the time when Monk's cabaret card was revoked. Fred Anderson remembers being at this gig, but was unable to remember whether they each brought their own groups or if they played together for the evening.



*The New York Amsterdam News 8/20/53*

Unfortunately for the Putnam Central, Max Roach's involvement in the club would come to an end. He decided in September to take a three-month engagement in California, at the Lighthouse on Hermosa Beach. It was there, after hearing the playing of a stellar new trumpet player on J.J. Johnson's newest recording, "The Eminent J.J. Vol.1" (Blue Note BLP 1506), that he sent for the trumpeter, Clifford Brown, to join him there, and The Clifford-Brown/Max Roach Quintet was born (see clipping in the "Supplemental Clippings" section).

In his stead, he turned over managing the Putnam Central affairs to Charles Mingus, who continued things along their present course.

Mingus began to play the Friday night concerts with local musicians

when no headliner was brought in. In this case, "local musicians"

meant some of the very best available. September 18, 1953, brought

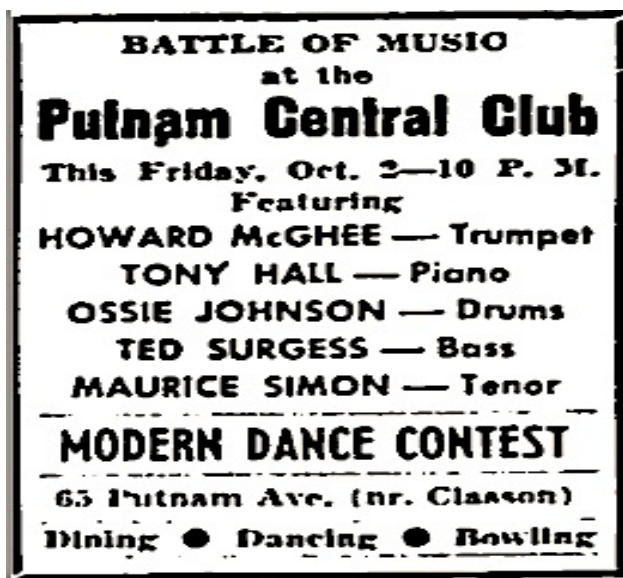
one of the earliest engagements that foreshadowed the band that

would become Jay and Kai:



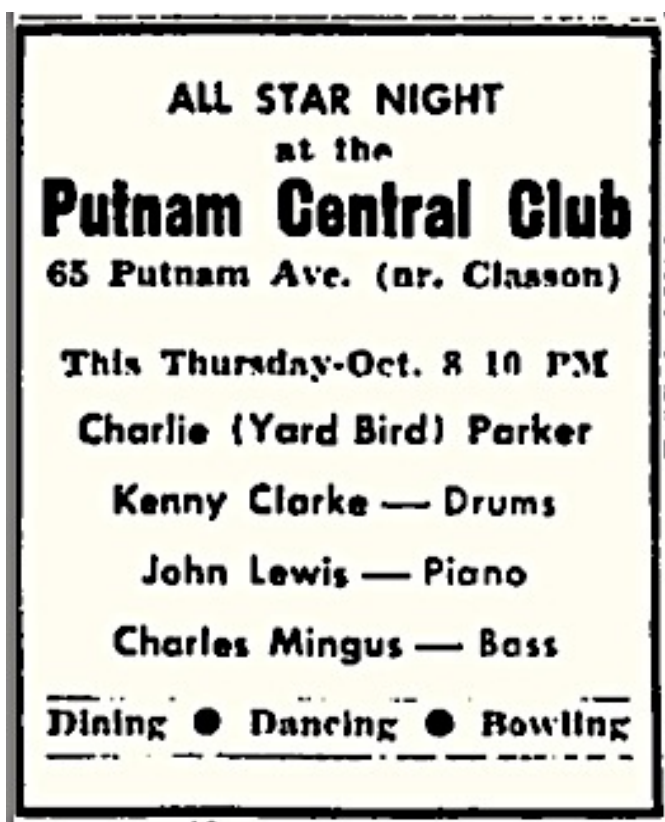
*The New York Amsterdam News* 9/16/53

On October 2, a Modern Dance Contest was held, giving the neighborhood Bebop dancers a chance to show how moves had progressed since the lindy-hop. The lineup surely kept the feet moving throughout the evening:



*The New York Amsterdam News 10/1/53*

The next week saw the benefit of having the Bassist managing the music policy at the club, as he had been playing in the Charlie Parker Quintet since the earlier part of that year. Mingus was able to procure the services of the great saxophonist for a Thursday night concert, held on October 8, 1953.



*The New York Amsterdam News 10/10/53*

This however, was not the first time that Charlie Parker played at the Putnam Central, as he had frequently been seen at the club, and in the neighborhood casually hanging out for years. Undoubtedly because so many of his bandmembers, and other musicians that he associated with had Brooklyn connections, he would end up there often after gigs. Three out of the four member of his first quintet, Max Roach, Tommy Potter, and Duke Jordan, were either from Bedford-Stuyvesant or lived

there (Tommy Potter), and Miles Davis would live there around the time that he left the quintet at the end of 1948. Miles' replacement Kenny Dorham, called to replace Davis at his Bed-Stuy apartment at the last minute on New Years Eve 1948, was a long-time resident of the neighborhood, living there well into the early 1960's. Other ornithologists that resided in the neighborhood were Art Taylor, J.J. Johnson, and Milt Jackson among others, all of whom would play frequently with Parker through the years. Al Harewood was also an avid Bird watcher, but being a young drummer admits that he "ran after Art Blakey trying to learn how to play"<sup>37</sup> Harewood remembered an earlier visit by Parker to the Putnam Central:

"I used to play there regularly. Everybody used to come there, Sonny Rollins, J.J., everybody. One time Charlie Parker was playing there and Art Blakey was late one night, so I got to play with Bird for 5 minutes. Miles came in that night and looked at me while I was playing with Bird in astonishment, and gave me a nod that let me know that I was [doing] all right. That was one of the first things that let me know that I was playing good."<sup>38</sup>

**Club 78**

At 78 Herkimer Street between Bedford and Nostrand Avenues was a large, multi-use building. In the 1920's before the racial makeup of the neighborhood began to change, it had been the home base of a private club aligned with the Republican Party, called the "Invincible Republicans". At some point, it was sold and came under the control of the local Elk's lodge who converted it into a second neighborhood social club, along with their main lodge at 1068 Fulton Street. Like the Putnam Central Club, it was set up as a Men's club, with a bowling Alley, and pool tables, and meeting rooms. The two upstairs floors were available for rent, and it was there that either the management of the building, or local social clubs would present dances.

In January 1947, Club 78 lured Brooklyn drummer Ray Nathan and his group away from their year long engagement at the Putnam Central Club. Nathan's group had just recently made their first recordings for the Savoy label in 1946, although the band was under the leadership

of their former pianist Kenny Watts. Nathan's band would continue to play nightly at Club 78 throughout the year, before returning to the Putnam Central in 1948. It was also a place which had regular jam sessions on Sundays, and Fred Anderson remembers seeing Ernie Henry, Pete Brown, Cecil Payne, Sahib Shihab, Jackie McLean, Brooklyn trombonist Bruce Carmichael, Franklin Skeets, Willie Jones, Ahmed Abdul-Malik, drummers Lenny MacBrowne and Larry Ritchie (a Left-Handed drummer who would later play a role along with McLean in the movie "The Connection") and others sitting in there at one time or another. "Club 78 was a hell of a place...sometimes there used to be 4 or 5 Alto Players on the bandstand...3 or 4 Bass players, you know. Club 78 was running neck and neck with the Putnam Central for a while" he fondly remembered.<sup>39</sup>



**CLUB SEVENTY-EIGHT Inc.**  
 78 HERKIMER ST., BROOKLYN, N. Y.  
 FOR MEMBERS ONLY  
 Is Presenting For Your Listening Pleasures  
**"The Ray Nathan Quartette"**  
 NITELY! in the "GLASS ROOM"



Featuring  
**"JIMMIE" BROWN**  
 TENOR SAX  
**CARROLL WALROND**  
 BASS  
**"TEX" — Piano**  
**RAY NATHAN**  
 DRUMS

Plus The Intimate Song Stylings of:  
**"BILLIE" STEWART**

A SERIES OF "COCKTAIL-SIPS" WILL BEGIN HERE  
 SUNDAY AFTERNOON, FEB. 2, 1947. AT 3 P. M.  
 Unless You Are A Member, We Cannot Permit You  
 To Participate In Our Club Activities. JOIN NOW.

*The New York Amsterdam News 2/1/47*

Also serving as a space for rent, local musicians would sometimes give their own dances at Club 78, usually bringing in a headliner to play with a local band, which in turn provided important exposure for local musicians to those who could recommend or hire them for gigs outside of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Anderson remembered that Eustis Harewood, the older brother of Al Harewood and a drummer himself, used to present dances and also play at Club 78.

If Max Roach was available, he surely would have been at this dance, as he studied with drummer Cozy Cole for a period in the 1940's. This 1947 dance was co-presented by popular bandleader and saxophonist Ray Abrams. The musician named "Batch" in this advertisement is none other than Brooklyn-born Harold Cumberbatch, then only playing Alto Saxophone, before he was to make the switch to the Baritone

**Ernie Stewart & Ray Abrams**  
PRESENT  
**COZY COLE**  
ESQUIRE'S DRUMMING SENSATION  
"BATCH"  
B'KLYN'S DYNAMIC ALTO SAX DISCOVERY  
**RAY ABRAMS AND BAND**  
Kenny Watts - "Grumpy" Jackson - Mac Wiggins  
9 P. M. UNTIL **THIS SUNDAY NITE** JULY 27  
**CLUB 78**  
PARKMER ST. and NOSTRAND AVE., BROOKLYN  
TAKE "A" TRAIN TO NOSTRAND AVE.  
MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION  
ADMISSION ..... \$1.25

Saxophone .

*The New York Amsterdam News 7/26/47*

Sometime during late 1950, Fred Anderson remembered attending a dance at Club 78 given by a local social club in which his brother-in-law was a member. Although he was only 15 or 16 at the time, his family connections proved to be useful. The band at the dance was led by Jackie McLean, who although living in Harlem, according to Anderson had a large following in Brooklyn, and visited there often. In fact, Anderson first met McLean when he was only 14, and remembered that the saxophonist would visit his parents house quite often when in the neighborhood. On this particular occasion the social club in which Anderson's brother-in-law was a member was called Club Topaz. While the full personnel of the band alluded his memory, he did remember that Jackie was accompanied by a left-handed drummer from Harlem named Maurice Brown that he often played with during this period. Also in the band was Ritchie Powell, the younger brother of pianist Bud Powell, and an obscure trumpeter named Lowell Lewis. Lewis, remembered fondly by Brooklynites, and by people such as Jimmy Heath who knows him from their hometown of Philadelphia, was referred to more than once as "the first avant-garde trumpet

player". He supposedly had a style so adventurous for the times that it received mixed reviews from listeners, although all that have recalled it did seem to like his playing.

### **212 Gates Avenue – The Chessmen**

When I was fortunate enough to speak to Randy Weston, one point that was repeatedly made by him was the influence of the individual houses where the musicians lived, and how those environments themselves became centers of culture for young musicians. One house in particular became extremely influential, not only in the immediate area, but also outside the neighborhood borders. This particular house was located at 212 Gates Avenue, between Franklin Avenue and Classon Avenue. This particular block of Gates Avenue, was one of the streets where large mansions were built in the late 1800's, subsequently abandoned by their owners as the ethnic makeup of the neighborhood began to change in the 1920's. Although 212 Gates has long been torn down, an imposing, beautiful sister mansion next door

still survives, and is still the most grand house on the block, giving us a window into what 212 might have looked like.

The house was inhabited by a number of young black intellectuals, including, sculptor Jimmy Giddens, drummer Willie Jones, semi-pro basketball star Charles "Lefty" Morris, Fred Braithwaite, Sr., and for a time Max Roach. Braithwaite's influence would even be felt into my generation. His son, Fred Braithwaite, Jr, (b.1955) is better known by his stage name, "Fab Five Freddy". In the early 1980's while I was growing up and crazy about Hip-Hop, Fab Five Freddy became the host of the first television show focused on Hip-Hop, *Yo! MTV Raps*. The Chessmen all remained friends throughout their respective lives, and Braithwaite, Jr. grew up in an environment dominated by visits to his house by these socially conscious, fiery black thinkers. "Willie [Jones] was always there, and Willie was an activist...He was at my house three days of every week until I was an early teenager; he was like a fixture at my house, along with at least three other guys," he would recall.<sup>40</sup>

At his birth Max Roach was named his Godfather, and was a constant presence throughout his life. He remembered:

"My dad and Max Roach were friends from the teen years at Boys High School. Max played in Drum & Bugle corps, as a kid and then he became this young whiz kid drummer playing with the big bands. He quickly rose in the 40's and Max rose to be one of the architects, and my dad was right along with him. There was a group of friends who had formed a little social group that referred to itself as the Chessmen; they developed a love of chess during World War II so when the war was ended they were avid chess players. And they would gather and hang out a lot. Max lived in a big, kind of old mansion at 212 Gates Avenue. This house, I understand, had a huge living room and a huge baby grand piano and they would give these sets [musical performances]. As Max became prominent he would bring other Brooklyn jazz guys to come and hang with my dad and his friends. Hence that became a scene of jazz hipsters and frontrunners in Brooklyn, a little known slice."<sup>41</sup>

The Chessmen began to host regular musical gatherings, most often Jam Sessions, but sometimes performances of arranged music, referred to as "sets" by Brooklynites, at their house on Gates Avenue, and it quickly became one of the "insider" events in the neighborhood. They also began to host dances at the local halls-for-rent. Fred Anderson, who was in the next generation after those of the

Chessmen's age, remembers the dances at the Livingston Manor in Downtown Brooklyn that they used to give. It seems that most of the Chessmen had been athletes during their high school days, including Max Roach, who was a former track star at Boys High School.

Anderson remembers that Roach would occasionally play for these events, and many of these former athletes would be in attendance. He also remembers attending many of the sets held at the Chessmen's house. Bill Hardman used to play/sit in there often before he was to make his first recordings. In 1953, around the same time that John Lewis and Kenny Clarke were participating in the workshop concerts at the Putnam Central, also in its first year of existence was their new cooperative group, The Modern Jazz Quartet, or "MJQ". Anderson remembers hearing the MJQ at 212 Gates around 1953, during a visit home while he was serving in the Armed Forces.

Equally as important, the environment at 212 Gates became one that encouraged Afro-centric thought, and was one of the many examples in the neighborhood of how the music and awareness of the social

conditions were intertwined. At any time conversation could shift into intense debates about Marxist or Maoist theory, African or African-American nationalism, or recordings by Charlie Parker, Hank Mobley, Thelonious Monk, Archie Shepp and others. The lines between the topics were completely blurred and forever interconnected. Braithwaite Sr. and Drummer Willie Jones had even been present at the Audubon Ballroom on the afternoon of the assassination of Malcom X, and Jones, who carried a small reel-to-reel tape recorder at all times, captured a recording of the last moments of the civil rights activist and all of the ensuing commotion afterwards, with one of the assassin's bullets hitting the microphone of the recording device. Fred Braithwaite Sr. and Jr, along with others associated with the more socially conscious scene in the neighborhood, would listen to this recording repeatedly over the years, and allow the subsequent feelings it brought about to refuel their own consciousness. Years later, with the exception of the presence of the regular jam sessions, the environment in the junior Braithwaite's home seems to have been a continuation of the scene at 212 Gates Avenue.



"...but that's what went on at my house. These guys would roll up and do their thing, listen to music, and have these intense discussions and debates. My sense of it was this...I spent a lot of time sitting around the kitchen table where a lot of these discussions would happen...the Music was obviously more than a soundtrack...Yes, absolutely...My dad's den/study was in the basement, where the real shit would go down.." he remembered.<sup>42</sup>

In 1956, Randy Weston would compose a song dedicated to the house, the intellectual environment, and the participants involved. The composition was a cool, rhythmic minor-key romp known as "Chessman's Delight", and was debuted by Cecil Payne for Signal Records that year (*Cecil Payne*, Signal S1203, rec'd 5/19/56), and also recorded a few months later by Weston with Payne in his band, live at Manhattan's Café Bohemia for Riverside Records (*Jazz A La Bohemia*, Riverside RLP 12-232, Rec'd 10/14/56)

Along with the sets that were taking place at the house on Gates Avenue, the Chessmen began to branch out and promote gigs at other Brooklyn clubs, most notably at Tony's Grandean, which will be discussed next.

## Tony's Grandean

Just outside the sometimes blurry geographical borders of Bedford-Stuyvesant sat a bar known as Tony's, at 562 Grand Avenue, on the corner of Grand and Dean Avenues. Because of its situation on that corner, it would also be renamed "Tony's Grandean" by management after it started to gain a reputation for jazz. By 1953's, Tony's had been in operation as a bar for a few years, but did not have a music policy. An enterprising, multi-talented dancer, emcee, and sometimes promoter named Vincent Jones, who went by the nickname "Zandoo" (sometimes also spelled "Zandu" or "Sandoo") and referred to earlier while discussing an engagement at Brooklyn's Town Hill, convinced the management of Tony's to allow it to become a jazz club. Jimmy Morton, a photographer, and who became the first emcee at Tony's, (also a part of the aforementioned Town Hill engagement) remembered:

" In Robin's book [Author Robin D.G. Kelly's superb biography of Thelonious Monk, *Monk: An American Original*] he refers to it as a small, black owned café. We've got a friend named Vincent Jones, we used to call him Zandu, if he saw this article he would go crazy, because first of all it was owned by Italians named Bordello; in fact Roger Bordello had a liquor store on Bergen Street between Grand and the next street over.

Vincent Jones knew this family, and he was the one who talked them into letting Tony's be a jazz spot, and Vincent was the one who brought all the acts in. He was a dancer, and they used to bring him out onstage in a coffin. He had a partner that would be dancing and she would dance and he would come out of the coffin. He used to get mad at me because of I was taking all those pictures of young musicians, "and you never took any pictures of my act." I loved the act, but I never took any pictures of it.<sup>43</sup>

Vincent Jones was also good friends with the Chessmen, although it is not known whether he resided at the house with them. After Jones became the catalyst for bringing jazz to Tony's, he also included Chessmen Fred Braithwaite and Jimmy Giddens in on running the music policy. At the start, the three of them became responsible for booking the acts at the club. Jimmy Morton, because he was friends with all of them, never had to pay to get into Tony's. After a while, he had to earn his admission another way:

"Most bands announced themselves, but every now and then you'd get a band that would say 'I'm not supposed to be announcing anything.' So they [Jones, Braithwaite, and Giddens] said to me, 'you don't pay when you come in, so announce the bands.' And that's how I became an interant MC, simple as that. I started announcing the bands and then people used me for other things. People would have a fashion show or something, they'd call me to do that. It all started by me going to Tony's and knowing the guys running Tony's, and they started me MCing."<sup>44</sup>

Over at TONY'S CLUB GRAND-DEAN the one and only ART BLAKELY and the all-stars will be holding down the fort along with ZANDOO and DAJAA and that singing star BOBBY SMITH. With the Blakely boy on those drums you better call for those reservations and quick, JAMES MORTON is holding the m.c. spot and doing a bang-up job.

*The New York Amsterdam News 10/3/53*

Tony's would ultimately be short lived, only open until about 1955, and would only host jazz for the final 2 years of its existence, 1953-1955.

It was strictly a jazz bar known to "insiders" and neighborhood residents until Dorothy Kilgallen, a well known columnist for many newspapers including *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, began to mention the club in her column, and according to Morton, "All kinds of strange people began showing up that ordinarily wouldn't even be there."<sup>45</sup>

As mentioned earlier in this writing, Brooklyn, although the distance wasn't great, was somehow close enough from Manhattan at the same

time for the authoritative bodies there to be aware of the goings on, but far enough away that their influence in the Borough was weak at times. The presence of Organized Crime certainly played a role in this occurrence as it pertained to the entertainment industry, although it was not limited to it. At that time, by law musicians in New York City were required to obtain and possess a Cabaret Card from the New York State Liquor Authority in order to perform at establishments where liquor was served. When that body deemed a musician to have done something deserving enough to have their Cabaret Card revoked, that performer was supposedly unable to perform anywhere within the five Boroughs of the city. Brooklyn was an exception, and many times, away from the bright lights of Midtown Manhattan, a musician whose card had been revoked could easily travel across the East River and perform in the many clubs in Brooklyn. It is undeterminable just who performed and how many times such a performance may have happened, as many of these performance were obviously not advertised in local newspapers.

Thelonious Monk had begun his association with the Brooklyn scene around 1947, when his friend Randy Weston, who by then had been visiting the pianist off and on at his San Juan Hill apartment often for a year or so. That year would be important, because Monk would make his first recordings as a leader for Blue Note Records that year, and many Brooklyn musicians, including Tenor Saxophonist Billy "Wildman" Smith (who was a part of the very first session), and Max Roach would be a part of his early bands. Weston used to pick Monk up and bring him to Brooklyn to hang out, either to eat at his father's luncheonette, or to go and play at somebody's house with a piano. On one occasion he brought Monk to Jimmy Morton's sister's house at 3:00 A.M. because he wanted to play. While Morton's sister, who was a church-organist, may not have been excited at the knock on the door in the wee hours, she was thoroughly impressed after hearing Monk play. As Monk biographer Robin D.G. Kelly stated:

Through Randy, Monk met all the up-and-coming Brooklyn musicians whom he would later employ: bassists Gary Mapp, Michael Mattos, and Ahmed Abdul-Malik; drummer Willie Jones, trumpeter Ray Copeland, saxophonist Ernie Henry, to name a few. Just as Sonny Rollins became

Monk's conduit to the young Harlem musicians, Weston became Monk's entrée into Brooklyn's rich jazz world.<sup>46</sup>

Near the end of 1953, during one of his several periods where his Cabaret Card was revoked because of one incident or another, Monk began his association with Tony's, figuratively out of the reach of the New York City Police, and the Musician's Union. In December of that year, Fred Braithwaite and Jimmy Gittens organized a concert featuring Monk and his music at Tony's. The personnel was dominated by musicians that called Brooklyn home, some native and some not. Trumpeter Kenny Dorham, Bassist Sam Gill, and Drummer Willie Jones were a part of Monk's group during that engagement, along with Tenor Saxophonist Sonny Rollins. Rollins was still living in his native Harlem, although he also would spend a period living in Brooklyn in the late 1950's. A telling detail of the atmosphere, which described Brooklynites everyday connection to the music, was noted by Robin D.G. Kelly in his biography of the pianist, "The music was swinging enough to get people on the dance floor— a rarity when Monk performed in Manhattan."<sup>47</sup>



Monk's band at Tony's in Brooklyn, December 1953.  
 Left to right: Thelonious Monk, Sam Gill (bass), Willie Jones (drums),  
 and Kenny Dorham (trumpet). Photograph by Jimmy Morton

*(Thelonious Monk: An American Original, by Robin D.G. Kelly)*

On another evening at the club, a fight broke out during the concert,  
 instigated by some gang members from the Gates End section of  
 Brooklyn. As Weston remembered,

"They came in and all of a sudden they wanted to take over. Words were  
 exchanged, fights broke out. So the cats, they were really rumbling, and the  
 beer bottles were flying everywhere. People were trying to get to the men's



room, the ladies' room, and Monk and Sonny were still playing! They didn't miss a note."<sup>48</sup>

What wasn't explained about the fight in Kelly's book was how it actually started. Jimmy Morton would fill in the details after the book came out, although the one common thread in both accounts is that the music kept going regardless:

"What Randy didn't know is how the fight started. It started because they put me on the door – I was never on the door – if I was on the door all the time I would have known who the local gangsters were. The fact that I was not on the door usually, I didn't know the local gangsters, and they wanted to come in without paying and I wasn't going to allow that. So we got into it at the door, and it grew until the chairs were flying...the place looked so bad I was amazed when I came back the next night and the place had been put back together; they had repaired the chairs...all the damage that had been done the night before – as bad as this fight was, we didn't miss one night! I remember the bass player, who I think was Mingus, was holding up his bass, protecting his bass. I think Monk kept playing."<sup>49</sup>

Also present at Tony's during this time were visitors from France, pianist/composer Henri Renaud, and his wife Ny Renaud. Henri had come to New York to produce several recording sessions for the French Vogue record label. The Renauds were staying with pianist George

Wallington, and he urged them to seek out Monk while they were in the city. They were there the night of the fight, the only white faces at Tony's that evening. The resulting relationship between Henri Renaud and Monk was to result in him making his first trip abroad, being invited to play at the third Paris Jazz Festival in June 1954.

Despite all of the action that December night during Monk's engagement, he was given a regular weekend engagement at Tony's which spanned from December 1953 until May of 1954. Every weekend for a little over five months, he would lead groups at Tony's made up of a mixture of the Brooklyn and Harlem musicians that he was being introduced to, and that would learn his complicated music to his liking. Brooklyn musicians such as Trumpeters Kenny Dorham and Ray Copeland, Willie Jones, Bassists Michael Mattos, Sam Gill, Gary Mapp, Alto Saxophonist Ernie Henry, and others would play with Monk at Tony's during this period. Jimmy Morton, although born and raised in Brooklyn, was living in Manhattan at the time and would often drive Monk home after the gig was over.

For the weekend of March 19-21, 1953, Monk led a group at Tony's consisting of Miles Davis, Gigi Gryce, Charles Mingus, and Max Roach. Mingus would also have Monk, along with Art Blakey, at the Putnam Central a few months later in August. The personal relationship between Monk and Miles Davis has been well documented as always having been difficult. During this period, they had been at odds with each other after a rehearsal for the Tony's engagement almost ended in the two coming to blows. Although they were still able to make great music on stage, Monk still had to have his fun. During one of Miles' solos that night, Monk snuck up behind him and drew a cigarette and matches out of the trumpeters pocket. He then lit up, and put everything back into the pockets, *during the solo*. Reportedly, Miles never missed a note while it all was going on. The music was so inspiring to saxophonist Gryce that evening that on intermission, he was compelled to write a tune commemorating the event.

"I sat at the piano during intermission," Gryce later recalled, "and picked out this melody. At first I was going to call it "The Four M's" [for Miles, Max, Mingus, and Monk]."<sup>50</sup>

The resulting tune, entitled "A Night At Tony's" was recorded for Prestige Records on May 19, 1954 by a group co-led by Gryce and trumpeter Art Farmer. (*When Farmer Met Gryce*, Prestige 7085, rec'd 5/19/54 and 5/26/55)

Vocalist Etta Jones, fresh off her long term association singing with the Earl Hines sextet, was trying to establish her solo career in 1954, and she also received some much needed work at Tony's. Jimmy Morton remembered:

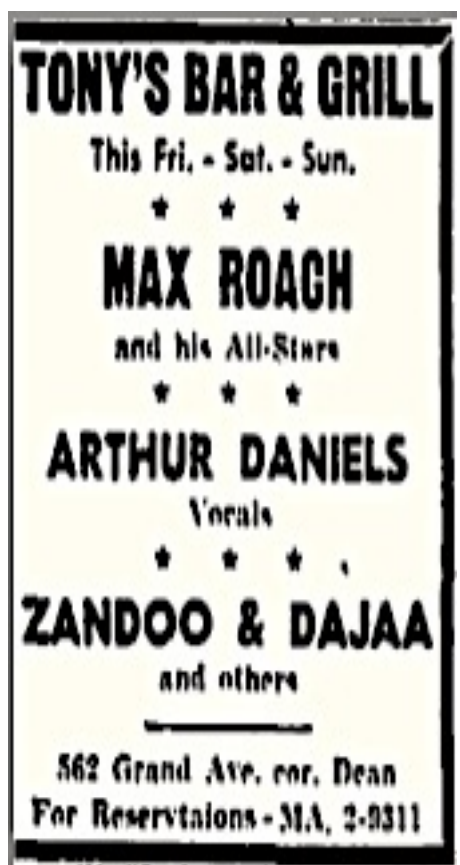
"I met Etta Jones when Art Blakey brought her to Tony's, and we already had a singer at the time, and I was very upset; I said "who's this person, we didn't hire her...", until I heard her sing! When I heard [Etta Jones] sing, I said we didn't need the first guy that we hired...But I used to introduce [her] and I would say "Hush, it's the bewitching hour...you're about to be inundated with the golden tones of Etta Jones..." That's how I used to bring her on."<sup>51</sup>

Morton also recalled, while displaying photos of the club to interviewer Willard Jenkins, how Etta Jones felt about having to sing along with Monk's very distinctive style of accompanying each night. Pianist Wynton Kelly was drafted in the Army in 1950, and while home on a visit between January and May of 1954, he stopped into Tony's. Morton took a picture of him in his Army Khakis, and remembered of that evening that once Jones spotted him,

"Etta pleaded with him, saying, 'you know how trying it is to sing with Monk.' She said, 'Please play for me.' And Wynton Kelly not only played for her when she asked him to, but he played for he for the rest of the night. We had to figure out a way to pay him because we had already paid Monk."<sup>52</sup>

After Monk's departure from Tony's, Max Roach, who also was close to the Chessmen, began to play a role along with Braithwaite, Giddens, and Jones in bringing talent to the club. Since he was also booking the Putnam Central, he was able to secure some of the best musicians around by sometimes offering them at least two consecutive weeks of work in Brooklyn, at both clubs. For the rest of 1953, and 1954, the line-up of both the Putnam Central and Tony's would be similar.

This engagement was held the same weekend that J.J. Johnson was performing at the Putnam Central. He would play at Tony's also a month later. It was the first week that Max Roach took off from playing at the Putnam Central after he began his series of regular Friday night engagements there in late July. Also of note is that Arthur Daniels is listed on vocals. He was also a talented Brooklyn Drummer, who went on to record with many people (**cite names**). Zandoo and his "Coffin Act" would also be featured.



MAX ROACH and  
VINCENT JONES

*The New York Amsterdam News* 8/15/53

A five-day period that must have swung the roof off of Tony's occurred from September 3-7, 1954. What is also interesting is that on September 7, Kenny Dorham led a gig at Tony's, but he may not have been playing trumpet, at least not exclusively. An account a month later places the trumpeter on the Tenor Saxophone, and obviously playing that instrument well also.

**TONY'S  
CLUB GRANDEAN**  
presents in the  
**FIESTA ROOM**  
This Thursday, Sept. 3rd  
**GERRY MAPP** and his  
All-Stars  
Guest — **MAX ROACH**  
Fri.-Sat. and Sun. -Sept. 4-5-6  
**HORACE SILVERS** and his  
All-Stars  
Monday, Sept. 7 — Labor Day  
**KENNY DURHAM** with  
**BOBBY SMITH** vocal & M. C.  
**DENISE** — Exotic Dancer  
**SANDO** and **DAJAA**  
Cover . . . \$1.00  
562 Grand Ave. cor. Dean  
Brooklyn, N. Y.  
For Reservations MA. 2-9511

**KENNY DORHAM**, who is famous and best known for his trumpet playing, is taking more and more to the tenor sax these days and making with a gob of beautiful sounds.

*The New York Amsterdam News* 9/5/53      *The New York Amsterdam News* 10/3/53

**TONY'S**  
**CLUB GRANDEAN**  
 presents in the  
**FIESTA ROOM**  
**HANK MOBLEY**  
 and his All-Stars  
**CARMAN TAYLOR**  
 'Ding Dong'  
**ARGENTINITA**  
 Exotic Dancer

---

562 Grand Ave. cor. Dean  
 Brooklyn, N. Y.  
 For Reservations MA. 2-9511

*The New York Amsterdam News*  
 9/19/53

**TONY'S** Grand &  
 Dean St.  
 MA. 2-9311

- **Art Farmer**  
 (with his Trumpet & Band)
- **Baby Lawrence**  
 (World Greatest Tap Dancer)
- **Betty Carter**  
 (Sensational Vocalist)

PLUS

- Marietta & Charlie  
 Dance Team
- Jimmy Morton  
 ("The Fabulous M. C.")

**Special Show Easter Sunday**  
 5 P. M. Until  
 Admission \$1.00 — (Tax Incl.)

*The New York Amsterdam News*  
 4/17/54

The Bordello brothers would close Tony's in 1955, but it's short-lived dalliance into the jazz club business had been more than worthwhile. Monk would, get his Cabaret Card back in 1957, but then lose it again in 1958 in what became a familiar cycle, and he would be seen back in

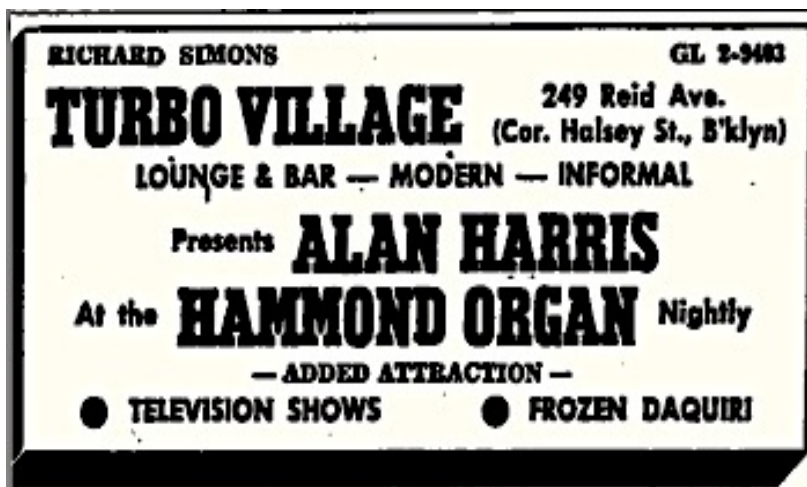


Bedford-Stuyvesant playing at other out-of-reach places from time to time. Tony's would be recalled with pride by Brooklyites involved as a place in which they controlled, built up, and supported, all while being able to being in the best in Jazz at the time.

### **Turbo Village**

Turbo Village, located at 249 Reid Avenue (renamed Malcolm X Boulevard), was a local bar on the corner of Reid Avenue and Halsey Street. It opened it's doors in 1947, and within a year they had an organ installed. The Organ circuit is another aspect of jazz that needs to be explored much more thoroughly, as there was a definite scene comprised of hundreds of bars all over the city in which organists would rotate between, often for stable, long-term engagements. An organist named Gladys Gryce was the first to perform on the instrument at the Turbo Village, beginning in January of 1948. She would soon leave to being playing at the Shalimar Bar in Harlem. By May of that year, popular organist Alan Harris began a three-year

engagement at the Turbo Village, performing there nightly, with the exception of a few moonlighting weekends, until being enticed to leave for Freddie's Bar in the Bronx in October of 1951 (Coincidentally, that Bronx bar may have been partially owned by and named for former Duke Ellington trumpeter Freddie Jenkins, although more research needs to be done). Harris was succeeded by another popular member of that circuit, Arthur Bowie, who would also remain at the Turbo Village for over two years.



*The New York Amsterdam News 7/24/48*

When the Round Robins began in 1949, the Turbo Village was a member of the inaugural Association governing the weekly event. After the success of their involvement with that event, the Turbo Village and

*New York Age* columnist Larry Douglas instituted a copy-cat series at the bar called "Celebrity Night", to be held on Monday nights.

According to the founders, "it [was] intended to tide the boro over until each Wednesday night when ever changing lineups of stars are on hand for the sensational Round Robins."<sup>53</sup> The first one was held on December 12, 1949, with Savannah Churchill performing as the headliner, but also included among others, Tenor Saxophonist Wardell Grey.

Although it is uncertain how long Celebrity Night would last, it would seem that that event sparked the band bug in the Turbo Village, and their patrons would expect to hear music at the bar during their visits.

The bar would have

bands there off and on until they closed in the mid-late 1960's. Around 1957, Brooklyn Drummer Billy Clark began hosting a series of Thursday night jam sessions at the Turbo Village. Playing with them was a teenage pianist from the neighborhood named Richard Williamson, who would later change his first name to Rafik. Williamson

would become an early influence on and teacher of saxophonist Wes Anderson III. After the group with Clark and Williamson stopped playing at the club, a replacement had to be found. Lucky for the club owners, there was a new pool of talent in the neighborhood ready to fill the spot.

Beginning in the early 1950's, an influx of important jazz musicians from northern and mid-western cities such as Detroit, Indianapolis, and St. Louis began to settle in New York, and many of them would eventually find their way to Brooklyn to merge with the still advancing stream of musicians from the south and southwest. For one of them, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, it would become the first regular gig that he was able to obtain in New York. He was living in Brooklyn at the time, at a house owned by Trombonist Slide Hampton at 245 Carlton Avenue in Fort Greene. He would also spend time practicing with John Coltrane at his Manhattan apartment, and it was there that he met Wayne Shorter. Eventually, Shorter began regularly make the trek from his native Newark, NJ to Brooklyn to practice with Hubbard, and

they formed a band together. Shorter was already familiar with the neighborhood, as a few years earlier he used to frequent another club in Bed-Stuy, the Continental while Horace Silver's group was playing there. The first Hubbard/Shorter group was a pianoless quartet, and aside from the Trumpeter and Saxophonist included Bassist Tommy Williams, and Drummer Pete LaRoca Sims. When they finally secured a place to play at Turbo Village, they walked into a club that had declined tremendously since its glory days of the late 1940's. Trumpeter David Weiss, who led an octet which ended up being the last group that Hubbard played with before his death in 2008 would recall,

"He said that he and Wayne tried to get a gig everywhere and this was the only place that would hire them. They were given Monday nights He said they were so happy that someone finally gave them a gig. Freddie said it was a dump (and I guess at the beginning had no piano)...as he put it, there were peanut shells all over the floor."<sup>54</sup>

Although the group started out playing on Mondays, they were so popular that their engagement eventually achieved house-band

regularity, and they were soon engaged four nights a week. The band would play at the Turbo Village for over a year. It also became the catalyst that jump started his career. As word got around, all of the Brooklyn musicians that lived in Bed-Stuy began coming by and bringing others with them. Brooklyn-born drummer Andrew Cyrille was 19 or 20 years old at the time, attending St. John's Prep school, and was considering giving up music for a career in chemistry. Occasionally he would sub for Pete LaRoca in the Hubbard/Shorter group, and he said that experiences such as playing with the group at Turbo Village convinced him to stick with music. Hubbard remembered,

"Sonny [Rollins] had heard me at Turbo Village, at Reed and Halsey in Bedford Stuyvesant, where I started playing four nights a week shortly after I came here. Philly Joe Jones lived in Brooklyn; he'd come by the club to play, and he started inviting everyone to come listen to me. One night he brought Bud Powell to sit in; the next thing I know, Sonny was coming by. I stayed there about a year and a half, I met all the other musicians-Hank Mobley, Paul Chambers, Walter Davis. Those were the beboppers, and we hooked up."<sup>55</sup>

After Philly Joe heard Freddie at the Turbo Village, he hired him to play at Birdland. As Freddie told it, he was copying Miles Davis solos note for note, until he looked up and saw Miles sitting there. After finally hearing Freddie make up his own ideas, Miles spoke to Blue Note Records owner Alfred Lion, who was also in attendance, about recording him right there at Birdland. Hubbard received a call from then Blue Note A&R man Ike Quebec the next day. All this happened during Hubbard's first two years in Brooklyn, and before he would join Art Blakey in 1961. Bed-Stuy residents remember Turbo Village as "The place where Freddie earned his reputation".

After the Hubbard/Shorter quartet stopped playing at Turbo Village, he was succeeded by a group led by longtime Bed-Stuy resident, Trumpeter Kenny Dorham. Dorham's group began playing at the Turbo Village in the fall of 1959. Dorham had been working a series of day-jobs for the last few years, although he was still keeping as regular of a playing schedule as possible, and this multi-night engagement at the club in his neighborhood must have pleased him. He had just recorded

an album earlier that year, which is one of my personal favorites, for the Jaro Label, entitled "The Arrival of Kenny Dorham" (Jaro 5007, rec'd 1/10/59). Aside from Dorham, his group featured Baritone Saxophonist Charles Davis, Bassist Butch Warren, Pianist Tommy Flanagan, and Drummer Buddy Enlow. He was trying to establish a regular working band, but the infrequency of the gigs and the pay for them had presented a challenge. When the engagement at the Turbo Village presented itself, he was able to secure 3 out of the four musicians that had recorded on his Jaro release, but Tommy Flanagan was unable to commit to the band. In his stead, he found a young pianist named Steve Kuhn whom he had met recently while in Boston, and had just moved to New York less than a month before. This would be Kuhn's inaugural gig in New York, working at Turbo Village. He remembered,

"As it turns out, one of them [people he had met while in Boston] was Kenny Dorham, and he needed a piano player, so he hired me maybe two or three weeks after I got to the city. We worked in a club in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, called the Turbo Village, which was a funky-ass club with an upright piano, but I was delighted. I was completely happy about that. It was a quintet with Charles Davis, playing baritone at that time; Kenny; the



bassist was Butch Warren, who is an extraordinarily gifted bassist who has had some issues over the years; and the drummer was Buddy Enlow, who I believe has passed.<sup>56</sup>

The Turbo Village was one of Fred Anderson's regular hang-outs, and he had a group of friends that were all extremely jazz-literate. Kenny Dorham was well respected in the neighborhood, but when he brought in a white piano player, it did raise an eyebrow from him and his friends. Anderson was also friends with Dorham's drummer Buddy Enlow, whom he knew through associates of Enlow's from his hometown of Philadelphia whom he served with in the Air Force. Sometime after Dorham ended his engagement there, a quintet led by Philadelphia native Cal Massey began playing at the Turbo Village. Massey, who had been a contemporary of Philadelphia musicians such as John Coltrane, Jimmy Heath, and Benny Golson, was a recent resident of Brooklyn. His group included pianist Sadik Hakim, who had been the pianist on Charlie Parker's first recording, Bassist Roy Sattendant, Saxophonist Roland Alexander, and drummer Scoby Stroman.

Later, saxophonist Wes Anderson III, while just beginning to play, would play at the Turbo Village while gaining invaluable instruction from the older neighborhood musicians who frequented the place. It would continue to be an important place for young musicians to sit in until it closed its doors.

### **The Continental**

The Mid 1950's brought a steady stream of important, but short-lived jazz clubs to the neighborhood, and it seemed as soon as one would close, another would open. After Club 78 closed, the Putnam Central and Tony's were the jazz spots for a while, and then after they closed, the Continental came along to claim the throne. It was located at 724 Nostrand Avenue, between Prospect Avenue and Park Place in Crown Heights. It opened in late 1955 or early 1956, and was immediately

advertised as "The Jazz Spot of Brooklyn". When it opened it did so somewhat cautiously, hiring local talent, and also featuring a few variety-show acts, including a Comic M.C. and sometimes a dancer, but soon the focus was solely on the music. By late 1956, they started to bring in up-and-coming musicians, most of whom were just past the "who are you" stage in their careers. They had been sidemen with big name jazz musicians, or had gained a reputation through recordings, were just beginning to form their own bands. Most of them would become the stars of the emerging Hard Bop movement. Fred Anderson was just coming out of the Air Force in 1956, and was fortunate to come home right as the Continental was in full swing. Charles Mingus, after had gained a fair amount of notoriety through his recordings and associations, and in Brooklyn through his performances at the Putnam Central, Tony's Grandean, and his Jazz Workshop concerts. Sometime in the fall of 1956, when the Continental began to bring in musicians with bigger names, they brought in Charles Mingus' group to the club. At the time, Mingus was just beginning to experiment with his collaborations with poetry and jazz that would culminate in an album

called *A Modern Jazz Symposium of Jazz and Poetry*, recorded for the Bethlehem Label in 1957 (Bethlehem BCP 6026, rec'd 10/1957). It was either too new a venture, or not presented well enough to be well received, but as Anderson remembered, it didn't go over too well in Brooklyn.

By that year Jackie McLean has gained a large following in the neighborhood clubs, as he had been sitting in and/or playing dances there since as far back as 1949, and had continued to spend time there even after beginning to become more famous through recordings and associations with people such as Miles Davis. Also, after the death of Charlie Parker the previous year on March 12, 1955, jazz fans were looking for his heir apparent, especially among those like McLean who were known to have been friends/contemporaries of Parker. After Mingus group left the Continental, McLean brought a group into the club for two weeks, and was a huge success. On the strength of McLean's reception by the neighborhood jazz fans, the Continental began booking regular groups.

Being a recent military man himself at the time, Anderson was also quick to recognize others in military attire. Later in 1956, he saw Horace Silver's group at the Continental. "That was one of Horace's earliest groups. In fact, what's-his-name was supposed to have been in that group...Wayne Shorter. [He] was in the Army, so he used to come down there and play in his Army uniform! He was stationed at Fort Dix.", he remembered.

The group at the Continental during that engagement included trumpeter Art Farmer, Saxophonist Clifford Jordan, Bassist Doug Watkins, and 17 year-old drummer Louis Hayes. Being a drummer himself, Anderson made sure to check out the young kid playing drums with Silver's band, but since he had been in the Air Force for the past four years and off of the scene, he wasn't as in tune with what was going on with the jazz scene in regards to personnel changes, who had formed their own groups, etc. He did noticed that for some reason Clifford Jordan didn't seem to know the music, and a saxophonist in an Army uniform *did* know all the music, but he was

teaching Cook all of the parts. It was made clear to him later. "Wayne Shorter was supposed to be the Tenor Player [in Silver's quintet], but he was in the Army, he got drafted or something. And so, he was down there teaching [Clifford Jordan] the tunes."<sup>57</sup>

By the next year, the Continental was known throughout the city as a dedicated jazz club, and was considered part of the city "circuit" along with the more well known Manhattan clubs. During the latter part of 1957, engagements such as these were commonplace at the club, which took place from December 2-6, 1957:



*The New York Amsterdam News 11/30/57*

A week after the All-Star gig closed, Cannonball Adderley brought in Miles Davis' soon-to-be band (Wynton Kelly wouldn't join the Davis group until 1959) without the trumpeter to the Continental from December 17-22. He had just joined Davis group two months earlier. During two of the days during this week (Dec. 17 and 19) he was also recording with Machito's Afro-Cuban orchestra for the Roulette Label (*Kenya-Afro Cuban Jazz*, Roulette R52006). By this time, "Philly" Joe Jones was also a resident of the neighborhood, along with Wynton Kelly. After their engagement was over, the club closed out the year with a New Year's gala featuring Horace Silver's Quintet.



*The New York Amsterdam News 12/21/57*

A couple of weeks after swinging in the new year with Horace Silver, Miles Davis brought his new sextet to the Continental. The operative word here is new, as John Coltrane had just joined the band on January 2, 1958, and the group had just completed a two-week engagement at Birdland. The patrons at the Continental were able to hear the band feel itself out in only its third week of existence. Although some Bed-Stuy residents may have made the trek to



Birdland to hear the band, since it was coming to their neighborhood for six nights, why bother?



*The New York Amsterdam News* 1/25/58

The Continental would be closed by 1960, but not after thrilling Bed-Stuy residents for a few years of swinging jazz. "When the Continental was open, we didn't go to any other place but the Continental. The Continental was *The Joint!*", Fred Anderson would say more than once. Horace Silver believed so also...so much that he would compose a romping blues which he would record in 1959 commemorating his experiences at the club entitled *Cookin' at the Continental*. (From the

Horace Silver LP *Finger Poppin' with the Horace Silver Quintet*, Blue

Note BLP 4008, rec'd 1/31/59)

### **The Coronet/The Blue Coronet**

Just as the Continental was entering its final days, another club would open which would become, through a second incarnation, the longest running, and most well-known jazz club in Brooklyn until it closed. The address 1200 Fulton Street would be synonymous with good jazz almost continuously for more than Twenty years. In 1959, The Club Coronet opened its doors on the Fulton Street "strip", just down the block from the Baby Grand, The Arlington Inn, the Verona Café and the Carroll Bar. Vocalist/Pianist Freddie Cole was living in Bedford-Stuyvesant in the late 1950's, and his trio played a multi-week engagement at the Coronet that ended in October of that year. He was replaced by a group advertised as being from Boston, The George Scott Quintet.



*The New York Amsterdam News 9/26/59*

Fred Anderson remembers seeing Maynard Ferguson's band at the Coronet in 1959, with Slide Hampton in the Trombone section.

Sometime after 1961, when both Al Grey and Billy Mitchell had left the Count Basie Orchestra and formed a popular group, they also played the Coronet on multiple occasions. It seems that on each occasion, the group would have a different addition to the front line. Anderson remembered that the first time that he ever saw Vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson was as a part of the Mitchell/Grey group at the Coronet. On two separate occasions, Trumpeters Donald Byrd and Dave Burns both played with the group. Other musicians/groups that he

remembered which worked at the Coronet included Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Horace Silver's Quintet, Mongo Santamaria, Tenor Saxophonist Frank Haynes, The Turrentine Brothers group, Sonny Stitt, The Blue Mitchell/Junior Cook Quintet, and Willie Bobo.

The Coronet would also follow the tradition of other Brooklyn Clubs in being a launching pad for the careers of many musicians, and Anderson may have witnessed one of them. In 1962, Latin jazz percussionist Willie Bobo was playing the Coronet with a future all-star band which included pianist Chick Corea, Bassist Larry Gales, saxophonist Joe Farrell, and trombonist Garnett Brown. Also with him was an eighteen year-old trumpeter from Newark, NJ named Woody Shaw, on his first major professional gig. Eric Dolphy, who was living at Slide Hampton's house in Fort Greene, heard him with Bobo's group and asked him to join his quintet, a group that Shaw stayed with until the saxophonist's sudden death in 1964. That year, 1962, there seems to have been a lot of clavé being played at the Coronet. On another occasion in the latter part of that year, percussionist Mongo

Santamaría was playing at the Coronet with his band. During his set he performed his version of Herbie Hancock's composition *Watermelon Man*, and in the audience was Riverside Records founder Orrin Keepnews. Keepnews knew a good thing when he heard it, and promptly arranged for Santamaría to record the arrangement for a Battle Records, a subsidiary of Riverside. The record became a huge success, reaching #10 on the 1963 pop charts, and supposedly paid composer Herbie Hancock's bills for the next few years.

Also in 1962, pianist Cecil Taylor played the Coronet with a trio including Bassist Henry Grimes, and drummer Sonny Murray.

According to A.B Spellman's account in his book *Black Music: Four Jazz Lives*, it was the first time that Taylor played a community audience in the few years prior to his appearance there. The black jazz audience was in the midst of a conflict at the time, with the sides for and against the newer avant-garde music constantly at odds with each other. Musicians such as John Coltrane and Jackie McLean were both very popular in the neighborhood, and both had played at the Coronet

at different times. Both saxophonists also were beginning to align themselves, to some degree, with the new music of Taylor and Ornette Coleman, which one would think would foster some kind of acceptance of that music with the crowd at the Coronet, but it was not so. The Coronet was a working-man, neighborhood club where a number of the patrons just wanted to hear good, familiar black music, and they were not at all receptive to Taylor and his group. After the first set of the first day, the manager of the club made up his mind. "We don't want this music in here, you're fired," he told the pianist.<sup>58</sup> Taylor, accepting the firing, still insisted on finishing the engagement for that day, and instructed his musicians to go back to the bandstand and prepare to play. An altercation took place between the manager and Murray in which knives were drawn, but it was soon defused by the wife of the manager. According to Murray, Jackie McLean was in the crowd that evening, and was very much inspired by the playing of Taylor and his group. So much so that when he was brought in to replace Taylor with a group of his own which included drummer Tony Williams the next evening, he began to play in the avant-garde vein.

The reaction was the same, except this time it was an audience member that decided he'd heard enough. Sonny Murray remembered,

"But you see man, that next night Jackie McLean was hit in the mouth by someone from the same crowd. Because he had been sitting there digging Cecil, and when he went up to play the next night he tried to play something experimental with Tony Williams and they came up and hit him in the mouth, and Jackie was supposed to be straight [accepted] in that bar."<sup>59</sup>

The Coronet would close in 1965, and then reopen at the same location as the more well known Blue Coronet in 1966. The Blue Coronet, however was open during a period where even a dedicated jazz club such as itself had to recognize that jazz's profitability waned at times, and the neighborhoods receptiveness toward other types of music could keep the cash register ringing. For that reason, The Blue Coronet, the later club, also occasionally included music other than jazz. Calypso Singers like Grenada's "The Mighty Sparrow" would also play the Blue Coronet from time to time beginning in the 1970's. For that reason, to a hard-core jazz fan like Fred Anderson, the original *Coronet* was the real jazz club, even though it didn't last as long. "The

Coronet came first, and then the Blue Coronet came later...but they didn't have as much jazz there as the Cornet had. The Coronet had EVERYBODY!"<sup>60</sup> Of course, this topic is to this day a heated debate among Brooklynites, especially among those who were too young to have any knowledge of the original Coronet, and remember the later Blue Coronet as being the definitive jazz club in the neighborhood.

In 1965, the last year of operation for the original club, the Coronet sponsored a Jazz festival during the Summer. It ran for 6 consecutive weeks from June 22 until August 1, and featured Rashan Roland Kirk, Max Roach, Yusef Lateef, and the Shirley Scott/Stanley Turrentine group, which possibly included drummer Otis "Candy" Finch, and bassist Bob Cranshaw.





When the Blue Coronet opened up in 1966, the new owner, Dickie Habersham-Bey was determined not to replicate some of the mistakes of the previous ones. The neighborhood had been on a constant decline since the late 1950's, and the drug problem in the neighborhood was growing consistently worse, and would sometimes degrade the atmosphere of the original Coronet, which used to allow admission to everybody. The Blue Coronet began charging a cover charge, which instantly weeded out passer-by's not necessarily concerned with the best interests of the club, and only brought in

those who intended to come for the music and atmosphere, nothing else. He described the crowd at the Blue Coronet as being "95% Black"<sup>61</sup> It is plausible that because of the strength of the Greenwich Village Clubs at the time (The Village Gate, The Village Vanguard, etc.,) that his clientele was made up of mostly local jazz fans and those African-Americans who sought out the club from other areas of the city. Habersham-Bey would speculate that the amount of music that he was presenting was equal to the Village Clubs during the hey-day of the Blue Coronet. To kick things off, Wynton Kelly and his trio with bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Jimmy Cobb were hired for the first two weeks of the club's operation. When the official Grand Opening was held in January 1967, fittingly enough Max Roach was brought back to Brooklyn to start things off right. With him were his wife at the time, vocalist Abbey Lincoln, saxophonist Odean Pope, Bassist Jymie Merrit, and pianist Stanley Cowell.

The Blue Coronet quickly put together an impressive calendar, pulling from established jazz groups, and also bands/combinations of well-known musicians that may not have worked regularly at other clubs.

They were all welcome at the Blue Coronet. Writer and Historian Dan Morgenstern remembered,

"[The Blue Coronet] was a major jazz club there for many years and from time to time I would go there to catch somebody that you couldn't catch in the New York club for some reason or other. But they always had good things happening there."<sup>62</sup>

By the time the Blue Coronet opened, established jazz stars, especially Brooklynites such as Max Roach, would draw capacity crowds at the club. The weekly lineup indicted here was typical of the quality of performer which regularly performed at the club. The second week, which brought Hank Mobley and the Wynton Kelly Trio, may be representative of the kind of engagement that Dan Morgenstern may not have been able to catch in a Manhattan club very often. Kelly's trio was an established group by this time, and although Mobley had made many recordings with Kelly and Chambers together, he hadn't recorded with the group as a unit and probably didn't perform with them often.

**The Blue Coronet**  
 .....  
**MAX ROACH**  
**COMES TO BROOKLYN**



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*The New York Amsterdam News 1/18/67*

Dickie Habersham-Bey, the owner of the Blue Coronet remembered:

"To tell you the truth, the bigger acts at that time, the heavy jazz boys: of course Miles [Davis], Max [Roach], [Thelonious] Monk... those would get you crowds. We had a lotta local Brooklyn boys, seemed like everybody in the world came out of Brooklyn... maybe because of cheaper living, but we had our crowd [of musicians] come out of Brooklyn: Kenny Dorham... I could

go all down the line; but you get what you pay for. I remember every New Year for a long time we used to have double acts, for New Year's Eve I would have like Freddie Hubbard and his quintet and Lee Morgan and his quintet... a battle of the trumpets. We had a lotta repeats: Mongo Santamaria..., I've got lists of names... but everybody you could name, you name 'em they played there, every jazz musician of note: Hugh Masakela... you name 'em, big and small."<sup>63</sup>

**THE BLUE CORONET**  
**SONNY STITT AND BLUE MITCHELL**  
**COME TO BROOKLYN**



**BLUE MITCHELL QUINTET**  
 DEC. 5th thru DEC. 10th

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Vocalist **SALLY MARS**  
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*The New York Amsterdam News 12/9/67*

Thelonious Monk would play the Blue Coronet for the first time with his quartet from Sept 10-15, 1968. Elvin Jones, Lee Morgan and others

would also lend their services that year. The Blue Coronet also added to the impressive number of clubs in which to jam for aspiring musicians. Once the word was out, people came from all over the city to take part in the sessions there. Trumpeter Charles Tolliver, who grew up in Brooklyn's Fort Greene neighborhood for a time remembered,

"A whole bunch of cats that were just getting started at the time used to go to the Blue Coronet and jam in the late 1960's. People like Jack DeJohnette, Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter's brother Alan Shorter used to be there with us. I think that they had jam sessions on Monday nights..."<sup>64</sup>



*The New York Amsterdam New 7/5/69*

Miles Davis first played the Blue Coronet around August of 1968. Davis was a huge celebrity at the time and possibly the biggest draw for the club at the time. Dickie Habersham-Bey recalled that he was paying Davis \$5000 for a week at the club, but he was worth every penny. "A lotta guys would play the club and the [musicians] union would supply them with local [rhythm sections], but Miles came in with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Wayne Shorter, Tony Williams... so when he

came in he had his regular group.” Davis was apparently into his more eccentric behavior at the time, and as reported in *Jet* magazine, the music-loving Brooklyn crowd didn’t necessarily appreciate his antics:

**Trumpeter Miles Davis** didn’t make the customers too happy by playing only a trio of tunes each set at Brooklyn’s **Blue Coronet** and then disappearing from the stage to let his sidemen carry on . . . Now moved a few blocks

*Jet Magazine* 7/25/68

Brooklynites are tough, and although this may have upset some of the patrons at the club, it couldn’t have caused enough of a response in them to cause them to retaliate in the way in which Davis would be treated when he played the Blue Coronet a little more than a year later. On October 9, 1969, after finishing that evening’s engagement at the club, Miles Davis was shot through the door of his red Ferarri, while sitting in front of his then girlfriend, Margeurite Eskridge’s apartment in the East Village. One of the bullet wounded the trumpeter in the hip. While much speculation has been made about the details, it is now clear that the incident had to do with an



organized crime figure who wanted another performer at the Blue

Coronet during the same week that Davis was performing. Dickie

Habersham-Bey was in the middle of the conflict, and recalls it clearly:

"There's always been guys that want to take over the business when they see you doing good business. The week I had Miles... he was working for me regularly; anytime he had a week off he would call and say 'Hey Dick, I'll bring [the band] in. This guy who was monopolizing the business – he's dead now, he got shot on Flatbush Avenue... the name is not important. I booked Miles that week [the week Miles was shot in an altercation in Manhattan after a gig at The Blue Coronet], the Village Gate had Gloria Lynne. Now he made a deal with me to have Gloria Lynne at my place, I told him I couldn't, so he told Miles 'don't show up' [at The Blue Coronet]; certain people tried to bulldoze musicians at that time.

I looked in the paper and it said Gloria Lynne was gonna be at the Village Gate. This guy said 'no, Gloria Lynne gonna be at your place...' There were some threats passed and Miles lawyer – Harold Lovette... that bastard [laughs] knew there was tension. Harold called [this guy] and told him what to kiss... See Harold started everything. They weren't consulting me because I knew Miles was going to be at my place, and not Gloria Lynne. Then Harold told that guy what to kiss and said Miles was coming over [to the Blue Coronet] anyway. So over Harold's BS, this guy wanted to make a point, to show you how bad he was.

When Miles played I had to keep two parking spaces out front of the Blue Coronet to keep Miles and his red Ferarri out front because there were no designated parking spaces. So when Miles left the club they put the boys on him. You know in Brooklyn it's very easy to get shooters, even at that time, and they drove up and shot Miles' car up. When I went down to see the car, if Miles hadn't had that heavy [car] door, he would have been dead. They

arrested Miles for having a couple of reefers on him. Miles said he was never coming to Brooklyn again."<sup>65</sup>



*New York Amsterdam News* 10/11/69

A few months earlier, another Davis' engagement at the Blue Coronet from June 1969 was captured by an amateur recording, and survived as a bootleg for many years. It was released in 2010 on the Domino label as *Miles Davis: Live at the Blue Coronet 1969* (Domino Records (7)– 891207). The shooting incident would also occur just months before Miles would have another local connection in his band. Wayne

Shorter would leave the band in late 1969, and he would be replaced by Brooklyn-born saxophonist Steve Grossman.

The Blue Coronet would remain open until 1985, when Dickie Habersham-Bey closed the Blue Coronet. He cites a number of reasons, including the drug problem associated with the decline of the neighborhood, and high unemployment, and also the "lack of concern for jazz [which] fractured the musicians". During its twenty year history, it was the single most well-known jazz club in Brooklyn, and for the local musicians, it provided an important place for the intersection of established musicians and the younger musicians just trying to learn how to play. Trumpeter Olu Dara, who lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant in the mid 1960's, said about the Blue Coronet, "That's where every body came. If musicians wanted to be introduced in town, they would meet the older musicians, who would hook them up with a gig."<sup>66</sup>

In the late 1970's, saxophonist Wes Anderson III was a budding talent, taking advantage of the fertile musical environment in his home, and in Bed-Stuy. When Sonny Stitt was making one of his frequent engagements at the Blue Coronet, his father, who had played drums with the saxophonist in the past, brought him by the club and told him to bring his horn. After Stitt, who was always looking to impart knowledge upon a young musician by example, saw the young man with the saxophone case looking and listening admirably from the audience, he asked him to sit in. Anderson, knowing that Stitt was a friend of his father's, and having begun to gain a reputation as an up-and-comer, believed that a friendly musical experience was about to take place. He failed to notice the devil's horns sticking up in back of Stitt's head. The saxophonist called for *Cherokee* at a breakneck pace, a tune that he knew back and forth, and had been playing at that tempo for over 30 years. After spewing off chorus after chorus of effortless improvisation, Stitt, ever the educator, turned it over to young Anderson. A lesson was learned by all that evening.

## **La Marchal**

At 837 Nostrand Avenue, at the corner of President Street in Crown Heights, sat La Marchal Supper Club. These types of clubs, which were numerous in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights, normally didn't become known as jazz clubs, but occasionally a jazz event would be held there, and sometime it would catch on, and the place would become a jazz spot. More often than not, it remained a variety-show type supper club. Such was the case with La Marchal. It would not be known today if not for a single, momentous event that took place at the club, though there were other occasional jazz events there during its short existence.

La Marchal opened its doors in 1961, and quickly was established as a cabaret, with lounge-type novelty acts. Beginning in 1963, they began to have more jazz in the club. Kenny Dorham, who was working a day job at a music store in Manhattan at the time, began playing at La Marchal four nights a week in January of that year. It is not known exactly how long he stayed at the club, but by October a musician

named Charlie Motz led a quartet that was featured at the club. Fred Anderson was a frequent visitor at La Marchal once they became known as a jazz spot, and remembers one of the first gigs he saw there was a double bill featuring the bands of Sonny Rollins and Milt Jackson. Saxophonist Lucky Thompson was playing with Jackson's band during the engagement. Anderson also caught Kenny Dorham's quintet with Joe Henderson at La Marchal, although is not known whether it was during the initial engagement in early 1963 or later.

As discussed earlier, quite often a group of like-minded people would get together and form a social club in Brooklyn, and for possibly the first instance in jazz history, a group of the wives of jazz musicians did just that. A group of the wives of jazz musicians who were living in Brooklyn at the time, including Stella Timmons, wife of pianist Bobby Timmons, Brenda Hubbard, wife of Freddie Hubbard, Sonia Hamilton, the wife of drummer Bobby Hamilton, and the wives of pianist Cedar Walton, and possibly saxophonist Charles Davis, formed a club called "Club Jest Us". They decided to put together a concert to help to

promote their husband's careers, and chose Club LaMarchal as the location. On April 9-10, 1965, Club Jest Us presented a concert featuring the two most well known of the younger trumpeters in jazz, Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan, along with pianist Harold Mabern, saxophonist/flautist James Spaulding, Bassist Larry Ridley, drummer Pete LaRoca, and percussionist Big Black. Fortunately for jazz, Hubbard had the foresight to arrange to record the event, and it was subsequently released in two volumes on Blue Note records. Given the title "The Night of the Cookers", it features some spirited long-winded trumpet jousting. (*The Night of the Cookers: Live at Club La Marchal* , Blue Note Vol.1-BLP 4207, Vol. 2-BLP 4208) The true orientation of the event was that Lee Morgan was brought in to play with Hubbard's group. The band, the song selection, and even one of the wives in the club which presented the event was Hubbard's. On the recording, the environment of a Brooklyn jazz club was on full display, with plenty of interaction and co-signing from the audience when they heard something that they liked. When asked about the club and that evening in particular, pianist Mabern remembered,

"[The Club] was filled to capacity, if you had 100 people it was a packed house. [La Marchal] was a real small place right on the corner. The audience was great, and I would say you probably had 98% African American people in the place that night. Audience participation was great; during that time all audiences were great, but there were a lot more black people involved because what we played they could relate to. There were a lot of Brooklyn fans that would hang around all of us, and they supported up, which was beautiful at the time. They were very receptive and they were into all of us as musicians, they had the records, there were even some of these guys that had listening clubs."<sup>67</sup>

Aside from this event, there was not much jazz at LaMarchal in the years before it closed around 1967. At some point during their last years, vocalist Betty Carter began to be a favorite of La Marchal, and in April 1966, she performed there on a double bill with the Art Farmer/Jimmy Heath Quintet.



*The New York Amsterdam News 4/2/66*



## **The East**

In the entire history of the neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, never was the proud spirit of self-containment, and self-sufficiency on display more clearly than from 1970 through 1986, when a school, cultural center, and jazz club known as "The East" was in operation. Located at 10 Claver Place, just off of Fulton Street, The East was formed under the leadership of a disgruntled Brooklyn-Born public school teacher and jazz aficionado, Jitu Weusi (b.1939). In the 1960's, the climate in Bedford-Stuyvesant, like many African-American neighborhoods across the country, was politically charged with the struggles associated with the Civil Rights Movement. By the late 1960's Weusi had been a teacher in the New York City public school system for a number of years, and was unsatisfied with the acceptance of different cultural perspectives and their integration into the curriculum implemented by the New York City Board of Education. He was a member of an organization known as the African-American Teacher's Association, and through that organization was part of a movement meant to put

pressure on the Board of Education to change the curriculum to be more accepting of those other perspectives. In 1968, The association founded a group called The African-American Student Association, and Weusi was the adult advisor to the group. Saxophonist Jimmy Cozier was a member of this organization as a high school student, and many years later stil speaks of it with pride. After a year or so of raising issues, involvement in local conflicts over those issues and little progress with the Board of Education, the Student Association decided that they wanted their own cultural center in the neighborhood. The gained control of the building at 10 Claver place during the summer an fall of 1969, renovated it and restructured the space as a cultural center. From the beginning, Weusi, who had previously worked as a waiter at the Village Gate in Manhattan, and subsequently gotten to know all of the musicians while there, realized that jazz as cultural expression was an integral part of the mission of The East, and must be a part of its fabric. When asked about the mission of The East and the ways in which they worked to achieve it, Weusi said,

"The mission was to bring enlightenment to our people—recreational, philosophical...We worked to achieve it through a number of different things; one was through the entertainment that we provided. Our opening performance was Leon Thomas and from the very beginning our music was always radical. Gary Bartz. Freddie Hubbard, Rahsaan Roland Kirk...our music was always out there. Then, one of the first things that we brought into the East was the bookstore. We pushed reading, understanding, books, studying, and upliftment. And then the next thing we brought in was a school; the Uhuru Sasa School became a vehicle for us educating young people and adults as well. The East thing was always an upliftment of a mind, a forging of a higher objective, a higher goal, a better person, and self – improvement."<sup>68</sup>

When the Uhuru Sasa School was established, and then eventually certified through the New York State Department of Education, it was soon discovered that additional income was needed to subsidize the school. The process followed by The East to gain certification was in essence a pre-cursor to today's charter schools, unfortunately minus the exorbitant per-student stipend that are paid to them by State governments today. As part of their subsidizing plan for the school, The East quickly established a music policy featuring jazz four nights a week, Thursday-Sunday, although some artists would only prefer or be available for a shorter engagement. Jazz at The East, supported by the community, played an important role in the existence of the school at

least for the first seven years, before the school changed locations in 1978. When asked about the process of subsidizing the school's income, Weusi said:

"That was part of what the music did. The music helped us to pay for running the school. Take a typical Pharoah Sanders weekend; a Pharoah Sanders weekend meant for us a \$5,000 weekend. That meant that we could go to the bank Monday morning and put in \$5,000 in our account; which meant that we could pay teacher's salaries, we could buy food, we could do this, we could do that..."<sup>69</sup>

And when asked about whether the musicians who played the club would give The East a break on their fees, in the spirit of black consciousness, he remembered,

"I would think so, yes. Everybody that played [The East] got paid, nobody played for free. But they never charged us what they might have charged a Birdland, or the Vanguard. What we served was very good food, everybody talked about the food at The East; guys couldn't wait until they had finished their set to send [their orders] down to the kitchen. We had Chicken dinners, Fish dinners, vegetarian dinners. I remember guys used to send down to the kitchen for different plates. We had this vegetarian rice called Kawaida Rice, big green salads, potato salad, collard greens..."<sup>70</sup>

The musicians who played the East were undoubtedly inspired by the positive black environment, and consistently expressed it in their performances. The quality of those performances and the energy being expressed by the artists became a defining quality of the playing there, and something that the audiences came to anticipate and relish. Jo-Ann Cheatham, publisher of *Pure Jazz* magazine, was a frequent patron of the East during its heyday. She describes the scene:

"It's such a chiché, but the vibes...A combination of the people, the atmosphere, the conversation, the hipness...I never went to The East and had a bad time, a bad performance. There was never any fighting or anything like that. It was crowded...the [clientele] people always looked healthy, they looked good, their clothes...it was just nice. I know that's not a very good description, but that's the way I felt about The East. Whenever Pharoah appeared on a Saturday night at The East, everybody was all hopped up about Pharoah; no one ever articulated this, you're asking me about The East, because you knew this was the thing to do [go to The East]. People knew not to miss the concert, because they knew the music was gonna be telling the truth."<sup>71</sup>

The East, with its environment of cultural upliftment and Black nationalist sensibilities, decided early on who they preferred for their

audience. The artists that performed at the East were all black, and the club decided that those that should hear them should be the members of the community that supported them, or African-Americans from other communities. At first, there was an unofficial policy that that only people that should be allowed come into The East were African-Americans, although Weusi does admit that "an individual white person here or there" did come to the East (writer/jazz aficionado Russ Musto has reported being there many times). According to Weusi, the only time that the issue came to a point of contention was after it became known that the musicians who were playing there were regularly delivering inspired performances, no doubt charged and inspired by the positive, uplifting environment present at The East.

"Initially they [white people] didn't pay that any mind, because [hypothetically speaking]'...who was the East?' But after awhile, when the word started getting out that there was this place, that the musicians really *played* there, and you could hear the music, they [audience] didn't do no talking, wasn't no bottles clinking, wasn't no noise...people were into the music, this was a serious place. *Then* people started trying to come, people started coming, and we had to more or less inject that policy, but that was

after I'd say maybe two years. Let's say we started in '70, it wasn't until '72 that we began to have that problem.

...it came to a head, in about '77 when [white] people wanted to bring their children into the school and we had to draw the line. Some of us said yes, and some of us said no, and that eventually caused a [schism] in our organization."<sup>72</sup>

The music presented at The East consisted of black musicians whose music was either entirely avant-garde, or was based in the modal/hard-bop tradition and contained elements of avant-garde.

Long-time Brooklyn resident and trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah worked at The East with a number of avant-garde groups, including "The Brotherhood of Sound", "The Master Brotherhood", and a group led by drummer Rashied Ali called "The Melodic Art-Tet". Abdullah also played with Sun Ra's Arkestra for a number of years, and performed with the band at The East for the first time in 1975. Aside from Pharoah Sanders, Jo-Ann Chetham remembers also hearing pianist and vocalist Doug & Jean Carn, vocalist Leon Thomas, saxophonist Gary Bartz, and vocalist Betty Carter performing at The East. Saxophonist/Flautist James Spaulding played the club for the first time as a bandleader. His group included bassist Bob Cunningham, trumpeter Michael Ridley

(brother of bassist Larry Ridley), and a very young Lenny White on drums, still being chaperoned by his parents, according to Spaulding.

As can be gathered by the accounts from many of the people who frequented the club, saxophonist Pharoah Saunders was a favorite there, especially in the years following the death of John Coltrane in 1967. He performed there many times between 1970-1977, and on one occasion he was recorded at the club. Released in 1971 as *Pharoah Sanders: Live at The East* on Impulse Records (Impulse AS 9227), for years it was thought of as having been genuinely recorded at the club. Although the microphones were set up at the club that evening, as many who were present would later recount, for some reason the recordings made live were not used. Instead, Sanders group was recorded in a conventional recording studio, and selected patrons and staff from The East were brought in to simulate the noise and atmosphere of the club, which was then combined into the commercially released recording.



On at least one often-spoken-about occasion, The East's policy of not admitting White patrons did come to a head, and this time it affected the music, involving drummer Elvin Jones and his band. Details about this particular incident have been hard to come by, as almost everybody that I have spoken to, or all written accounts point to a different main character in the story. What is certain, is that either one of Jones' band members, or a woman that was accompanying him or his band was white. On this particular occasion, around 1973, Elvin Jones was slated to bring a group into the East for a Friday and Saturday engagement. Weusi had been friends with Jones since his days at the Village Gate when the drummer was playing with John Coltrane, and had maintained that friendship over the years. "He was just a beautiful brother. I never thought that he, of all people, would object to our policy."

The incident would have two stages. The first test, which Weusi admits should have sent up the red flag, was that Jones sent a white person

over to the club to set up his drums earlier in the day. Weusi remembered,

"We had a lotta code words at The East and somebody called me from downstairs: "Elvin sent [code word for a white guy] to set up his drums, what should we do?" I said "let the man set up his drums." So he comes in and he sets up the drums."<sup>73</sup>

Jones' first set was to begin at 9:00, and when he came to the club to play a little before that time, he was accompanied by a white woman.

Weusi explains:

"Then that night, it's 9:00 and here comes Elvin strolling in with his—I don't know, girlfriend or whatever. So they always leave the tough jobs for me. [Staff] said 'man, you gotta come down here and talk to this guy, he done brought [code word for a white woman]...' So I took Elvin aside and told him I didn't want to embarrass him but 'you know, we've got a policy here...' [Agitated] he says 'I don't care what your policy is, that woman can't come in with me?' I said 'as much as I love to have you, our policy is this... I will try to accommodate you as much as I can, if you want to hake her home I'll be patient, I'll work with you, but we cannot void our policy...' He said 'if she can't stay, I can't stay...' So he left. By 10:30 we had Carlos Garnett on the stage [in Elvin's place] and that was that."<sup>74</sup>

It would seem that in his band at this time was also either bassist Gene Perla, or saxophonist Joe Farrell, both white musicians, along with saxophonist Frank Foster. Among musicians who were in the audience, the murmurings which made their way through the crowd as the show started later than usual and featured a different artist began, seemed to have changed the story. On more than one occasion, I was told that it was either Farrell or Perla that was not admitted to the club, and because of that, Jones and his band left.

The East would continue to have music every week until they moved in 1977 to the much larger 13<sup>th</sup> Regimental Armory on Sumner Avenue and Jefferson Avenue, site of the Billy Eckstine vs. Jimmy Lunceford battle in 1946. The space, while being immense and much more manageable for their growing attendance, did not have great acoustics for the small groups that were preferred, and therefore jazz was presented there much more infrequently until The East closed permanently in 1986. Personally, the most lasting impression that I received from speaking to people that used to frequent the East is the

sense of pride and inclusiveness in the experience of being there. They *wanted* to talk about it, and it was one of those occasions where people would apologize for the limitations of the English language in trying to convey the amount of love and exuberance that they had for it. Randy Weston probably put it the best when I asked him about The East:

...That was great. That was the way things are supposed to be.<sup>75</sup>

## **Muse**

Another local source of pride was a Creative Arts center which operated from the late 1960's until the 1980's called Muse. It was a venture of the Brooklyn Children's Museum, and was initially meant to test the feasibility of setting up small neighborhood museums in within the urban area, and it eventually became the headquarters of the museum. It opened its doors in 1967 and offered a wide variety of programs, including puppet shows, planetarium shows, live animal shows, craft demonstrations and such, and also instruction in theater,

creative writing, poetry, and music. It was located in a large loft building at 1530 Bedford Avenue near Lincoln Place. During its existence, it would become centralized gathering place for young musicians to study, and along with the fertile club scene present in the neighborhood, gave them even more opportunities to hone their skills, and to interact with older musicians, most of whom lived in the neighborhood. Within the first couple of years, jam sessions were being held at Muse, which gave many young musicians a chance to play for each other, and learn from the masters living among them.

**Muse**—1530 Bedford Ave at Lincoln Pl, Bklyn. New headquarters of the **Brooklyn** Children's Museum, containing live animals, see and touch programs, biological exhibits, a planetarium, facilities for art, music, dance, drama and creative expression workshop, discussions, jam sessions (774-2900).

*(New York Magazine 9/1/69)*

Because Muse was an entity of the Brooklyn Children's Library, all of the programs held there were subsidized. By 1970, the jazz component of Muse had become prominent enough among the other programs that jazz concerts were held there twice a month, free of charge.

**Hilton Ruiz Ensemble, Jazz concert, MUSE, 1530  
Bedford Ave, Brooklyn (774-2900) at 8 (free).**

*(New York Magazine 4/21/73)*

Aside from the regular jam sessions that would be held at The Muse, the various teachers there all directed separate big bands with varied musical identities. Bassist Reggie Workman began as one of the teachers at Muse, and in 1978 he became its director. Workman was a member of the Collective Black Artists (CBA), a group of African-American jazz musicians that sought to preserve the legacy and improve the visibility of the music through performance and education, and the Muse had an informal relationship with that organization. The

CBA Ensemble played its first public performance at Muse on April 9, 1971, and many of the teachers at the Muse would also be a part of the CBA. Workman ran a big band at Muse, as did Tenor Saxophonist Bill Barron, older brother of pianist Kenny Barron. The elder Barron would also become Director of Muse at some point. Tenor Saxophonist Roland Alexander, and poet Luis Reyes Rivera also taught at Muse.

**Musicians from the Collective Black Artists jamming at the Muse with Reggie Workman on Bass**



*(Black Enterprise Magazine, December 1978, P.51)*

The Muse was around just at the time to inspire the generation of musicians that went on to join the forefront of jazz in contemporary

times. Young musicians such as Wes Anderson, Jimmy Cozier, T.K. Blue, and Kenny Kirkland, Ahmed Abdullah and pianist Danny Mixon studied/played at the Muse, and received some of their first big band experience playing in the ensembles there.

### **Cal Massey**

The Bedford-Stuyvesant/Crown Heights area had long been an area where musicians settled looking for affordable housing, and whether searching for it or not, happened to stumble upon a fertile musical environment, rich in history and tradition. Some musicians were simply contributors to it, and others, along with their contributions, were nurturers, always willing to impart instruction and experience upon any young musician willing to listen. The latter describes trumpeter and composer Cal Massey, who moved to Brooklyn from his native Philadelphia in the late 1950's. He purchased a house at 235 Brooklyn Avenue, where he raised his family which included his wife and five children. He was affectionately given the nickname "Folks", an



African-American colloquialism for “family” because of his ability to connect with and form quick, lasting interactions with everybody from strangers to people who had known him for years. Massey’s home became the neighborhood’s home, a center in the community to promote consciousness, and perpetuate the arts. Archie Shepp summed it up best when he described Massey as “a beacon to the growing community of musicians in Brooklyn”<sup>76</sup>

Trombonist and long-time Brooklyn resident Charles Stevens, who I had the pleasure of playing with in Frank Foster’s Loud Minority Big Band when I first moved to Brooklyn, described Massey as “The musical presence and center in Brooklyn”.

Massey moved to the neighborhood at a time when it was beginning to decline, and gigs were being guarded closely by those that had them, and passed on largely to members of those musicians’ immediate circles. Massey, aside from playing the Trumpet, was also an accomplished composer, and his compositions were recorded by Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, and

Archie Shepp, among others. For one reason or another, he didn't get a lot of gigs as a trumpeter in Brooklyn or otherwise, but he was not deterred by the lack of opportunities. He began to make his own.

Massey was always aligned with the plight of African-Americans during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's, and in the spirit of the times, he organized benefit concerts for local causes. One such cause was a benefit to raise funds for a community playground, held at St. Gregory's Rectory, a Catholic Church located just across the street from his house at 991 St. Johns Place. The Benefit concert was held on April 24, 1966, and the lineup itself speaks volumes to the amount of respect that Massey held amongst his peers, some of them much more well known than himself. The concert featured, among others, Thelonious Monk and his quartet, and John Coltrane and his quartet, with Rashan Roland Kirk as guest artist. Coltrane's portion featured his composition *A Love Supreme*, with drummer Elvin Jones playing with a cast on his foot, and with the Coltrane himself the prayer. Massey's nine-year old son at the time, saxophonist Zane Massey, remembered that Coltrane's performance was inspiring even to himself at such a

young age, and that the saxophonist came over to the Massey house after the concert to eat, but his horn was always out of the case, ready to be played.

# JAZZ CONCERT

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TWO PERFORMANCES

3 to 5 P.M.

7 to 9 P.M.

*Ticket Prices for Each Performance:*

Adults — \$2.50

(Children under 14) — \$1.25

*Tickets Available:*

St. Gregory's Rectory, 224 Brooklyn Ave.

Reservations: Call PR 2-1244 (after 7 P.M.)

Arranged by: CAL MASSEY

Show for Benefit of St. Gregory's Playground

Six years later, Massey organized a series of benefit concerts for the Black Panther Party. The first one was held on February 22, 1972 at a for-rent space at 1310 Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, and it premiered Massey's composition, *The Black Liberation Movement Suite*. The Concert also featured Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, Alice Coltrane, Leon Thomas, Pharoah Sanders, and others to raise funds for the Party's legal defense fund.

When bassist Paul Chambers passes away at age thirty-three on January 4, 1969, Cal Massey was one of the first to arrange a Benefit concert and tribute to the bassist, held at the Cocp Social Club in Fort Greene. Again, the lineup speaks to the influence and respect that Massey held among musicians.

<b>GIGANTIC TRIBUTE TO PAUL CHAMBERS</b> INFO-CALL 467-2702 Sponsored and Arranged by CAL MASSEY and JAZZ MUSICIANS with cooperation of C.O.O.P. ASSOCS. - and the following DJ's NEVER BEFORE IN THE HISTORY OF BROOKLYN!		
<b>BILLY TAYLOR</b> <b>ALLEN GRANT</b>	<b>ED WILLIAM</b> <b>RHETT EVERS</b>	<b>DEL SHIELD</b> <b>V. ROUNDTREE</b>
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<b>SUNDAY JAN. 26, 5 PM - UNTIL . . . COME \$4.50</b> <b>C.O.C.P. 681 FULTON ST. BKLYN. N.Y. JOIN US DONATION</b>		

*The New York Amsterdam News 1/25/69*

Massey would unfortunately pass away on October 25, 1972, but not before leaving his legacy on a number of young Brooklyn musicians who benefited from his company. Aside from his immediate family, including his saxophone-playing son, many musicians that I came in contact with after I moved to Brooklyn, including Wes Anderson, Jimmy Cozier, trombonist Robert Trowers, trombonist Charlie Fowlkes, and others spoke highly of his influence on them when they were

learning how to play in Bedford-Stuyvesant of the 1970's, which in general had de-valued jazz music to an almost discouraging amount compared to the attitude toward the music in the 1950's through the 1970's. Massey was one of the guiding forces that kept many young jazz musicians of that generation on the right path.

## **LOOSE ENDS**

As I went about documenting the many aspects of the Bedford-Stuyvesant scene, I came to the realization that it is ultimately an impossible task. There were so many musicians that made the neighborhood their home for short periods of time, so many venues that opened up for short periods of concentrated, important jazz activity before closing, and most of them left little trace of their existence. In this section I will attempt to cite a number of these more isolated, but impactful venues and events to the Bed-Stuy scene.

There were a number of additional for-rent spaces, cabarets, and theaters in the neighborhood and surrounding areas that would host jazz events either regularly for a short time, or for isolated, one-time events.

### **The Universal Temple/Willoughby Temple**

The Universal Temple (also known as the Willoughby Temple), located at 441 Willoughby Avenue, on the corner of Nostrand Avenue, is a Masonic building that was available to host social events. Photographer and Emcee Jimmy Morton remembers hearing Jackie McLean at the Universal Temple, playing with Brooklyn bassist Franklin Skeete. Near the end of March of 1956, Art Blakey and his Jazz Messengers were scheduled to play a dance at the temple, but a brush with the law would intervene. Blakey and Horace Silver, while driving in Philadelphia, were arrested after a number of Benzedrine tablets were found in their car. With them was Janka Koenigswarter, the 18-year



old daughter of “the jazz baroness”, Pannonica van Koenigswarter. In his place, Miles Davis and his quintet substituted for Blakey at the last minute with his quintet which contained John Coltrane, Red Garland, Philly Joe Jones and Paul Chambers.

### **Gayheart Ballroom**

Gayheart Ballroom was located at 824 Nostrand Avenue, on the corner of Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights. Open by 1946, it was known in that decade for it’s Rhumba dances, in which it regularly engaged bands which were playing at the top Latin Music ballrooms, such as at the Palladium in Manhattan. By the 1950’s, as the African-American and Caribbean population gained a foothold in the neighborhood, the ballroom became known for swing dances, and calypso dances, and even later Jam sessions. Fred Anderson remembered:

**F.A.** Gayhart was jumping on Sundays. Let me see...I came home...’55, and these cats had....first they had a couple of gigs on a Sunday...some place on Bergen street right off of Nostrand Ave. It wasn’t a big club or nothing, it was a small joint that had nice musicians and stuff, and it got so small that they started renting Gayhart. Yeah, even in ’56. I knew some of those cats who

were giving those sessions. They were a little older than me but nice cats...they were from Downtown Brooklyn.

...I cant think of some of their names, but they used to give Sunday sets, you know, Sunday sessions in the afternoon. I saw Idrees Suliemann...I saw him down there battling a couple of trumpet players down there.

**V.G.** Oh yeah, at Gayhart?

**F.A.** He could hold those long notes.<sup>77</sup>

### **Gems Paradise Club**

Gems Paradise was another cabaret/nightclub similar to the Tip Top, the Baby Grand, and the Town Hill, which featured multi-act variety shows. It was located at 260 Kingston Avenue, between Lincoln Place and St. John's Place in Crown Heights. After Organist Sarah McLawler and her husband, violinist Richard Otto, stopped playing at the Tip Top, they began working at Gem's Paradise in November of 1957, and were there for at least three months. Occasionally, they did bring in big name acts, such as this three-act show with Dizzy Gillespie's Orchestra from 1958:

**THE NEW  
GEMS PARADISE CLUB**

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**ARSENIA RODRIGUES Orchestra**

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JOE PANAMA and His  
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EVERY SUNDAY 8:00 P. M. MATINEE SHOW

**DIZZY GILLESPIE Orchestra**  
featuring Sonny Stitt on sax  
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(between St. John's and Lincoln Pl., one block east of parkway)  
GEORGE MASON, Manager SYLBURN GRAY, Proprietor

*The New York Amsterdam News 1/25/58*

## **The Id**

In the 1970's, as many of the long standing jazz clubs in the neighborhood were either closed or soon to be, jazz events began to take place at unexpected venues. One such place was a club called "The Id". It was originally a for-rent hall known as Satellite Caterers, and at some point it was re-incarnated as a jazz club. When asked

about the declining number of clubs during that decade, and the venues that replaced them, Ed Stoute remembered:

"They had some beautiful places that opened up. There was a place called The Id that opened up in the 70's, it's now a church on the corner of East New York Ave. and Utica Ave [St. Anthony Baptist Church, 425 Utica Avenue]. It was a huge place; it was originally satellite Caterers and they called it The Id, and it was a beautiful place with a big long bar, real nice place. I'd walk in there and Cedar Walton and them would be playing, Billy Higgins would be laughing at me while he's playing...They had some hellified groups in there—Charles Davis, Richard Davis... All of a sudden that place they called The Id—Satellite Caterers—closed, and that place was hot, the music was HOT in there."<sup>78</sup>

### **The Centaur**

The Centaur was another neighborhood bar, located on Franklin Avenue between Prospect Place and Park Place in Crown Heights. In the late 1950's when Wynton Kelly was playing with the Miles Davis Quintet, he lived close this bar, and at some point convinced the ownership to allow him to bring his trio into the bar, and they were such a hit that they were allowed to play there whenever they were available. Pianist Ed Stoute hardly ever missed a chance to hear Kelly

in person, and when asked by writer Willard Jenkins about the club and its patrons Stoute recalled,

**E.S....**Wynton Kelly lived pretty much around the corner and whenever the Wynton Kelly Trio was not playing with Miles you could catch them at The Centaur every weekend; Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb. There was a grand piano up behind the bar. If they had recorded what Wynton Kelly played in there it would have run around the world like a shot, that was one of the most dynamic trios I've ever heard. With Wynton Kelly everything is going to start swinging immediately! And every chorus it would go to another level, until they got you inside our chest and you would say 'they can't swing no more than this!' They got your chest tightening up—and the next chorus, another lever...That's the way they played. That was an awesome trio.

**WJ:** At these places was the clientele strictly black?

**ES:** Mostly, yeah; that was a black neighborhood and you didn't find too many white people coming down there. The people that came down there came to hear some music, it was a nice group, and everything was beautiful. This was a place designed to hear music.<sup>79</sup>

## Theater Activity

As late as the 1960s, the various theaters in the neighborhood would also sometimes stage shows, replacing or sometimes accompanying a film. The Loews Brevoort Theater, on Bedford Avenue and Brevoort

Place. Ed Stoute remembers seeing Miles Davis Sextet there with John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, and Jimmy Cobb there during the late 1950's. They played there for a full weekend, and they were then entire show, without an accompanying film. Stoute speculated that Davis' fee was so high that the theater couldn't afford to also show a film alongside the trumpeter's group.

The Brooklyn Apollo, open since circa 1925, was the sister theater to the famous Apollo Theater on 125<sup>th</sup> Street in Harlem. Located on the corner of Fulton Street and Throop Avenue, its programming in the pre-war days mimicked the Harlem theater, hosting Amateur night shows on Friday nights, and films during the week, and the occasional stage show. Sometimes a show that had been a hit in Harlem was given a second run at the Brooklyn Apollo, although in that respect it was not nearly as active as the original theater. By the post-WWII years, the stage shows were almost nonexistent and film was shown almost exclusively at the Brooklyn Apollo. It was, however, available for-rent to those wishing to present their own concerts. A group known

as the "Gotham Jazz Society" presented trumpeter Lee Morgan at the Brooklyn Apollo on October 29, 1966, with an all-star band which included Hank Mobley, Paul Chambers, Cedar Walton, and Billy Higgins. A second group featuring Grant Green, John Patton, and drummer Clifford Jarvis were also on the show, as was vocalist Leon Thomas.

**Jazz Show  
At Bklyn  
Apollo**

Trumpeter Lee Morgan will perform with an all star combo at the Brooklyn Apollo Theatre, Fulton Street and Throop Avenue, on Saturday, October 29 at 8:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

Morgan, who wrote the tune 'Sidewinder', will feature saxophonist Hank Mobley, bassist Paul Chambers, pianist Cedar Walton and drummer Billy Higgins.

Also appearing on the same show are guitarist Grant Green, organist John Patton, drummer Clifford Jarvis, and as an added attraction vocalist Leon Thomas, formerly with the Count Basie band.

The concert is the second of a series presented by the Gotham Jazz Society.

(New York Amsterdam News 10/29/66)

### **Slide Hampton's Home in Fort Greene**

In 1958, Trombonist Slide Hampton purchased a home at 245 Carlton Avenue in the neighboring Fort Greene neighborhood, just a few blocks south from the border with Bedford-Stuyvesant, and also relatively close to the Brooklyn Academy of Music. He had been living previously in a Harlem apartment located in the vicinity behind the Apollo Theater on 125<sup>th</sup> street, and when twenty-year old Freddie Hubbard moved to New York in July 1958, the trumpeter moved in with him there. Once Hampton closed on the Brooklyn brownstone, both he and Hubbard instantly became Brooklynites. Soon after, saxophonist Eric Dolphy also moved into the home, which would helped to provide a fertile musical home base for the trumpeter. Describing it the trumpeter said, "The house was like a conservatory"<sup>80</sup> When asked about Dolphy during an interview, the trumpeter said,

"He was a good friend...we lived together at Slide Hampton's House for about a year and a half, and let me tell you, we practiced every day....And he introduced me to a lot of Indian music, and he introduced me to this free-form style of playing which Ornette Coleman had brought to New York. And



he introduced me to a lot of different books like Slonimsky's Thesarus Book...<sup>81</sup>

The Carlton Avenue house was Dolphy's base when he heard 18-year old trumpeter Woody Shaw at the Coronet on Fulton Street. Although it is not known how long he lived at the house, his experience there was memorable enough for him to pen a wailing, soulful blues melody on his LP "Outward Bound" for the New Jazz Label, entitled "245" (New Jazz NJLP 8236, rec'd 4/1/1960).

Freddie Hubbard remembered the impact of the Brooklyn scene on himself as a young player:

"Bill Hardman was making it. I became friends with him and used to go over to his house. When I met Kenny Dorham, now that was an experience. He wasn't bitter, but kind of upset at not being accepted like Dizzy and Miles were. He played some stuff back then that was inside, but he never had the *big* tone. He could play some stuff inside, like a saxophonist. I never could play like K.D. I remember he taught me a different way of getting to the D7 bridge (rhythm changes). He had some slick stuff he would play, man, like the subdominant A-minor-seventh to the D7, instead of D7 for the entire time...He would come down through there (the D7) and it would be so pretty.

Brooklyn was the place. We all lived near each other. You had all the cats- Max Roach, even Miles for a little while. Everybody came to Brooklyn.

Wynton Kelly was around the corner. Kenny Dorham around the corner, Grant Green around the corner, Doug Watkins, Paul Chambers. Paul told me he thought like a tuba player. It was something about that tuba for him that got that sound. And when he and Philly Joe Jones would get together, man, it would be something else, on and off the bandstand."<sup>82</sup>

The close proximity of the musicians around him ended up being a huge help to Hubbard when he eventually joined Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers:

"One night I was in a club, checking them [the Messengers] out, and Art came up to me and said, 'Lee's leaving to start his own band, here's all the music.' I went back to Brooklyn, and I didn't stop smiling for a week. I was going to be playing with one of my idols! I had a chance to practice with Doug Watkins---He lived near me in Brooklyn--- and he helped me with some of the music. I was so excited that all the older cats came to my aid, trying to get me to cool out."<sup>83</sup>

### **Bilal Abdurrahman**

Another musician who must be mentioned is saxophonist, Reedist Bilal Abdurrahman. The Brooklyn-born reedist would participate in the fertile jazz scene growing up, but through associations with musicians such as Ahmed Abdul-Malik and Randy Weston, he became interested

in African culture and African music, and became proficient on many African reed instruments. In 1958, he opened up an African restaurant called "The African Quarter at 1700-A Fulton Street near the corner of Stuyvesant Avenue, which was located on the site of Boys And Girls High School today.

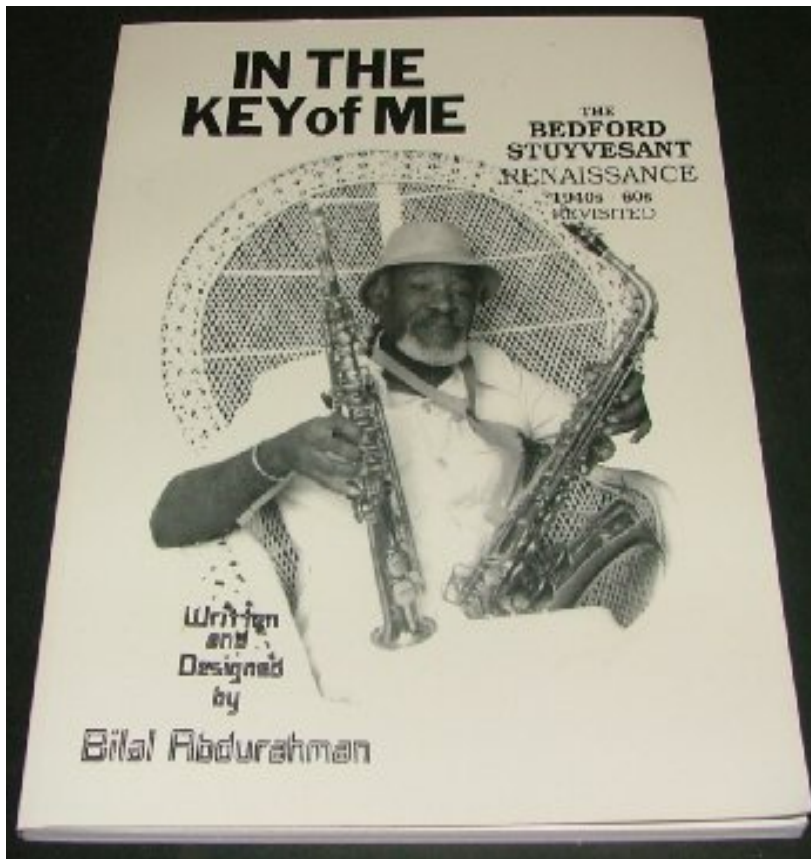


*The New York Amsterdam News 10/31/59*

He and other musicians would also play in his restaurant, which would feature African music and showcase African musicians, many living in Brooklyn as a part of the growing African community that was beginning to take shape near the Atlantic Avenue and Flatbush Avenue area. Through his associations with Ahmed Abdul-Malik, he would play various instruments on five recordings under the leadership of the

bassist, four of them on a subsidiary of the Prestige label, New Jazz, and one for Prestige itself. He also recorded

Abdurrahman would play an active role in educating the next generation of musicians, and would be active on the scene through the 1980's. He was also an active historian and in the 1980's, he self-published a book containing many of his personal photographs, and remembrances called, *In the Key Of Me: The Bedford-Stuyvesant Renaissance, 1940's-60's Revisited*, which was a history of music in Bedford-Stuyvesant from the 1940's-1980's. It is a heartfelt and personal tribute to the neighborhood in which he lived and loved, with many photographs of performances at outdoor street festivals, and also inside some of the long-gone Bed-Stuy clubs and Ballrooms.



Robert Trowers probably described his griot-like status the best. In the 1970's, while Trowers was a teenage up-and-coming trombonist playing in Ray Abrams Big Band, and someone would ask a question about a long-gone club, musician, or event, the older musicians in the group such as Abrams and Matthew Gee would say, "You need to ask Bilal about that."

### **The Brooklyn Influence in recordings of the 1930's-1960's**

Musicians from Brooklyn have been a part of important jazz recordings since the music was first being recorded in New York City. Because of the simple fact of the sheer amount of musicians that lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant, having instances where a number of musicians from the neighborhood participated on a certain recording, group, or association with a musical entity is unavoidable.

One of the most significant periods of the participation of Bed-Stuy musicians throughout the history of jazz is during the early-mid Bebop period, from about 1942 until around 1949 or so. During this time, when the music was just beginning to break out of the stylistic patterns of the swing era, the "Brooklyn Beboppers" began to be noticed at jam sessions in Harlem as being adept at incorporating the new ideas in music being worked on at the time. When a musician with a reputation was needed to help to bring exposure to the music, the great Coleman Hawkins stepped up to the plate. When he put together

the first Bebop band to record on February 16 and February 22, 1944 for the Apollo Label (Apollo 751, 752), alongside Dizzy Gillespie, Oscar Pettiford, Budd Johnson, and Don Byas, were Brooklynites Ray Abrams, Alto Saxophonist Leonard Lowry (who Randy Weston described as “the first Avant-Garde saxophonist”) and Max Roach.

They were the first Brooklynites to begin to bring the gospel of Bebop back to Brooklyn, as they all (along with Cecil Payne) participated in early bebop sessions with trumpeter Victor Coulson (who was also on the Coleman Hawkins recording) and pianist Alan Tinney at Monroe’s Uptown House in Harlem. Brooklyn Beboppers would continue to be a part of his recordings within that idiom, with J.J. Johnson, Max Roach, and Cecil Payne all recording with Hawkins over the next few years.

On what was both one of Bud Powell’s and Leonard Gaskin’s earliest recording dates, they both recorded with Brooklyn-born saxophonist Frankie Socolow on May 2, 1945, for the Duke record company (Duke 112, 115). Duke was a short-lived, Brooklyn-based record label, owned by producer Bob Shad. A month earlier, Gaskin had also been

the bassist on Miles Davis' first record date under the leadership of singer Henry "Rubberlegs" Williams (Savoy 564). At the time, Davis was living on Kingston Avenue.

Of course, as has been stated earlier, when Charlie Parker put together his first working quintet in 1946, with the exception of Parker, the entire band was made up of Brooklynites. The Savoy Label, which had recorded Parker's group, became *the* Bebop label, and subsequently was where many of the Brooklyn Beboppers could be found for the next few years. On January 29, 1946, Saxophonist Dexter Gordon recorded one of his early Bebop sessions for Savoy using Max Roach and Brooklyn trumpeter Leonard Hawkins (Savoy 595, 603). An almost All-Brooklyn Bebop session was made for Savoy on June 26, 1946 under the leadership of J.J. Johnson. Besides the Trombonist, the group included Brooklynites Leonard Gaskin, Max Roach, and Cecil Payne, along with Bud Powell (Savoy 615, 930, 975).



Saxophonist Sonny Stitt's first session as a leader was made for the Savoy label on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1946, and included his fellow Bed-Stuy resident, Kenny Dorham (Savoy MG 9006, MG 9014). A month later, when Kenny Clarke led a session for the French *Swing* record label on September 5, 1946, Brooklynites Stitt, Dorham, and Ray Abrams were participants. The next day, on September 6, Fats Navarro and Gil Fuller co-led a date for Savoy that included Kenny Dorham, Sonny Stitt, and Tenor Saxophonist Morris Lane, a resident of the neighborhood (Swing 224, 225, 244). July 15, 1947 was the date of a session led by saxophonist Allen Eager featuring Max Roach and Duke Jordan, along with Brooklynite Terry Gibbs on vibraphone (Savoy 908, 948).

Of course, there were other contributions outside of the Savoy label. Brooklyn Trumpeter Leonard Hawkins, Cecil Payne, Kenny Dorham, Tommy Potter, and Sonny Stitt all played and recorded with Billy Eckstine's Bebop big band between 1944-1946. Ray Abrams, and trombonist Leon Comegys, a Bed-Stuy resident, were both part of

Dizzy Gillespie's first big band to play in New York at the Spotlite in 1946, and on the band's first commercially released recordings for the Musicraft label (Musicraft 404, 447, 487). Cecil Payne would join the band in the summer of 1947, and Ernie Henry would join the band in 1948.

When Jump Blues/Boogie Woogie, and later Rhythm and Blues music entered the scene in the mid 1940's, Savoy also recorded a number of sessions in order to cash in on the popular styles. In a few instances, the bands were either all Brooklyn bands, or at the very least made up of mostly Brooklyn musicians. Pete Brown was an established musician by the mid 1940's, having already recorded with Willie "The Lion" Smith, Frankie Newton, Jimmie Noone, and Maxine Sullivan. When he began recording for the Savoy label in 1944, he tapped into the deep repository of Bed-Stuy musicians to round out his bands. His first two Sessions for Savoy on July 11, 1944 (Savoy 522, 523) and on August 1, 1944 (Savoy SJL2224) featured pianist Kenny Watts. By 1945, he expanded his group to a sextet, and featured Brooklyn born Trumpeter

Ed "Tiger" Lewis, and drummer Ray Nathan in the group. When Teddy Reig, Savoy's A&R director, needed a band that could play the blues to back singer Cousin Joe for a session, he turned to Brown to put the band together. He assembled an All-Brooklyn band that included Kenny Watts, Leonard Hawkins, Leonard Gaskin, guitarist Jimmy Shirley, and drummer Arthur Herbert, and himself. Recorded on February 13, 1946, it was released under the title *Cousin Joe Accompanied by Pete Brown's Brooklyn Blowers* (Savoy 5536, 5527).

Pianist Kenny Watts, through his association with Pete Brown was able to secure a number of his own recording dates for Savoy, and he too was to rely heavily on the Bed-Stuy musicians that he was playing with regularly in the neighborhood clubs. His first session for Savoy, recorded on August 9, 1946, would feature an all-Brooklyn band consisting of Tenor Saxophonists Kenneth Hollon and Jimmy Brown, Bassist Carroll Waldron, and drummer Ray Nathan. This was the same group, minus Hollon, which was in the midst of a long-term engagement at the Putnam Central Club under Nathan's leadership.

Watts' next session for Savoy, recorded a little over a month later on September 30, 1946, was the aforementioned session featuring Redd Foxx, which occurred after the singer/comedian's appearance at the Putnam Central Benefit Concert. The group included trumpeter John Swan, Tenor Saxophonist Stafford "Pazzuza" Simon, bassist Les Millington, and Drummer Arthur Herbert along with Watts and Foxx, and the recording went under the title *Redd Foxx with Kenny Watts' Brooklyn Buddies* (Savoy 630, 631, 645).

Watts was also to participate on two sessions not under his own leadership for Savoy, but ones that also relied heavily on Bed-Stuy musicians. On February 18, 1947, he participated in a session under Ray Abrams' leadership, featuring two Brooklyn vocalists, Milton Buggs and Billie Stewart. Along with Abrams and Watts, the band's Brooklynites included drummer Lee Abrams, Leonard Lowry, and vocalist Billie Stewart, in addition to trumpeter Fats Navarro, and bassist Curley Russell (Savoy 647,648).

Billie Stewart would impress Teddy Reig of Savoy enough to be offered another recording session on February 18, 1949. Her stylistic similarity to Billie Holiday was well known in Bedford-Stuyvesant, but may have caused Reig to believe that he might cash in on recording a vocalist so similar to Holiday. For that session, she was accompanied by an all-Brooklyn band consisting of Leonard Hawkins, Tenor Saxophonists Ray Abrams and Coleman Hoppin, Cecil Payne, Leonard Gaskin, Lee Abrams, and 17-year old Wynton Kelly, on his second recording session.

Sometime in 1949, Wynton Kelly formed his first working trio, along with bassist Franklin Skeete, and drummer Lee Abrams, all Brooklynites. Saxophonist/Vocalist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson had been living in the neighborhood for a couple of years by then, and heard the group playing in the local clubs. When he began his association with the King record company that year and needed to put together a band, he decided to use Kelly's ready-made rhythm section as his own. The trio would make two recording dates with Vinson on August 16 and

August 30, 1949, respectively (King 4313, 4331, 4355, 4381). They would also record with a band led by saxophonist Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis for the Birdland Label on February 7, 1950 (Birdland 6003, 6004). Kelly would soon abandon the trio to join Dinah Washington’s band in 1951, but when the opportunity came for the pianist to record his first recordings as a leader for Blue Note Records, he returned to his Brooklyn trio for his debut. The Trio, with Franklin Skeete and Lee Abrams recorded for Blue Note on July 25, and August 1, 1951. Skeete was unavailable for part of the July session, so bassist Oscar Pettiford was engaged for a portion of the recordings (Blue Note 1578, 1579, 1580, 1581).

When Max Roach and Charles Mingus founded Debut Records in 1952, aside from playing on many of the recording sessions themselves, they also utilized the large pool of musicians living in Bedford Stuyvesant. Since Wynton Kelly left his trio to join Dinah Washington’s group, bassist Franklin Skeete and drummer Lee Abrams both joined Lester Young’s band, and were also available to freelance again. Max Roach

decided to take advantage of the opportunity. On April 10, 1953, an early session for Debut under Roach's leadership found bassist Franklin Skeete and trombonist Leon Comegys in the group along with Hank Mobley, Idrees Suliemann, and Gigi Gryce. Gryce and Roach had been performing often in the neighborhood at Tonys Grandean with Thelonious Monk during this time. On April 14, 1953, Charles Mingus led a session for Debut featuring Roach and Spaulding Givens, who at the time was the intermission pianist for the Club, where Roach was performing regularly and also was in charge of booking. A week later, on April 21, 1953, Roach led another session for Debut, featuring Hank Mobley in a quartet along with Franklin Skeete, pianist Walter Bishop, Jr, and himself.

Blue Note records, in its early days of recording the modern jazz of the times, after years of recording Stride and Boogie-Woogie pianists and New Orleans music, turned to, among others, the musician-residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant to help to define the sound of many of their recordings beginning in the mid-1950's. Brooklynites had been a part

of the label's entrance into Bebop since Brooklyn Tenor Saxophonist Billy Smith participated in Thelonious Monk's first recording session for the label on October 15, 1947 (Blue Note 542, 547, 560). On May 30, 1952, both Max Roach and Kenny Dorham recorded on a session for the label with Monk. Dorham would also record with saxophonist Lou Donaldson for a Blue Note Session on August 22, 1954, which also included Brooklyn-born trombonist Matthew Gee, no longer using his stage name "Melody Matt", as he had done for his long-term engagement at the Elk's Grille in 1948-49. When the early Horace Silver group that would eventually become the Jazz Messengers recorded for Blue Note on November 13, 1954, Dorham and Bed-Stuy resident Doug Watkins were a part of the band, as they would be after the next year, when the group assumed the name that Art Blakey eventually would carry as its leader for the next sixty years. It was all of this exposure, through Monk, Lou Donaldson, Max Roach and Horace Silver/Art Blakey, that enabled Kenny Dorham to begin to record for Blue Note as a leader, beginning in 1955, an association that would continue off and on until 1964. As far as the rhythm



sections are concerned, Brooklynites such as Doug Watkins, Philly Joe Jones, Paul Chambers, Art Taylor, and later neighborhood resident Ben Dixon regularly made up a majority of the rhythm sections utilized on Blue Note Recordings through the mid 1960's. When Grant Green began recording for Blue Note Records in 1960, his band included Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones, which made for an All-Brooklyn group as he had recently moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant himself (Blue Note 5-27548-2). The section of Kelly, Chambers, and Jones would also record multiple times as a group for competing labels big and small such as Riverside and Vee Jay, aside from being the rhythm section of the Miles Davis Quintet for a short time. That same All-Brooklyn rhythm section, would become almost a second "house" rhythm section for Blue Note in the early 1960's, along with the Horace Parlan trio, which contained Al Harewood on drums.

**List of Musicians that were Born and raised in Bed-Stuy (inc.  
Crown Heights) Area-Mid 1920's-1970's**

Randy Weston

Cecil Payne

Wynton Kelly

Bilal Abdurrahman

Ray Copeland

Al Harewood

Eustis Harewood

Steve Pulliam

Arthur Edgehill

Lena Horne

Lee Abrams

Ray Abrams

Robert Trowers

Rector Bailey

Marcus Miller

Adelaide Hall

Ed Stoute

TK Blue

Buddy Williams

Jimmy Cozier

Scoby Stroman

Ernie Henry

Matthew Gee

Wessel Anderson II

Wessel Anderson III

Howard Kimble

Neil Clarke

Charlie White

Kenny Kirkland

Andrew Cyrille

Joe Knight

Harold Cumberbatch

Tulivu Donna Cumberbatch

Tommy Williams

Arthur Taylor

Lloyd Mayers

Gary Mapp

Sam Gill

Ahmed Abdul-Malik

Franklin Skeets

Ronnie Matthews

Willie Jones

Trevor Lawrence

Arthur Herbert

Art "Trappy" Trappier

Vincent Bair-Bey

Ronnie Coles

Eddie Martin-T.Sax

Teddy Reig

Leonard Lowry

Lloyd Mayers

Leonard Hawkins

Kenny Watts

Eddie Tram

Eric Gale

Lloyd Robinson

Howard Webster

Herb Rainey

Zaid Nasser

Henry Macintosh

Herbie LaVell

Cliff Smalls

Danny Mixon

Al Hicks

Bobby Hamilton

Ed "Tiger" Lewis

**List of Musician Transplants that either grew up in, or lived in  
Bed-Stuy for a significant amount of time**

Max Roach

Billy Smith

J.J. Johnson

Miles Davis

Duke Jordan

Leonard Gaskin

Kenny Dorham

John Ore

Doug Watkins

Paul Chambers

Grant Green

Cal Massey

Tommy Potter

Kiane Zawadi

Freddie Hubbard

Eric Dolphy

Ahmed Abdullah

Gerald Hayes

Bill Lee

Bobby Timmons

Sid Catlett

Jamil Nasser

Pete Brown

Bill "Bojangles" Robinson

Edward Boatner

Sidney Bechet

Gil Coggins

Kenny Clarke

Carmen McRae (she and Kenny Clarke lived together on Dean Street)

Freddie Cole

King Curtis

Harold Mabern

Cedar Walton

Slide Hampton

Noah Pointer

Roland Alexander

Freddy Bryant

Luis Russell

Reggie Workman

Leon Comegys

Bill Hardman

Joe Carroll

Ben Dixon

Roland Ashby

Betty Carter

Lester Bowie

Eubie Blake

Jimmy Nottingham

Betty Carter

Ben Dixon

B.T. Lundy

Lem Davis

Lloyd Trotman-Bass

Edgar Bateman

Jimmy Scott

Ray Copeland

Sarah McLawler

Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson

Delores Brown

Teddy McRae

Webster Young

G.T. Hogan

Charles Tolliver

Sam Jones

Cecil Taylor

Larry Ridley

Sonny Rollins

Marie Toussaint

Ted Curson

Irving Stokes

Joe Henderson

Junior Cook – He and Joe Henderson lived together in the early 1960's

### **List of Bed-Stuy Clubs**

#### **Nightclubs – 9 locations**

The Baby Grand

The Town Hill

The Verona Café -1330 Fulton St – Fulton St. and Verona Ave.

Arlington Inn – 1263 Fulton St.

Tip Top – Fulton St. and Utica Ave.(E.S. Account)

George's Riviera – Bedford Avenue and Brevoort Place

Gem's Paradise Club

Wentworth Club 21

The Kingston Lounge

#### **Jazz Clubs (Includes Restaurants that also presented jazz) – 16 Locations**

The Putnam Central – Putnam Ave. and Classon Ave.



Club 78 – 78 Herkimer Street – Herkimer between Bedford Ave and Nostrand Ave.

Continental – Nostrand Ave between Prospect Ave and Park Ave.

Coronet – 1200 Fulton Street

Blue Coronet – 1200 Fulton Street

La Marchal – Nostrand Ave. and President St.

Berry Brothers Café – 1714 Fulton St – Fulton Ave between Stuyvesant Ave and Lewis Ave.

The African Quarter – 1740A Fulton St and Schnectady Ave.

The East – Bedford and Clairmont Place

Rusty's Turbo Village – Halsey Ave. and Reid Ave.

Tony's (Tony's Grandean) – Grand Avenue and Dean Street

Dean Street Café – Washington Avenue and Dean Street

The Moulan Rouge – Putnam and Sumner – Everybody played there, including Miles.

The Id

The Fantasy – Utica Avenue between Prospect Avenue and Park Place

The Centaur- Franklin Avenue bet Prospect Place and Park Avenue

### **The Ballrooms/For-Rent Halls – 11 Locations**

Gayhart's Ballroom

Crawford's Ballroom

Sonia Ballroom

Brooklyn Palace

Bedford Ballroom

Elks Ballroom

The Willoughby Temple

Parkway Plaza

Eastern Parkway Arena

Arcadia Ballroom

Rose Ballroom

### **Theaters – 2 Locations**

Loew's Brevoort

Brooklyn Apollo

### **Bars – 26 locations**

Jefferson Bar – 397 Tompkins Ave- Corner of Jefferson Ave. and Tompkins Ave.

Carroll Bar – 1303 Fulton St.

Ben's – Lexington Ave and Sumner Ave.

Paul's – Dekalb Ave and Sumner Ave.

The Full Reed – Fulton St. and Reid Ave.

The Cosmo

Pleasant Lounge – 1763 Fulton Street

The Corner Stop

The Wagon Wheel

Farmer John/Cross Road Bar – Fulton St. and Bedford Ave.

Brownies- St. Marks between Nostrand Ave. and New York Avenue

Frank's Caravan, which closed and the owner opened the Flamingo Lounge

Flamingo Lounge

The Kit Kat Lounge – 699 Gates Avenue

The Lucky Spot – 307 Grand Ave

The Sumner Lounge

Berry Brothers – 1714 Fulton Street, original address, later moved down close to Nostrand according to Jimmy Cozier.

Rex Bar

Flying Horse Bar

Monaco Bar – Utica Avenue and Bergen

The Ful-Reid – 1753 Fulton Street – Fulton and Reid Ave

Esquire Bar – Kingston and Atlantic

The Val Hal on Lafayette and South Elliot

Tiffany's – Nostrand Avenue – Big John Patton played there

The Crescent Lounge – Reid Avenue and Fulton St.

Keynote Club – Sumner Ave.

The Bamboo Lounge

**In total, 65 documented locations within Bedford-Stuyvesant that presented jazz with some regularity between 1930-1970.**

**This list does not include approximately 20 additional reported locations that could not be verified.**

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- <sup>1</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 11/26/10.
  - <sup>2</sup> Miles Davis, Quincy Troupe, *The Autobiography of Miles Davis* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1989), 82.
  - <sup>3</sup> Miles Davis, Quincy Troupe, *The Autobiography of Miles Davis* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1989), 82.
  - <sup>4</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 6/24/12, 12:21.
  - <sup>5</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 6/24/12.
  - <sup>6</sup> Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1985), 51.
  - <sup>7</sup> Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle* (Da Capo Press, Cambridge), 181.
  - <sup>8</sup> W. Royal Stokes, *The Jazz Scene: An Informal History from New Orleans to 1990* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1991), 56.
  - <sup>9</sup> Phone Interview with Bob Wilbur 11/3/10.
  - <sup>10</sup> Bob Wilbur, Derek Webster, *Music Was Not Enough* (Oxford Press, New York, 1988), 23-25.
  - <sup>11</sup> W. Royal Stokes, *The Jazz Scene: An Informal History from New Orleans to 1990* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1991), 56.
  - <sup>12</sup> Bob Wilbur, Derek Webster, *Music Was Not Enough* (Oxford Press, New York, 1988), 30.
  - <sup>13</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 6/24/12.
  - <sup>14</sup> Alan Goldsher, *Hard Bop Academy: The Sidemen of Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers* (Hal Leonard, Milwaukee, 2002), 2.
  - <sup>15</sup> Horace Silver, Phil Pastras, *Let's Get to the Nitty Gritty: The Autobiography of Horace Silver* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2006), 45.
  - <sup>16</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 6/24/12.
  - <sup>17</sup> John Birks Gillespie, Wilmont Alfred Fraser, *To Be or Not To Bop* (Doubleday, New York, 1979), 192.
  - <sup>18</sup> Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1985), 127.
  - <sup>19</sup> Interview with Ed Stoute and Morris Fant, conducted by Vincent Gardner 4/18.2010, 50:35.

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- <sup>20</sup> Robert O'Meally, *Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday* (Da Capo Press, Cambridge, 1991), 101.
- <sup>21</sup> Alex Halberstadt, *Lonely Avenue The Unlikely Life and Times of Doc Pomus*, (Da Capo Press, Cambridge, 2007), 55.
- <sup>22</sup> *The New York Amsterdam News* 7/21/45.
- <sup>23</sup> Peter Pullman, *Wail: The Life of Bud Powell* (Peter Pullman, 2010), Chapter Four.
- <sup>24</sup> A.B. Spellman, *Four Lives in the Bebop Business* (Pantheon Books, New York, 1966), 156.
- <sup>25</sup> Alex Halberstadt, *Lonely Avenue The Unlikely Life and Times of Doc Pomus*, (Da Capo Press, Cambridge, 2007), 30.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview with Ed Stoute, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on June 15, 2010.
- <sup>27</sup> From Jazzofilo Blogspot Website, *Carline Rey, her husband was Luis Russell, Louis Armstrong's Bandleader/Arranger/Pianist*, by Arnold Jay Smith, <http://jazzofilo.blogspot.com/2010/02/carline-ray-her-late-husband-was-luis.html>
- <sup>28</sup> From the article "Night Life in Brooklyn", *The New York Amsterdam News* 2/7/48.
- <sup>29</sup> Interview with Al Harewood, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 12/9/09
- <sup>30</sup> From the Column, "Swingin' in Brooklyn with Larry Douglas", *The New York Amsterdam News* 3/11/50.
- <sup>31</sup> Interview with Ed Stoute, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on June 15, 2010.
- <sup>32</sup> From the article "Negroes Dedicate 'Dream Club' to Social Welfare of Community", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 1/20/45.
- <sup>33</sup> Phone Interview with Terry Gibbs, Conducted by Vincent Gardner, 8/24/12, 6:02.
- <sup>34</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 11/26/10.
- <sup>35</sup> From the article "Negroes Dedicate 'Dream Club' to Social Welfare of Community", *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 1/20/45.
- <sup>36</sup> Interview with Jimmy Morton, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 5, 2010.
- <sup>37</sup> Interview with Al Harewood, Conducted by Vincent Gardner, 12/9/09
- <sup>38</sup> Interview with Al Harewood, Conducted by Vincent Gardner, 12/9/09
- <sup>39</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 11/26/10.
- <sup>40</sup> Interview with Fred Brathwaite, Jr, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on October 8, 2010

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Fred Brathwaite, Jr, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on October 8, 2010

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Fred Brathwaite, Jr, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on October 8, 2010

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Jimmy Morton, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 5, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Jimmy Morton, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 5, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Jimmy Morton, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 5, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Robin D.G. Kelly, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (Free Press, New York, 2009), 119

<sup>47</sup> Robin D.G. Kelly, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (Free Press, New York, 2009), 165

<sup>48</sup> Robin D.G. Kelly, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (Free Press, New York, 2009), 165

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Jimmy Morton, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 5, 2010.

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Jimmy Morton, conducted by Willard Jenkins for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 5, 2010.

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<sup>56</sup> From jazz.com, *In Conversation with Steve Kuhn*, by Ted Panken.

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<sup>57</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 6/24/12.

<sup>58</sup> A.B. Spellman, *Black Music: Four Jazz Lives* (University of Michigan Press, 2004), P. 19

<sup>59</sup> A.B. Spellman, *Black Music: Four Jazz Lives* (University of Michigan Press, 2004), P. 20

<sup>60</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 11/26/10.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Dickie Habersham-Bey, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on June 7, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Dan Morgenstern, conducted by Vincent Gardner 11/29/10

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Dickie Habersham-Bey, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on June 7, 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Phone Interview with Charles Tolliver, conducted by Vincent Gardner 3/8/13

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Dickie Habersham-Bey, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on June 7, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> From the Article "The World According to Dara", *CMJ New Music Monthly Magazine*, March 2001, P.24.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Harold Mabern and Larry Ridley, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 5, 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Jitu Weusi, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 6, 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Jitu Weusi, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 6, 2010.

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Jitu Weusi, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 6, 2010.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Jo Ann Cheatham, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott & Kaitlyn Greenidge for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 16, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Jitu Weusi, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 6, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Jitu Weusi, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 6, 2010.

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with Randy Weston and Donald Sangster, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 10/2/10,

<sup>76</sup> Fred Wei-Han Ho, *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader*, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2009), 132

<sup>77</sup> Phone Interview with Fred Anderson, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 11/26/10.

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<sup>80</sup> Ted Panken, *Making it Me: Freddie Hubbard Maps Out His Road To Greatness*, printed in *Downbeat*, October 2001.

<sup>81</sup> Freddie Hubbard Interview for *This is It: Jazz Network*, Part one, conducted by Joe Williams, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ygCrTbduXE>, 3:42

<sup>82</sup> Scotty Barnhart, *The World of Jazz Trumpet: A Comprehensive History&Practical Philosophy* (Hal Leonard, Milwaukee, 2005), 119

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## Jazz Activity in the Other Brooklyn Neighborhoods

Just on the other side of Crown Heights, are the neighborhoods of Brownsville and East New York. In the years before World War I, Jewish People from Manhattan's Lower East Side looking to escape the overcrowded conditions, combined with those from Europe emigrating to America to escape the turmoil there, settled in the area. For that reason, those neighborhoods were predominantly Jewish until contemporary times, although there was always a small African-American presence. With the new Jewish residents, came their love of theater, music, and literature, which they passed on to their children, who in some instances were first generation Americans. Many of these young neighborhood residents, such as composer George Gershwin, born at 242 Snediker Avenue in Brownsville in 1898, would go on to make an indelible mark on American Music. Also occasionally the big bands would make their way to theaters in Brownsville, if they happened to be working a particular circuit which ran the theater.

Such was the case when on Sunday, July 25, 1943, during a tour of selected Loews houses, pianist Earl Hines and his orchestra performed a concert at the Loews Palace theater, located at the corner of Strauss Avenue and East New York Avenue in Brownsville. With the Hines organization were Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Sarah Vaughan, and Billy Eckstine, all as part of this groundbreaking, but never recorded group.

As is well documented, organized crime was also a part of Brownsville's history. The notorious Jewish Mafia, dubbed Murder Inc. by the press, had its base of operations in the neighborhood. The connection/interaction between organized crime and entertainment is also well known, and as notorious as the reputations of the gangsters might have been, young musicians such as Brownsville native Terry Gibbs (born Julius Gubenko in 1924) never felt threatened by them growing up or later:

"It's funny how in that era...They didn't kill you and I, they loved Jazz Music. All the hoods that I knew loved Jazz Music...All of them. But they would kill each other because it was a business. A lot of the clubs were run by guys that were really shady, but they were great to us!"<sup>1</sup>

Although the Jewish residents of Brooklyn, and the Jewish people for that matter, have always had an admirable tradition of self-containment within their communities, when it came to the music of the young generation during the days of the jazz's greatest popularity, the kids sought it out largely outside the borough. In Brooklyn and elsewhere, Jews before World War II didn't necessarily build many jazz clubs in their own neighborhoods, but they were a part of the scene wherever it was happening. For those young Jewish jazz lovers in Brooklyn, that meant largely bypassing the fertile scene that was going on a few neighborhoods over, and going to midtown Manhattan, Harlem, and Downtown Brooklyn. When both the club dance/ballroom scene in the 1930's, and the Cabaret/jazz club scene began to develop in Bed-Stuy in the 1940s, during the years when the bands of Andy Kirk, Count Basie, Jimmy Lunceford, Billy Eckstine and others were playing dances in Bedford-Stuyvesant ballrooms just a couple of miles away, the residents of Brownsville and East New York were not a noticeable part of the audience. This has presented itself as a recurring

theme within the musician/residents of non-black neighborhoods in Brooklyn, and it has a direct correlation to the social times that were involved. The African-American community was forced to live largely within and for itself, and adapted by creating its own musical venues and audience to support them. Because that same pressure was not placed on the communities of non-black people, although there was plenty of discrimination against residents of those neighborhoods, they were at least able to regularly frequent the large theaters in Downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan with little difficulty. In comparison, when Fred Anderson, while growing up in Bedford-Stuyvesant, cut school with his friends to go catch a jazz show, they got on the subway and went to the Apollo Theater in Harlem, another African-American neighborhood, to catch Miles Davis, Milt Jackson, and J.J. Johnson playing there. When Terry Gibbs and Tiny Kahn cut school to go hear jazz, they took the subway to the New York Paramount to hear Benny Goodman. Even when Count Basie or another popular black band was playing at the New York Paramount or another of the grand Manhattan theaters, young people from Bed-Stuy would not seek them out there because

of the location, and the fact that there was a good chance that the band would be coming to their neighborhood soon anyway.

It wasn't until the World War II years and just before, when Bebop was just emerging, that the young musicians from the Brownsville area began to occasionally frequent jazz establishments in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and collaborate with its musicians while trying to learn how to play the new music. At the same time, they also were getting together in their own neighborhoods to jam and share ideas.

Vibraphonist/Drummer Terry Gibbs, and drummer Norman "Tiny" Kahn (b. 1923), grew up next door to each other, so close that their bedroom windows actually faced each other. As Gibbs recalled about his relationship with Kahn,

"Nobody knew him like I knew him. From six years old until I went into the Army [at age eighteen] we were together day and night. We looked like Sidney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre (Actors with radically different builds from movies such as *Casablanca*) walking in the street, because he weighed about three-hundred pounds and was about six-foot-one, and I weighed about Eighty-two pounds, and was about four-foot-eleven. We were together day and night because we had that in common...we had music in common. Musically he was ahead of most of the people [in our circle of friends]."<sup>2</sup>

Both Kahn and Gibbs were playing drums as teenagers, and in Gibbs' basement, they would sit around listening to records, and also taking turns on the drums playing along with those by Count Basie's Orchestra. In the neighborhood, there were many bands that played club and social dances, and young musicians like Terry Gibbs and Tiny Kahn played some of their earliest jobs working in them.

"Jo Jones was the kinda drums I played. But Tiny *really* played that way. Tiny and I auditioned for about four bands, and I won them all because he couldn't play "Sing, Sing, Sing." That was the big thing. Had to play a drum solo, right. I had the thing down. Until one day, we both went to audition for a band, and all they had was Count Basie stocks, and he got the job. It really gassed me in a way, because we were kids, and you were rooting for each other."<sup>3</sup>

According to Gibbs, the activity at his basement went on until around 1942, when he turned eighteen and went into the Armed Forces. Then Kahn and Gibbs met neighborhood saxophonist Frankie Socolow, whose family home also had a basement and a record collection. Socolow (b.1929), although in the same age group as Gibbs and Kahn,

joined Boyd Raeburn's band at age sixteen, and was looked up to by musicians from the neighborhood and his own family as a result.

Socolow was given free reign over the basement:

"He was like big-time, and his mother [and father]...they were really proud of him because it was a Big Band. And if you played with one of the Big Bands, you were a star. And Frankie, because he played with Boyd Raeburn, he was a big star, and they didn't care what he did."<sup>4</sup>

Socolow would also invite the New York musicians that he was playing with in Raeburn's band to his basement in Brownsville, where they would meet Kahn and the other local musicians. It was in Socolow's basement where they all would get together and consolidate their musical views through discussion and jamming together, along with having a lot of fun hanging out with each other. "We could just go into his basement without even calling or anything, and we'd be there until six, seven, eight o'clock, [or] nine o'clock in the morning!"<sup>5</sup> The sessions in the basement apparently went on for quite a while, even after they all began playing with bands in the mid-late 1940's. Socolow described the scene in Ira Gitler's book *Swing To Bop*:

"We would get together—if we all happened to be in town at the same time. When we were traveling with bands there were lots of times when these bands had periods of unemployment. And we'd just be in town for weeks, sometimes months, doing the best we can. We used to call it the dungeon. It was like a beacon in the night for wayward musicians. We spend an awful lot of time down there. We had a piano and a drum set and, of course, a great record collection. We were night people, and we would just listen to music all night—play a little Monopoly for a change, but there was always laughter, very happy kind of thing. Tiny used to keep us entertained quite a bit on the piano. He would just sit and play and we'd listen—and once in a while I would join him."<sup>6</sup>

Besides Socolow, Kahn, and Gibbs (when he was home from the service), other musicians that would frequent the basement were pianist and Brownsville native George Handy, trumpeter Norman Faye, saxophonist Manny Albam, trumpeter Johnny Mandel, saxophonist Allen Eager, and Tenor Saxophonist Al Cohn. Cohn(b. 1925) was born and raised in nearby Crown Heights, but was unaware of the Brownsville crew until he was around nineteen or twenty years old, around 1944 or '45. Although all of the participants in the Socolow basement scene loved jazz, they were well-rounded listeners. Cohn remembered:



One interesting thing was that in addition to listening to a lot of jazz, we were listening to classical music too—Stravinsky and Bartok and some stuff that was pretty far out, even ten. Schoenberg. But I was tryin' to remember the Frenchman that was in New York that Bird was studying with or wanted to study with. Varese. Frank [Socolow] had a record of Varese things then. That was '44, '45. And it wasn't new then. So we were aware of these things.<sup>7</sup>

Out of these Jam Sessions in Gibbs' own and Socolow's basement came a few local gigs for Gibbs, Kahn and some of the other participants. Although the pay wasn't great, "about five cents a job...if you got a quarter you were big time..."<sup>8</sup>, they were so happy to play that they didn't think twice about carrying drums without cases on a combination of buses, trains, and trollies to other areas of Brooklyn in order to play the job. Many times these were jobs playing with the same bands in which Gibbs was hired over Kahn, but he remembers that his friend would help him carry the drums anyway. Gibbs also remembers playing for Basketball and Dance events, the same type that were present in Bedford-Stuyvesant at this time and earlier, except for one slight difference in Brownsville. As he put it,

"Basketball was secondary to the dance music. We'd go play jazz at some of these halls they had [in the neighborhood]...we'd play jazz, and then there was a basketball game. Basketball wasn't a big thing in those days in Brooklyn [meaning in his neighborhood]."9

In contrast to the same events in Bedford-Stuyvesant, although the dances would be huge events, Bed-Stuy's Brooklyn Flashes basketball team also firmly commanded the attention of the crowd.

There were also other opportunities for gigs in Brownsville, although the neighborhood's bandleaders had a peculiar way of negotiating salary for gigs. Saxophonist Georgie Auld, who moved to Brownsville from his native Canada when he was ten years old (in 1939), remembered:

"[After beginning to play saxophone] At first I'd occasionally sit in with my brother's band at dances in the city. I wouldn't get paid, but I got some experience. Sometimes I'd get jobs on my own for New Year's Eve. You'd go that morning to the Sam Asch music store on Pitkin Avenue in Brooklyn where the bandleaders hung out. You'd wear a symbol to identify yourself. Since I played sax, I'd stick a reed in my hatband or lapel. The negotiations were tricky. When you asked a bandleader, "How much?" he might say, "Five

dollars” but raise two fingers. That meant he got five dollars per band member but paid only two dollars.”<sup>10</sup>

Also to come out of those basement sessions in Brownsville were contributors to a few of the popular Big Bands that were still working after the war. Tiny Kahn, Johnny Mandel, and Al Cohn would all play in Henry Jerome’s early Bebop-influenced band of 1944-45, along with Brooklyn pianist Gene DiNovi (a band that also included former Nixon Politician Leonard Garment, and former Secretary of the Treasury Alan Greenspan, both on saxophone). Norman Faye, Johnny Mandel (arranging and playing Trombone instead of Trumpet), George Handy and Tiny Kahn would also all play in Boyd Raeburn’s band at different times.

In 1945, Terry Gibbs and Tiny Kahn participated on a record date led by clarinetist Aaron Sachs, which also featured Pianist Gene Dinovi and bassist Clyde Lombard (Manor 1124, rec’d 6/8/46). When a rehearsal was set for the date, DiNovi and Lombardi were unavailable. Since Gibbs had a basement available with a piano and his Vibraphone

already set up, and given the huge task that it would have been to transport the Vibes to Manhattan for the rehearsal, Aaron Sachs decided to make the trip to Brownsville to rehearse for the date. As Gibbs remembered:

“Just Aaron [Sachs] and myself, and Tiny [rehearsed for the recording]. He [Kahn] wrote some of the things that we played. Sometimes he would come up and play piano, and Aaron and I would rehearse the things that Tiny wrote, so we could record them.”<sup>11</sup>

Gibbs had never met Aaron Sachs before receiving the call from him to record, nor had he met fellow Brooklynite Gene DiNovi before the recording session. In this case, his reputation preceded him. As he put it, “Milt Jackson was already there [in New York], and I was like the new young hot-shot Vibes player on the scene, so he called me to record with him. That was my first session, actually, before I recorded with Allen Eager”

On that session, one of Kahn’s original compositions, “Tiny’s Con”, has been a source of intense discussion among Beboppers for years. The

composition is a 32-bar original Bebop melody in the key of F, superimposed over the chord progression to "Back Home Again in Indiana". The source of contention comes when it is compared to the more well-known composition by Miles Davis, "Donna Lee", which is also stylistically the same type of melody, although in the key of A-Flat, and also superimposed over the same chord changes. The proposed and controversial theory is that Miles Davis based his composition, which he recorded with Charlie Parker, and therefore received much more exposure, on Tiny's Con. This is further supported by the fact the Tiny's Con, recorded June 8, 1947 was recorded exactly eleven months before Donna Lee. Sachs Manor recording had been released and was in circulation well before the Parker record date. There also remains the possibility that Davis could have heard any one of the participants from the Manor recording performing the tune live at any number of venues that was frequented by all of the Beboppers. The two compositions also share many melodic similarities. Not only do they share many melodic similarities, including the same phrase in the same spot on a couple of occasions, and also phrases that may not

be copies *verbatim*, but are identical in melodic contour and thought, and also occur at the same place within the borrowed chord progression. The conclusion that Kahn's composition inspired the Davis melodic line is clear in my mind, and it was clear in that of Terry Gibbs also, after we discussed the similarities and the chronology:


"Well you know where it came from then. You know, Tiny Kahn wrote that, and Donna Lee is pretty close to that. We've always talked about it...in fact there was even talk that Charlie Parker wrote Donna Lee...there was never jealousy about it, but we could never understand it. You know that Tiny didn't hear it from Miles, Miles had to hear it from Tiny. Nobody really cared about it in those days, because we weren't going to get paid anyhow...they were going to rip you off for the publishing [anyway]..."<sup>12</sup>

Brownsville would go through a major decline in the 1960's, when the population shifted from predominantly Jewish to African-American. It would become the tough neighborhood that boxers Mike Tyson and Riddick Bowe would come from in the 1980s'. The few clubs that were there would also close down as they saw the neighborhood change, but there was at least one club in the neighborhood that had an impact on the jazz scene.

## **The Brownsville Club Scene**

Within the Neighborhood, the club scene didn't develop until after World War II, when a few cabarets-style clubs began to open up in Brownsville. One of the earliest was Club Cobra, located at 1593 East New York Avenue at the corner of Osborne Street, today the site of the Howard Houses, a New York City Housing Project.

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*The New York Amsterdam News 10/27/45*

Club Cobra didn't bring in big name acts, rather focusing on mainly local talent. Clint Smith and his Clintonians were a local band which played in the 1930's Bed-Stuy Club Dance scene. Freddy Bryant was a Brooklyn resident who had been with Count Basie's Orchestra during his residency at Manhattan's Hotel Lincoln in 1944, and would record with Jimmie Lunceford in 1948 and 1949. Aside from the appearance of swankiness portrayed in upper-left hand corner of the



advertisement, supposedly by the 1950's it was a real dive. Doc

Pomus recalled a job that he worked at the club with Pete Brown in the early 1950's:

Doc usually played the Cobra with the ever-stoned Pete Brown. The paranoid sax player must've weighed close to three hundred pounds and carried a revolver in the waistband of his pants. Whenever anybody got too close, he pulled it out. During one gig, a mid-song volley of gunshots sent everyone scrambling for the exits. Moments later a light-skinned, trembling Negro clutching a Colt .45 ordered everyone who was left to march out the back door and into a dead-end alley. After Doc, Pete, and the rest had filed into the filthy, narrow passageway, the gunman emptied an entire clip into the crowd and ran away. Doc heard the bullets ricochet off the brick walls. Amazingly, no one was hit. But when Pete Brown's drummer, Lionel Trotman, noticed his shirt was covered with blood—a remnant of somebody's nosebleed—he swooned and collapsed on the pavement.<sup>13</sup>

Dave's Inn was another cabaret in Brownsville, located at 1761 Pitkin Avenue, part of the early Rhythm and Blues circuit which Pomus worked often in those days.



*The New York* 12/15/51

### **Soldier Meyer**

The only true jazz club to open up in Brownsville during those years was Soldier Meyer's, located at 451 Sutter Avenue. It was opened by Joseph Meyer, a Jewish immigrant from Poland, and former Army and Professional lightweight Boxer who fought under the name "Soldier Meyer". "He fought 13 times and lost every fight," said Terry Gibbs, who like many young boys idolized prizefighters, but wasn't particularly impressed with the future clubowner's record in the ring. As was common among athletes, after his boxing days were over, Meyer aspired to go in to show business, but seemingly only advanced

as far as owning a street side show on the Coney Island Boardwalk in the mid-late 1930's. His acts included juggling and animal shows, and on at least one occasion in 1938, his Python and King Snake escaped from their enclosures and slithered along the boardwalk, causing quite a scene.

Joseph Meyer opened the club in the summer of 1949, and his two sons, Walter and his younger brother Norby were jazz fans. Drummer Roy Haynes would describe the elder Meyer as having "a low voice, like a Mafia-type feeling"<sup>14</sup> Norby, the youngest son, while still in high school between 1945-1948 arranged to bring the bands of Stan Kenton and Charlie Ventura to play at the school on two separate occasions. When his father opened up the club, his sons were both involved in running the business, and they quickly instituted a modern jazz policy at the club. Miles Davis left the Charlie Parker Quintet just before New Years in 1948, and began working with a new nonet at the Royal Roost with the group that would become known for the recordings known as "The Birth of The Cool". When that group

ultimately failed, Miles went back to being a single, working with pick-up groups. Sometime between August and October of 1949, a band led by Davis was the first group to play at Soldier Meyer's. The band played for two weeks at the club. Davis was in the process of putting together his own band at this point, and he knew he wanted drummer Roy Haynes in the band. Haynes was with Davis at Soldier Meyer's that summer, but things would soon change. After working at Soldier Meyer's with Davis, Haynes gets an offer that he eventually couldn't refuse, and unfortunately for Davis, it wasn't from the trumpeter. Roy Haynes remembered:

"After Soldier Meyers', we went into the Orchid Room—The old Onyx—On Fifty-second Street, first with a trio of Bud Powell, Nelson Boyd, and myself; and later on Monte Kay put in Miles, Sonny Stitt, and Wardell and made a group out of it. Now, Bird is still working across the street at the Three Duces, and Max is coming over, and we're swingin like crazy. So then *he* cuts out from Bird, and he gets his group, and he goes to Soldier Meyers'. ...So he came over and sounded me about working with Bird. I dug Bird, but at that time I wasn't particularly enthused about working with Bird. I don't know *why*. So I gave him one of those *comme ci, comme ca* type of answers, and he said, 'All right, later for you. I'll get Kansas Fields.' And then Bird came over and hired me himself."<sup>15</sup>

For the rest of Miles Davis' life, whenever Roy Haynes was within earshot, the trumpeter used to say, "Charlie Parker stole my drummer," referring to the period directly after playing at Soldier Meyer's when Haynes began playing with Parker. Max Roach would also have something to say about this period, as Haynes would recall later:

"One time much later, we were doing something for children and Elvin's there, Louie Bellson, Max and myself, and we are all talking. When Max Roach's turn to talk comes, he comes up and says [yelling], "Roy Haynes took my gig, and he never gave it back!" And I said, "I was supposed to give it back?" I never knew that."<sup>16</sup>

Terry Gibbs, who had just finished his tenure in Woody Herman's band, had just recently come back home around the time the club opened. After the hectic, barnstorming type of travelling that he was doing on the road with Herman, he was happy to be able to secure a job a few blocks away from home at Soldier Meyers. By now he was almost certainly making more than the "big-shot" twenty-five cents

salary he was happy to get while playing in Brownsville as a teenager.

As he recalled in his autobiography *Good Vibes: A Life in Jazz*,

“The first band I ever had after I left Woody, the front line was Stan Getz, Kai Winding, and me, with Stan Levey on drums, Curly Russell on bass, and George Wallington on piano. We played a place called Soldier Meyers’ in Brooklyn. We worked there for two weeks and after that, we couldn’t get a job. We followed Miles Davis, who couldn’t get a job after that either. We were all young. This was 1949, and we weren’t that well known.”<sup>17</sup>

After booking the bands themselves for the first couple of months, Norby and Walter Meyer decided to turn the management of the music policy over to an established figure who had connections to all of the young, modern musicians. They chose Pianist, composer, Disc Jockey, and Jazz Critic Leonard Feather. He began his weekly “Bop Sessions” at Soldier Meyer’s on October 14, 1949, and quickly lined up the best talent he could find. Since its musical direction was clearly defined at this point, Norby and Walter Meyer decided to augment the club name, which now became “Soldier Meyer’s Brooklyn Bop House”. Although the personnel for the first group to play is not known, the second week of the series was the engagement that Roy Hanes speaks about while

describing the period with Max Roach was preparing to leave Charlie Parker's quintet, and have Haynes be his replacement. Beginning on October 21, 1949, Feather secured the talents of Brooklyn's favorite son, Max Roach, to lead a band at the club. Featured were J.J. Johnson and vocalist Kenny "Pancho" Hagood, along with a handful of the young, second generation Beboppers from New Jersey, pianist Walter Davis, Jr, bassist Al Cotton, and saxophonist Hank Mobley, who was living there at the time.

**LEONARD FEATHER**  
PRESENTS NIGHTLY  
**BOP CONCERTS**  
NEW SHOW EVERY THURSDAY  
This Week  
**MAX ROACH** and His ALL STARS  
featuring  
J. J. JOHNSON On Trombone • KENNY (Pancho) HAGOOD On Vocals  
Plus the Sensational RITA MOSS at the Piano  
**SOLDIER MEYER'S**  
BROOKLYN BOP HOUSE  
451 Sutter Ave. — DI. 2-9019  
8th Avenue "A" train to EAST NEW YORK STATION.  
Change for CANARSIE LINE TO SUTTER AVENUE.

*The New York Amsterdam News 10/22/49*

By November, a Wednesday night jam session was started, and the length of the Feather-produced sessions was shortened to Thursday or Friday through Sunday. Trombonist Kai Winding brought his "Boptette" into Soldier Meyers on November 12-15, 1949 (**verify**). While his pianist for this engagement is unknown, bassist Gene Ramey, and drummer Denzil Best were part of Winding's group.

F R E E  A D M I S S I O N	LEONARD FEATHER Presents Weekend	F R E E  A D M I S S I O N
	<b>BOP CONCERTS</b>	
	EVERY FRIDAY — SATURDAY — SUNDAY	
	New Show Every Friday, Saturday, Sunday	
	Beginning This Friday	
	<b>KAI WINDING BOPTETTE</b>	
	Featuring BREW MOORE — Tenor Sax	
	Jam Session Every Wed.	
	<b>SOLDIER MEYER'S</b>	
	<b>BROOKLYN BOP HOUSE</b>	
431 Sutter Ave.	DL 2-9019	
8th Avenue "A" Train to EAST NEW YORK STATION. Change for CANARSIE LINE TO SUTTER AVENUE.		

*The New York Amsterdam News* 11/12/49

November also brought the vocal team of Jackie & Roy to Soldier Meyer's, fresh off of their engagement at Bop City in Manhattan. The



next month, Feather brought in pianist Lennie Tristano's sextet. With the pianist were Alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, Tenor Saxophonist Wayne Marsh, Guitarist Billy Bauer, Bassist Arnold Fishkin, and Drummer Jeff Morton. They played the club from December 10-13, 1949. A private recording of Tristano's group at Soldier Meyers was made, possibly by the pianist, and exists as a bootleg recording today.



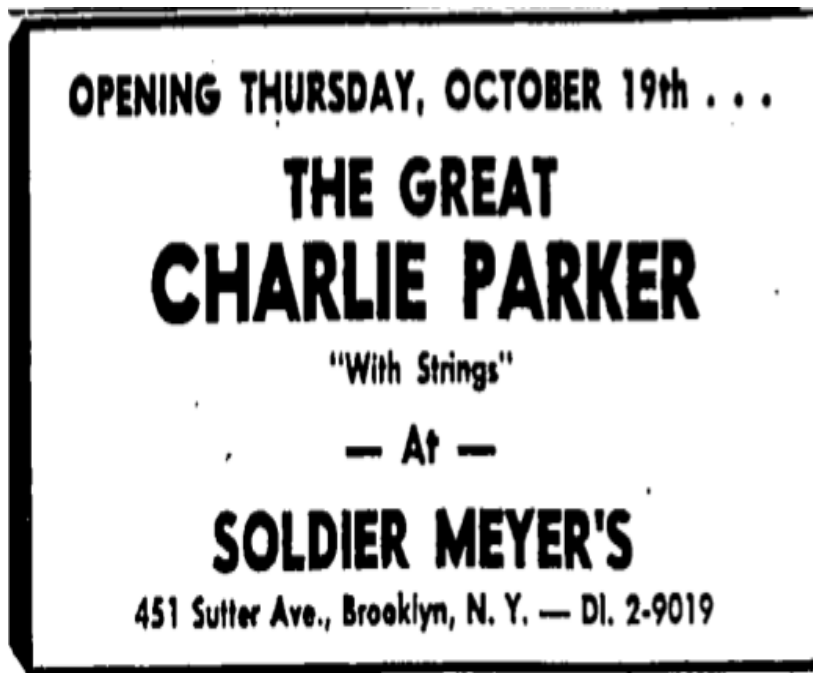
*The New York Amsterdam News 12/10/49*

Tristano's group was followed by a quintet led by J.J. Johnson, featuring Sonny Stitt, an all-Brooklyn front line, at least.



*The New York Amsterdam News 12/24/49*

By the end of January 1950, it seems that Leonard Feather was no longer producing the Bop concerts at Soldier Meyer's, although they did continue. The club continued on through that year, giving the local and not-so-local Beboppers a new venue in which to play. The highlight of the year came in October, when Charlie Parker with Strings was booked to play at Soldier Meyer's for an entire week. Parker and his string ensemble opened at Soldier Meyer's on Thursday, October 19, and closed on Wednesday, October 25.



*The New York Amsterdam News 10/14/50*

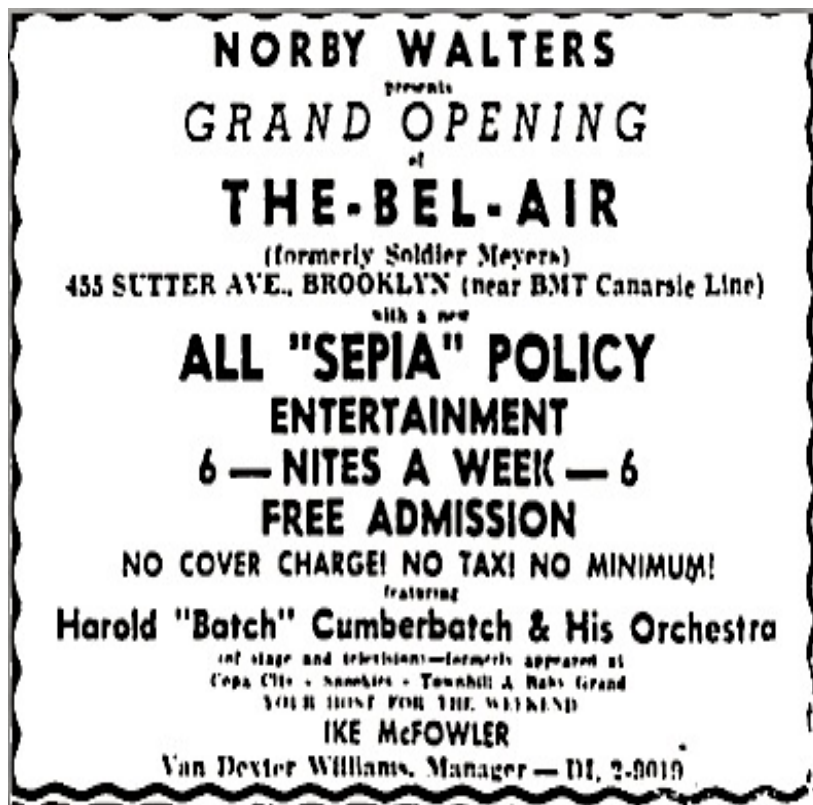
As would be expected with Parker's String group at the height of its popularity, the engagement was huge success in the only Brooklyn appearance of the ensemble in its existence.

Florence Mills' Studio. . . . The great Charlie Parker (with strings) jammed Soldier Meyer's in East New York. Many celebrities came from the five Boros to name just a few, I saw Oscar Pettiford, Teddy Cohen, Terry Gibbs, Charlie Ventura, Ray Nathan, Max Roach. Incidentally, Duke Jordan was featured at the piano.

*The New York Amsterdam News 10/28/50*

Soldier Meyers would stay open until 1953, when the Joseph Meyer sold the club to his two sons. The musical tastes at the club began to change after 1951 or so, and by the time the sons took over the club, Rhythm and Blues, representing the new African-American music, was firmly entrenched as the popular music of the day among young Jewish patrons. The sons re-named the club "Norby and Walter's Bel-Air". The two sons, while adept at running a club, didn't show the same savvy in keeping a working sign outside of their business, and in this case it played into a long-established trend among people who

emigrated to America. The ampersand symbol connecting “Norby & Walter’s” on neon sign outside the club never worked, and the patrons of the club came to know the club as “Norby Walters”. Following the aforementioned trend, the two brothers soon changed their last name to the Walters. Norby Walters would purchase his brother’s share in the club, and operate it by himself, although they would continue to work together throughout their careers. When the club re-opened again as Norby Walter’s Bel-Air in 1954 with a 6-night a week entertainment policy, Bedford-Stuyvesant saxophonist Harold Cumberbatch was brought in to lead the house band.



*The New York Amsterdam News 8/28/54*

Norby Walters would go on to have a very colorful life. The Bel-Air would stay open until 1959 or so, until Norby opened another club in Queens, called the Flamboyant. By this time, his tastes were firmly entrenched in Latin Music, and his new club was part of the bustling NYC Latin scene in the 1960's with stars such as Tito Puente, Joe Cuba, Tito Rodriguez and others performing there. In 1964 he moved to Manhattan and opened up The Norby Walters Club, on E.60<sup>th</sup> street,

next to the famous Copacabana. His father, who everybody affectionately called "Soldier", served as the maitre'd at the club. In 1968, he closed the Norby Walter's club after two known mobsters were shot there in March of that year. He then became a booking Agent, opening the Norby Walters Agency later that year. It would seem that Roy Haynes intuition about the elder Meyer's voice would be correct, as Norby Walter would end up proven to be an associate of mobster Michael Franzese, of the New York's Colombo crime family, who was also a partner in Walter's booking firm. His firm would handle the biggest stars of the 1980's, Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, Luther Vandross, and others, including Miles Davis. He would later brag, "I've become Norby Walters, the premier seller of black entertainment in the United States of America, maybe in the world," (*Agents of Turmoil, Sports Illustrated* August 3, 1987, by Craig Neff). Walters would soon venture into sports management, and his organized crime connections would come with him. In 1988 he was brought up on charges, and later convicted of racketeering, conspiracy and mail fraud pertaining to his dealings with college athletes, and part of the testimony against

him was that he would bring up Franzese's name in order to intimidate college athletes into signing management contracts.

**The Italians near the Waterfront: Bensonhurst, Midwood, Bay Ridge, Sheepshead Bay, Marine Park**

As you travel in Brooklyn going South toward Coney Island even today, you begin to see that the racial makeup of the borough changes. During the jazz's heyday it was even more noticeable. The neighborhoods that were a part of mainland Brooklyn close to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century's largest Eastern resort have always been a magnet for people mainly from Italy, but also populations from Greece, a small Jewish population from various countries, and later a large population from Russia. As was the case with many of the musicians in Brownsville, aside from what might have been happening in their own or their friends' basements, the young musicians from these areas largely tended to bypass the jazz scene in Brooklyn and travel to



Manhattan for their music, with a few exceptions. The most famous organized crime connections in Brooklyn also come from these neighborhoods, and continue to have a presence there to this day. They were completely intertwined with the existence of music in those areas during the years that nightclubs were operating there.

In these areas, you didn't find the dedicated Jazz clubs, such as the many in Bedford-Stuyvesant, or even Soldier Meyers in Brownsville. The patrons of this area preferred the cabaret or nightclub, and there were two types. The first was the smaller, exclusive social clubs that were operated by a specific gangster, such as the one operated by famous mobster and later FBI informant Sammy Gravano on 86<sup>th</sup> street and Macdonald avenue in Bensonhurst. These clubs did have music, but for obvious reasons many of the details of who played and what was played in those types of clubs are still hard to come across. The second type were the larger, more lavish nightclubs in the style of the Las-Vegas type operations made famous in the 1950's. These lavish venues were almost all well connected with Organized Crime, as was

the management of most of the big stars who played there. These connections would bring the same entertainment that would appear in Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and Midtown Manhattan to Brooklyn.

The most lavish and well known nightclub in the area was Ben Maksik's Town and Country, located on Flatbush Avenue and Avenue V, where Kings Plaza Shopping Mall is located today. It began around 1945 as a smaller club on the same location known as Ben Maksik's Roadside Rest, before it was razed to make way for the much larger, elegant, two-thousand seat Town and Country.



*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 11/30/45*

The owner, Ben Maksik, had managed a club in Las Vegas before moving to Brooklyn, and decided to bring the same type of

entertainment there, with the aid of his “connections”. The club soon earned the nickname “The Copacabana of Brooklyn”, and brought in the greatest cabaret stars of the day, people like Robert Goulet, Jerry Lewis, Jackie Mason, Milton Berle, and occasionally they would bring in a well-known jazz act. The connections of the management of singer Harry Belafonte had an arrangement with Ben Maksik’s to have the singer perform there every year. They even brought in some of the remaining working big bands occasionally in the 1950’s and 1960’s, although they were not the priority of the club, and seemed to only appear there in the weeks in between performances of popular cabaret entertainers. Ben Maksiks did have a house band, and many musicians from the surrounding neighborhoods were able to work regularly there for many years.

Judy Garland performing with the house band at Ben Maksiks on her opening night, March 28, 1958. She was reportedly making \$25,000 a week for three weeks, but was fired after only two days because of an argument with the owner.



Internet Clipping from the Facebook Page, *I Loved Being a Kid in Flatbush, Brooklyn during the 70's and 80's*

Tony Bennett made his New York City nightclub debut at Ben Maksik's in 1951, and he soon found out how shrewd a businessman the owner was:

"[After successes in 1950] My asking price went up so fast that one sharp club owner was able to take advantage of it. I first worked for Ben Maksik's Town and Country, which was sort of the "Copacabana of Brooklyn," in early 1951. To get the gig, Ben insisted I come back later in the year and work at the same price. I took the deal. After all, you never know what will happen, right? And then a few months later "Because of You" became a hit. Ben called in my contractual obligation in August, when it was really soaring. People lined up around the block to see me, but all Ben had to give me was the one thousand dollars that he'd paid me six months earlier, a third of what I was getting everywhere else. It was Christmas in August for Ben."<sup>18</sup>

Of the few name band performances that occurred at the Town and Country, a couple of the more notable ones include the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, under the direction of saxophonist Sam Donahue. The next year, beginning on April 30, 1965, Louis Prima played the Town and Country and were engaged there for two full months, closing on June 30. There were other large nightclubs in the area, such as the Elegante, another huge, Mafia-influenced nightclub on Ocean Parkway and Avenue M, but it and the others never featured much jazz. They did, however feature a fair amount of Latin music beginning in the 1950's, a scene and subject that most certainly should be explored and chronicled further.

In Bay Ridge, the neighborhood in which the Verrazano Bridge touches down in Brooklyn and which borders Bensonhurst, the smaller Mafia Clubs thrived. Pianist Ed Stoute recalled playing many jobs at places in these neighborhoods by the ocean which were owned or controlled by the Italian Mafia all through the 1960's. One semi-regular gig in particular occurred at an unnamed Bowling Alley at 59<sup>th</sup> Street and Bay Parkway in Bensonhurst. He performed there with a trio consisting of drummer Lee Abrams, bassist Hugh Brody, and himself. Another one was a place called "The Golden Note" on 67<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, in Bay Ridge, close to where the Gowanus Expressway runs today. Stoute remembers them as good playing situations, where you would get off earlier than playing in the African-American neighborhoods, finishing around 10:30-11:00. That would leave time for he and his band members to go somewhere else and have a jam session.

Sheepshead Bay, one of the last neighborhoods in Brooklyn before coming to Coney Island, is another historically Italian/European

neighborhood, that has gained a large Russian Population as of late.

Being that close to Coney Island and also possessing waterfront

property, there were always a number of hotels and cabarets there

which contained bands, although nowhere near the amount on the

Island. Trumpeter Bill Dillard, who recorded in the 1930's with

Clarence Williams, participated on Spike Hughes seminal recordings in

1933, and was also in Teddy Hill's band with young Dizzy Gillespie in

1937, recalled playing at a club with regular entertainment in those

days:

"I played in the early thirties in a club in Sheepshead Bay, the place used to sell seafood. I was working there with a fellow called Arthur Davey. We had a four-piece combo who played for dancing, and we also entertained. We had a little piano that we rolled out on the floor. Arthur Davey was a saxophone player and was also a very good singer. I also sang and it was a fairly good job. They also hired entertainment, a different act each week. Once, we had Johnson and Dean—by then they were quite advanced in age. Johnson and Dean—I think the man's name was Dean—and he was like a cake-walking dancer, and his wife had a nice singing voice. While she was singing, he used to strut and dance, that was part of their act. They were big stars of the Ziegfeld shows in the early years; they went to Europe, very early too." *[In fact, Charles Johnson was the man and Dora Dean was his wife.—D.G.]*<sup>19</sup>

Sheepshead Bay was also the birthplace of drummer Buddy Rich, born there on September 30, 1917. He was practically born into show business, as his Father and Mother were a vaudeville team. By the age of eighteen months, he was playing with his parents act, billed as "Traps, the drum wonder", and would perform on the travelling circuit until he was fourteen years old. He began playing wherever he could find work, and it was at a neighborhood club that gave him his first big-time exposure:

"Around 1937, I started hanging out in a place in Brooklyn called the Crystal Club. It had a small group with Henry Adler on drums and Joe Springer on piano and George Berg on tenor. Henry would invite me to sit in, and Artie Shapiro, the bassist, would sit in, too. Shapiro was with Joe Marsala's group at the Hickory House and he asked me to one of the Sunday-afternoon jam sessions they used to have there..."<sup>20</sup>

The Crystal Club was located on Ocean Parkway, just next to Washington Cemetery in the nearby Midwood neighborhood of Brooklyn. At the Hickory House, Rich made such an impression on Marsala that the clarinetist put him on salary for a while, paying two drummers at the same time, because he couldn't bear to tell his



regular drummer Danny Alvin that he had been replaced. That was his first major gig, and the one that started his career.

Also in Sheepshead Bay was a club by the name of "Max, The Mayor's". The club was named for the owner, Max, who Dan Morgenstern described as "A strange cat, a big jazz fan, but almost blind. He wore those thick glasses". The club seems to have opened in the early 1940's, and had a music policy seemingly from the beginning. In the late 1940's, Trombonist Conrad Janis and Saxophonist/Clarinetist Gene Cedric used to play at the club. In the 1950's, trumpeter Roy Eldridge worked there for a while. He seemingly had free reign to play weekend gigs there whenever he was not on the road, and did so for quite a few years. Morgenstern remembers the club being open into the 1970's. A description of the Eldridge's gig there was captured in *Downbeat*:

At Max, the Mayor's, a large establishment in the Sheepshead Bay section of Brooklyn, where the budget does not allow for a bass, and the crowd does

not allow for a letup, Roy would play chorus after chorus, sing, emcee and even back local "talent" on the drums (generating enough steam to drive the Basie band), and somehow educating the rough-and-tumble audience to appreciate the beauty of a passionate rendition of "I Can't Get Started." And when he came off the stand for a brief intermission, he would be warmly received at the bar.

"Roy sure knows how to break the ice," a member of the band commented. "And how to give."<sup>21</sup>

## **Flatbush**

The Flatbush Area of Brooklyn, just south of Prospect Park was also never a hotbed of jazz, with the exception of the significant activity at the Flatbush Theater in the 1930's, which was discussed in a previous section of this writing. Before the 1960's the neighborhood was populated by a mix of Jewish, Irish-American, and Italian-American people. Today it is primarily a neighborhood of West Indian people, and one of the toughest. There were occasional concerts in the neighborhood, held at many of the huge for-rent spaces which were former factory buildings and such. A seemingly All-Brooklyn All-Star event led by Max Roach occurred at the Albemarle Towers, located at 2168 Albemarle Road just off of Flatbush Avenue on June 23, 1964.

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*The New York Amsterdam News 6/24/64*

The only regular jazz presence in the Flatbush area was a club called Pumpkins, located at 1448 Nostrand Avenue, on the corner of Church Avenue. It opened in 1978, and presented jazz seven nights a week almost regularly until it closed just a few years ago, around 2009 or

so. Over the years local greats such as Cecil Payne, Roland Alexander, and Joe Carroll performed there, and also such non-borough greats such as Jimmy Scott, Gloria Lynne, and Ruth Brown. When I moved to Brooklyn in 1996, it quickly became the local place in which I, and many of my Brooklyn-based contemporaries performed most often, until I moved from Brooklyn in 2002. The one factor about Pumpkins that was odd during my tenure there is that hardly anybody would ever be in the audience. If we played for ten people on a Saturday night, the club looked funny. The owner, William "Bill" Rutherford was a true jazz lover, and was determined to keep the club running at all costs. On at least one occasion, and almost certainly others, he had to fight off residents of the tough neighborhood intent on disrupting the club with the large wooden club that he kept under the bar counter. The pay was never great, but even if absolutely nobody came into the club, Bill always gave you your salary. It was a great asset to myself and other young musicians which gave us an opportunity to write original music, and perform for and with each other quite often.

## **Downtown Brooklyn**

The Downtown Brooklyn area was home to the Grand Theaters of Brooklyn, and therefore, not too many clubs. There were churches downtown which used to sponsor Boat Rides up the Hudson that from all accounts, would hire one or two the best bands available in the 1940's and 1950's. There was also one rental hall in particular, the Livingston Manor, that was popular for holding dances from the 1920's until the end of the 1960's.

One club which featured jazz for a time would become famous, but not for swinging. Enduro's Sandwich Shop, located at 386 Flatbush Avenue Extension and Dekalb Avenue, was a popular downtown eatery, just across the street from the Brooklyn Paramount, but it wasn't until after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 that it changed its identity. The business was then expanded into a full restaurant, complete with a cocktail lounge and live entertainment. The acts which played at the Enduro were largely unknown, popular on the hotel and

lounge circuit, but not necessarily through recordings or Radio and/or Television appearances. Groups like the all-female Angie Bond Trio, or the Buddy Rocco Trio (led by pianist Pasquale Rocco, who was advertised as having recorded with Louis Armstrong, although I haven't found evidence confirming it) played the Enduro regularly, amongst novelty vaudeville-type groups. There were occasional exceptions to that trend, the most notable being Sidney Bechet, who in 1940 seemed to be having somewhat of a tough time finding work. During the summer of that year, a regular Monday night job at the Enduro with Trumpeter Sidney DeParis was his only steady work. In 1947, pianist Claude Hopkins led a quartet at the Enduro featuring bassist John Brown, guitarist Eddie Gibbs, and saxophonist/clarinetist Prince Robinson. The Enduro Restaurant would continue to have live music until the end of the 1940's, when it fell into financial trouble. Instead of closing it down, the family decided to give it another chance, and after renovating the restaurant, re-opened it on November 7, 1950 as Junior's Restaurant, famous for their Cheesecake today.

In probably was one of the most strange and peculiar set-ups for a jazz club since the Prohibition-era speakeasies tucked cabarets in every nook and cranny in New York, arguably the most impactful Downtown Brooklyn jazz club was one called "The Hole". In what is an unavoidable complex description, it was located at the bottom of the steps of the Jay Street/Metrotech Subway Station entrance to the "R" line at 379 Bridge Street, between Willoughby Street and Fulton Street (The Jay Street/Metrotech station serves more than one subway line, so to find it's location one must seek out the "R" line entrance). It was truly a Brooklyn "insider" type of club, known to those who needed to know. Although it had ceased to operate by the time I moved to Brooklyn, it was a legendary place often talked about by Brooklyn musicians. As Ed Stoute said while describing its location and environment:

"If you go to Fulton Street and Bridge Street, Make a right and walk to Willoughby, walk down the subway stairs one flight, and you are at the basement of the building. There was a door on the right that went into the basement of the building, and that was the club. They had a piano, and

drums in there, and a bar. That was a weird little place...that door was the only way in and out. It was fun, though...a lot of different cats came down there. Some of the greatest musicians came through there. [Pianist and Alto Saxophonist] Jackie Byard used to come down there...cats like that. We'd jam all night long."<sup>22</sup>

Stoute also remembered bringing his then musician Brother-In-Law to The Hole late one evening, and after playing and imbibing a bit, they both fell asleep. "When we woke up, we played some more, cats were still playing!"<sup>23</sup> Stoute started going to the Hole in the early 1960's, but remembered that it had been going on for some years before that. It would continue into the early 1980's, when the building was sold, and the new owner decided against continuing to let the musicians use the space.

### **Tidbits:**

### **Williamsburg**

The Neighborhood of Williamsburg has enjoyed somewhat of a jazz renaissance as of very recently, and although the explosion of the



Latin music scene in neighboring Bushwick in the late 1960's did spill over to Williamsburg somewhat, that neighborhood of European immigrants on the East River waterfront never really had a significant jazz presence, with one exception. In the early 1970's, Williamsburg was in the midst of a marked decline. The waterfront was full of dilapidated warehouse and factory buildings which were serving no immediate purpose. It was during this time that a small loft scene, which seems to be a pre-cursor to the well-known Manhattan loft scene developed in those buildings. Long-time Brooklyn resident and Trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah explained:

"We used to rehearse...in the 1970's many of the musicians lived around Williamsburg, around Broadway and Bedford. Rasheid Ali had a group there called the Melodic Art-Tet, and the group actually consisted of Charles Brackeen, Ronnie Boykins, and Roger Blank and we used to rehearse at Rashied Ali's place; he had a loft in Brooklyn. This was before he got his loft in Soho that became Ali's Alley that was the mid-70s; this is the early 70's [in Brooklyn]. Also there was Art Lewis, a drummer from San Francisco, they all lived right along Broadway in Williamsburg; Roger Blank, Daohd Haroun a trombonist; there were many musicians, there was a musicians' enclave right there around Broadway [in Brooklyn]." <sup>24</sup>

This scene seems to have been short lived, as the loft scene in Manhattan began to take shape in the early 1970's. By the time I moved to Brooklyn, those buildings were empty once again, and wouldn't see any dedicated attention until recent times, where they have become valuable waterfront loft real estate, and are being sold at exorbitant prices.

### **Tommy "Red" Tompkins**

When Dan Morgenstern first moved to the United States in 1947, he was befriended by a trumpet player named Nat "Face" Lorber. Lorber's family was one of the many Harlem families, which is where Lorber was born, which looked ultimately to other areas of the city to escape the overcrowding in Harlem. After a time in the Bronx, they settled in Brooklyn. Lorber told Morgenstern about a band used to hear an all-Brooklyn band over the radio, led by a good trumpeter Tommy "Red" Topkins in the 1930's. The band would eventually record a total of eight sides, four for Vocalion in 1936, and four for Variety in 1937.

Although not listed in discographies, Brooklyn-born pianist Ted Napoleon was a part of the band, and is present on the recordings.

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- <sup>1</sup> Phone Interview with Terry Gibbs, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 8/14/2012.
  - <sup>2</sup> Phone Interview with Terry Gibbs, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 8/14/2012.
  - <sup>3</sup> Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1985), 203.
  - <sup>4</sup> Phone Interview with Terry Gibbs, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 8/14/2012.
  - <sup>5</sup> Phone Interview with Terry Gibbs, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 8/14/2012.
  - <sup>6</sup> Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1985), 202.
  - <sup>7</sup> Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1985), 201.
  - <sup>8</sup> Phone Interview with Terry Gibbs, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 8/14/2012.
  - <sup>9</sup> Phone Interview with Terry Gibbs, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 8/14/2012.
  - <sup>10</sup> Moe Foner, Dan North, *Not For Bread Alone: A Memoir* (Cornell University, Ithica, 2002), 12
  - <sup>11</sup> Phone Interview with Terry Gibbs, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 8/14/2012.
  - <sup>12</sup> Phone Interview with Terry Gibbs, conducted by Vincent Gardner, 8/14/2012.
  - <sup>13</sup> Alex Halberstadt, *Lonely Avenue The Unlikely Life and Times of Doc Pomus*, (Da Capo Press, Cambridge, 2007), 35
  - <sup>14</sup> Roy Haynes Interview, *I'm Not a Metronome*, conducted by Christian McBride, Jazztimes, Nov. 2007.
  - <sup>15</sup> Ira Gitler, *The Masters of Bebop: A Listener's Guide*, (Da Capo Press, Cambridge, 1966), 193
  - <sup>16</sup> Roy Haynes Interview, *I'm Not a Metronome*, conducted by Christian McBride, Jazztimes, Nov. 2007.
  - <sup>17</sup> Terry Gibbs, Cary Ginell, *Good Vibes: A Life in Jazz* (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD, 2003), 111
  - <sup>18</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Good Life: The Autobiography of Tony Bennett* (Pocket Books, New York, 1998), 90

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<sup>19</sup> David Griffiths, *Hot Jazz: From Harlem to Storyville* (Scarecrow Press, Lahnam, MD, 1998), 77

<sup>20</sup> Whitney Balliett, *American Musicians II: Seventy-One Portraits in Jazz* (Whitney Balliett, 2005), 257

<sup>21</sup> Frank Alkyer, Ed Enright, *Downbeat—The Great Jazz Interviews: A 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Anthology* (Hal Leonard, Milwaukee, 2009), 66

<sup>22</sup> Phone interview with Ed Stoute, Conducted by Vincent Gardner, 3/12/13, 6:36

<sup>23</sup> Phone interview with Ed Stoute, Conducted by Vincent Gardner, 3/12/13, 6:36

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ahmed Abdullah, conducted by Willard Jenkins with Jennifer Scott for the Lost Jazz Shrines Archive, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn on April 6, 2010.

## Selected Discography

Recording Sessions in which important contributions were made by, or in which the personnel was dominated by Brooklyn-born, or Brooklyn-based musicians.

### **Tommy "Red" Tompkins and his Orchestra:** Tommy "Red"

Tompkins (tp,dir) + other (tp); Billy Pritchard (tb,vcl) + other (tb), 2 cl/ax, cl/ts, p, g, b, d, Sally Ann Harris (vcl); 24 June 1936, New York

*Viper's Dream*                      Vocalion 329

*Sumpin' 'bout rhythm*                      ---

*What The Heart Believes*              Vocalion 3271

*Jes' natch'ully lazy*                      ---

*(I was born that way)*

### **Tommy "Red" Tompkins and his Orchestra:** Tommy "Red"

Tompkins (tp,dir) + other (tp); Billy Pritchard (tb,vcl) + other (tb), 2

cl/ax, cl/ts, p, g, b, d, Sally Ann Harris (vcl); 18 February 1937, New York.

*Deep Shadows* Variety 543

*Oh babe, maybe someday* Variety 610

*I never had a dream* --

*Monopoly Swing* Variety 543

Note: This is the All-Brooklyn band mentioned by Dan Morgenstern, which was spoken about by his friend Nat "Face" Lorber. While discographies list the pianist as unknown, Morgenstern asserts that Marty Napoleon was the pianist in the band and on the recordings.

**Coleman Hawkins Quintet:** Coleman Hawkins(ts), Ellis Larkin's(p), Jimmy Shirley(g), Oscar Pettiford(b), Max Roach(d); 18 December 1943, New York.

*Lover Come Back To Me* Brunswick BL58030

*Blues Changes* --

**Coleman Hawkins And His Orchestra:** Dizzy Gillespie, Vic Coulsen, Eddie Vanderveer(tp), Leo Parker, Leonard Lowry(as), Coleman Hawkins, Don Byas, Ray Abrams(ts), Budd Johnson(bar), Clyde Hart(p), Oscar Pettiford(b), Max Roach(d); 16 February 1944, New York.

*Woody'n You* Apollo 751

*Bu-dee-daht* Apollo 752

*Yesterdays* --

**Coleman Hawkins And His Orchestra:** Dizzy Gillespie, Vic Coulsen, Eddie Vanderveer(tp), Leo Parker, Leonard Lowry(as), Coleman Hawkins, Don Byas, Ray Abrams(ts), Budd Johnson(bar), Clyde Hart(p), Oscar Pettiford(b), Max Roach(d); 22 February 1944, New York.

*Disorder at the Border* Apollo 751

*Feeling Zero* Apollo 753

*Rainbow Mist (Body and Soul)* Apollo 751

**J.J. Johnson—Jay Jay Johnson's BeBoppers:** J.J. Johnson(tb),

Cecil Payne(bar), Bud Powell(p) Leonard Gaskin(b), Max Roach(d); 26

June 1946, New York.

<i>Jay Bird (alt)</i>	Savoy SJL2232
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<i>Coppin The Bop</i>	--
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<i>Jay Jay</i>	--
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<i>Mad Bebop</i>	--
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**"The Brooklyn Savoy Sessions"****Pete Brown's Sextette:** Ed Lewis(tp), Pete Brown(as), Ray

Parker(p), Al Casey(g), Al Matthews(b), Ray Nathan(d); 20 February

1945, New York.

<i>Fat man's boogie</i>	Savoy 533, 694
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<i>That's the curfew</i>	--
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<i>Midnite blues</i>	Savoy 579
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<i>That's it</i>	--
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**Cousin Joe Accompanied By Pete Brown's Brooklyn Blowers:**

Cousin Joe (vcl) acc by Leonard Hawkins (tp), Pete Brown (as), Ray Abrams (ts), Kenny Watts (p), Jimmy Shirley (g), Leonard Gaskin (b), Arthur Herbert (d); 13 February 1946, New York

*Wedding Day Blues* Savoy 5527

*Desperate G.I. Blues* Savoy 5526

You got it comin' to ya Savoy 5527

Boogie Woogie Hannah Savoy 5526

**Kenny Watts And His Jumpin' Buddies:** Kenneth Hollon, Jimmy

Brown (ts) Kenny Watts (p) Carroll Waldron (b) Ray Nathan (d); 8 September 1946, New York.

*Watts my name* Savoy 629

*Doin' the thing* Savoy 618

*Brooklyn Boogie* Savoy 629

*Putnam Avenue Breakdown* Savoy 618

**Redd Foxx With Kenny Watts' Brooklyn Buddies:** John Swan (tp),  
 Stafford "Pazzuza" Simon (ts), Kenny Watts (p), Les Millington (b),  
 Arthur Herbert (d), Redd Foxx (vcl); 30 September 1946, New York.

*Let's wiggle a little boogie* Savoy 630

*Lucky Guy* --

*Fine Jelly blues* Savoy 631

*Red Foxx Blues* --

*Shame on you* Savoy 645

**Milton Buggs With Ray Abrams Orchestra:** Milton Buggs (vcl) acc  
 by Fats Navarro(tp), Leonard Lowry(as), Ray Abrams(ts), Cecil  
 Payne(bar), Kenny Watts(p), Curly Russell(b), Lee Abrams(d), Billie  
 Stewart (vcl); 18 February, 1947, New York.

*Gloomy Sunday* Savoy 647

*I live true to you* Savoy 648

*Solitude* (bs vcl) Savoy 647

*Fine Brown Frame Blues* Savoy 648

**Billie Stewart:** Billie Stewart(vcl), Leonard Hawkins(tp), Ray Abrams, Coleman Hoppin(ts), Cecil Payne(bar), Wynton Kelly(p), Leonard Gaskin(b) Lee Abrams(d); 18 February 1949.

*I Cried For You* (Unissued)

*Hurry Home* --

*Porgy* Savoy 692

*Day in, Day out* --

Note: These sessions were dominated by Bedford-Stuyvesant musicians, and they were the result of the exposure of many of the neighborhood's younger musicians to the Savoy label during sessions led by Alto saxophonist Pete Brown beginning in 1944. Brooklyn pianist Kenny Watts was on Brown's initial session for that label from that year, and beginning in 1946 began playing a regular engagement at Bed-Stuy's Putnam Central Club with local musicians such as drummer Ray Nathan and saxophonist Jimmy Brown. Watts would use the participants from the Putnam Central engagement on his own Savoy recordings of that year, including those with Redd Foxx. Also,

the sides under the leadership of Milton Buggs featuring Brooklyn vocalist Billie Stewart from 2/18/47 proved to be popular enough to be re-released as “Billie Stewart accompanied by Ray Abrams’ Orchestra”, given the same catalog number as the original issue, Savoy 647.

**Cecil Payne:** Irving Stokes(tp), Bruce Hinkson(ts), Cecil Payne(bar), Billy Kyle(p), Franklin Skeete(b), Heyward Jackson(d); 21 June 1949.

*Egg Head* Decca 48109

*No Chops* Decca 48114

*Big Joe* Decca 48109

*Hippy Dippy* Decca 48114

**Matthew Gee—“Jazz By Gee”:** Kenny Dorham(tp), Matthew Gee(tb), Frank Foster(ts), Ernie Henry(as), Cecil Payne(bar), Joe Knight(p), John Simmons(b), Wilbur Ware(b), Art Taylor(d); 19 July 1956/22 August, 1956, New York.

*Gee* Riverside RLP12-221

*Kingston Lounge* --

*The Boys from Brooklyn* --

*Out of Nowhere* --

*I'll Remember April* --

*Joram* --

*Sweet Georgia Brown* --

*Lover Man* --

**Wynton Kelly Trio:** Wynton Kelly(p), Oscar Pettiford(b), Franklin

Skeete(b), Lee Abrams(d)

*I've Found a New Baby* (unissued)

*Blue Moon* Blue Note 1581

*Fine and Dandy* BlueNote LNJ70079

*I've Found A New Baby* Blue Note BLP5025

*Cherokee* Blue Note 1579

*Born to be Blue* Blue Note 1578

*Where or When* Blue Note 1578

*Moonglow* Blue Note 1579

*If I Should Lose You* Blue Note LNJ7009

*Born to be blue (Alt)* --

**Wynton Kelly Trio:** Wynton Kelly(p,celeste), Franklin Skeete(b), Lee Abrams(d,conga); 1 August 1951.

*Goodbye* Blue Note 1581

*Goodbye* Blue Note BLP5025

*Foolin' Myself* Blue Note BNJ71001

*There Will Never Be Another You* Blue Note BLO5025

*Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me* Blue Note LNJ70079

*Summertime* Blue Note 1580

*Moonlight in Vermont* Blue Note BLP5025

*Crazy He Calls Me* Blue Note 1580

*Opus Caprice* Blue Note 1A158-83385/8

**Randy Weston—"Jazz A La Bohemia":** Cecil Payne(bar), Randy Weston(p), Ahmed Abdul-Malik(b), Al Dreares(d); 14 October 1956, Live "Café Bohemia" New York.

*Theme* Riverside RLP12-232

*Chessman's Delight* --

*Hold 'em Joe* --

*It's all right with me* --

*Just a riff* --

*Once in a while* --

*Solemn meditation* --

*You go to my head* --

*Solemn meditation (alt take)* --

*Theme* --

**Cecil Payne/Duke Jordan—Brooklyn Brothers:** Cecil Payne

(bar,fl), Duke Jordan(p) Sam Jones(b), Al Foster(d); 16 March 1973, New York.

*Egg head* Muse MR5015

<i>I Should Care</i>	--
<i>Jor-du</i>	--
<i>Jazz Vendor</i>	--
<i>Cu-ba</i>	--
<i>I Want To Talk About You</i>	--
<i>Cerupa</i>	--
<i>No Problem</i>	--

**The Brooklyn Four Plus One:** Cecil Payne (bar,fl), Ed Stoute (p),  
Leonard Gaskin(b), Wade Barnes(d), Tulivu-Donna Cumberbatch(vcl);  
8 February 1999, New York.

<i>L.C.'s cook Book</i>	Progressive PDC-7109
<i>Saucer Eyes</i>	--
<i>I Didn't Know About You</i>	--
<i>Blue 'n' Boogie</i>	--
<i>Stella by Starlight</i>	--
<i>Full Moonlight and Stars Made of Silver</i>	--
<i>Blue Monk</i>	--



*Cherokee*

--

*Meditation*

--

Also most certainly worth mentioning are all of the recordings made by Charlie Parker's original quintet, featuring the all-Brooklyn rhythm section of Max Roach, Duke Jordan, and Tommy Potter, and also the soon-to-be Brooklynite Miles Davis, which was in existence roughly from May 1947 until the beginning of 1949. Also of note were Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson's 1949 recordings for the King Label, which were the first recordings of what would become the first Wynton Kelly Trio featuring Kelly, bassist Franklin Skeete, and drummer Lee Abrams. The aforementioned Prestige Hard Bop recordings which begin in 1956 and feature numerous combinations with the paring of Brooklyn residents bassist Doug Watkins, drummer Arthur Taylor, and drummer "Philly" Joe Jones should also be mentioned. They would continue until the bassists' untimely death in 1962 at age 27, in a car accident while en route to meet Jones in San Francisco for an engagement.

## **Selected Live Recordings made at engagements held in**

### **Brooklyn:**

#### **Charlie Parker Quintet, Eastern Parkway Arena, 23 June 1951:**

"Little" Benny Harris(tp), Charlie Parker(as), Al Haig(p), Teddy

Kotick(b), Roy Haynes(d)

*52<sup>nd</sup> Street Theme* (I)                      Philology W846-2

*Ornithology* (incomplete)              Philology W5/18-2

*Embracable You* (inc.)      Philology 214W19

*Steeplechase*                      Philology 214W9

*52<sup>nd</sup> Street Theme* (II)                      --

*Now's The Time* (inc.)                      --

Medley:

*Be My Love*                      --

*April In Paris* (inc.)                      --

*Dance of the Infidels* (inc.)                      --

<i>52<sup>nd</sup> Street Theme</i> (III)	--	
<i>Wee</i> (incomplete)	EPM (F) FDC5711	
<i>This Time The Dream's On Me</i>		Phillolgy W846-2
<i>Don't Blame Me</i> (inc.)	--	
<i>A Night In Tunisia</i> (inc.)	--	
<i>All The Things You Are</i> (inc.)	--	
<i>Cool Blues</i> (incomplete)	EPM (F) FDC5711	
<i>52<sup>nd</sup> Street Theme</i> (IV)	Phillolgy W846-2	

**Charlie Parker Quartet, "Hot vs. Cool" Concert, presented by**

**Jerry Jerome, Loew's Kings Theater, 24 March 1952:** Charlie

Parker(as), Teddy Wilson(p), Eddie Safranski(b), Don Lamond(d).

*Cool Blues* Jazz Showcase 5003

**"Hot vs. Cool" Concert, presented by Jerry Jerome, Loew's**

**Kings Theater, 24 March 1952:** Henry "Red" Allen, Billy

Butterfield(tp), Big Chief Russell Moore(tb), Jerry Jerome(cl,ts),

Buddy DeFranco(cl) Dick Cary(p), Teddy Wilson(p), Eddie Safranski(b),  
Don Lamond(d).

*Introduction by Leonard Feather*

Red Allen (G) RA-CD-16a

*Fidgety Feet* --

*St. James Infirmary* --

*When I Grow To Old To Dream* --

*Finger Bustin'* --

*Sweet Georgia Brown* --

**"Trombone Rapport":** Willie Dennis, J.J. Johnson, Kai Winding,  
Bennie Green(tb), John Lewis(p), Charles Mingus(b), Art Taylor(d);  
Putnam Central Club, 18 September 1953.

*Move* Debut DLP-5

*Star Dust* --

*Yesterdays* --

*I'll Remember April* Debut FJP-14

*Blues for Some Bones (Wee Dot)* --

<i>Ow!</i>	Debut DEB126
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<i>Now's The Time</i>	--
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<i>Trombosphere</i>	--
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<i>Chazzanova</i>	--
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<i>Kai's Day</i>	Debut DEB198
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<i>Conversation</i>	Roost OJ1
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**Sun Ra—"Cosmic Tones for Mental Therapy":** Bernard Pettaway(b-tb), Marshall Allen(oboe), John Gilmore(b-cl,tone drums), Robert Cummings(b-cl), Pat Patrick(bar,fl), Danny Davis(fl), James Jackson(fl,log drums), Sun Ra (clavioline,side drums), Ronnie Boykins(b), Thomas "Bugs" Hunter (perc,verb), Clifford Jarvis (perc); Live at the Tip Top Club, late 1963.

<i>Adventure-equation</i>	Saturn 408
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<i>Moondance</i>	--
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<i>Voice of space</i>	--
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<i>Unidentified titles</i>	unissued
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**"The Night Of The Cookers Vol. 1":** Freddie Hubbard, Lee

Morgan(tp), James Spaulding(as,fl), Harold Mabern(p), Larry

Ridley(b), Pete La Roca(d), Big Black(cga); Live at Club La Marchal, 10

April 1965.

*Pensativa*

Blue Note BLP 4207

*Walkin'*

--

**"The Night Of The Cookers Vol. 2":** Freddie Hubbard, Lee

Morgan(tp), James Spaulding(as), Harold Mabern(p), Larry Ridley(b),

Pete La Roca(d), Big Black(cga); Live at Club La Marchal, 9 April 1965.

*Jodo*

Blue Note BLP 4208

*Breaking Point*

--

**Sun Ra—"Continuation: Sun Ra And His Astro Infinity**

**Arkestra":** Akh Tal Ebah(tp,mell), [pseudonym for Doug E. Williams

(tp,mell)], poss. Charles Stephens(tb), Marshall Allen(as), Danny

Davis(as,acl), John Gilmore(ts,cl), Danny Ray

Thompson(as,Neptunian,libflecto), Pat Patrick(bar,cl), Sun Ra(p),

Ronnie Boykins(b), poss. Clifford Jarvis(d), Carl Nimrod(space drums)  
 [pseudonym for Carl S. Malone (space drums) ], James Jacson(log-  
 drum) unidentified perc; Live at The East 1969.

*Continuation to* Saturn ESR 520

*Jupiter Festival* --

### **Miles Davis Quintet—"Complete Live At The Blue Coronet**

**1969":** Miles Davis(tp), Wayne Shorter(ts), Chick Corea (el-p), Dave  
 Holland (b,el-b), Jack DeJohnette(d); Live at the Blue Coronet 21-29  
 June 1969.

*This* Domino 891207

*Agitation* --

*No Blues* --

*Paraphernalia* (I) (incomplete) --

*Gingerbread Boy* --

*Paraphernalia* (II) --

*Miles Runs the Voodoo Down* --

*Walkin'* --

**Lonnie Liston Smith—“Live!”:** Donald Smith(fl,vcl), Dave

Hubbard(ts,sop), Lonnie Liston Smith(p.clavinet,keyboard,synt,perc),

Ronald Dean Miller(g), Al Anderson(b), Hollywood Barker(d), Michael

Thabo Carvin(perc); Live at Smuckers Cabaret, 19-21 May 1977.

Sorceress

RCA APL1-2433

Prelude

--

Expansions

--

My Love

--

Visions of a New World

--

Visions of a New World

--

Water Colors

--

Sunset

--



**Compositions commemorating actual Brooklyn locations,  
events, situations, people, etc. (listed chronologically from  
earliest commercial release):**

*Night Game in Brooklyn*, performed by Tony Pastor and His Orchestra,  
Rec's October 1940, released on the LP "Just For Kicks", Big Band  
Archives LP1210.

*Putnam Avenue Breakdown*, performed by Kenny Watts and his  
Jumpin Buddies, Rec'd 8 September 1946, Released on Savoy 618, 78  
RPM disc.

*Quincy Street Stomp*, performed by Sidney Bechet, Rec'd 12 February  
1946, released on Blue Note 517,78 RPM disc.

*The Boys from Brooklyn*, performed by Matthew Gee, Rec'd 19 July  
1956, released on the LP "Jazz by Gee", Riverside RLP 12-221.

*Kingston Lounge* performed by Matthew Gee, Rec'd 19 July 1956,  
released on the LP "Jazz by Gee", Riverside RLP 12-221.

*A Night At Tony's*, written and performed by Gigi Gryce, Rec'd 19 May 1954, released on the LP "When Farmer Met Gryce", Prestige LP7085.

*Chessman's Delight*, performed by Cecil Payne, Rec'd 19 May 1956, released on the LP "Cecil Payne, Signal S1203.

*Saucer Eyes*- performed by Cecil Payne, Rec'd 22 May 1956, released on the LP "Cecil Payne, Signal S1203. Written in dedication to a Bar maid at the Kingston Lounge

*Nostrand and Fulton*, written and performed by Freddie Hubbard, Rec'd 27 December 1962, released on the LP "Here To Stay", Blue Note BN-LA496-H2. Written in dedication to the corner of Nostrand Avenue and Fulton Street in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the center of musical activity in the neighborhood.

*245*, written and performed by Eric Dolphy, Rec'd 1 April 1960, released on the LP "Outward Bound", New Jazz NJLP8236. Written in dedication to the house owned by Slide Hampton in Fort Greene at 245 Carlton Avenue, where he and Freddie Hubbard lived together.

*Brooklyn Bridge*, performed by Don Sleet, Rec'd 16 March 1961, released on the album "All Members", Jazzland JLP45.

*Brooklyn*, performed by Hans Koller, Rec'd 18 January 1968, Germany,  
Released on the LP "New York City", MPS (G) 0068235.

*Brooklyn Bridge*, performed by Victoria Spivey, Rec'd 12 February  
1962, released on the LP "Victoria and Her Blues", Spivey LP1002.

*African Village Bedford Stuyvesant*- written and performed by Randy  
Weston, Rec'd 14 August 1974, released on the LP "Blues to Africa",  
Freedom FLP40153.

*Brooklyn*, performed by Paul McNamara, Rec'd 1980, Sydney, released  
on the LP "Misty Morning", Batjazz BAT2073.

*Brooklyn at Dawn*, written and performed by William Fielder, Rec'd 1  
October 1984, released on the LP "Love Progression", Prescription  
records.

*Brooklyn Bridge*, performed by Carla Bley, Rec'd December 1986 &  
January 1987, released on the LP "Sextet", Watt 17.

**Compositions commemorating fictitious or unsubstantiated  
Brooklyn events, or those that utilize “Brooklyn” in the title  
(listed chronologically from earliest commercial release):**

*When It's Moonlight in Brooklyn*, performed by Earl Gresh and His Gangplank Orchestra, Rec'd 30 April 1927, Columbia Records, unissued.

*Cowboy From Brooklyn*, performed by Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra, Rec'd 15 April 1938, New York, released on Victor 25832, 78 RPM disc.

*Carnival of Brooklyn*, performed by Raymond Scott and his orchestra, Recorded on Radio Broadcast 1939/40, New York, released on the LP “Business Man's Bounce”, Golden Era GE15029.

*Flatbush Flanagan*, written and performed by Harry James, Rec'd 8 January 1941, released on Columbia 35947, 78-RPM disc.

*Brooklyn Stomp*, performed by Happy Johnson, Rec'd 1945, released on Modern Music 122, 78 RPM disc.

*A Trio Grooves in Brooklyn [This Way Out]*, performed by The Nat King Cole Trio, Rec'd 27 February 1945, released on V-Disc 499, 78 RPM disc.

*Brooklyn Boogie*, performed by Louis Prima and his orchestra, Rec'd March 1945, released on Majestic 7141, 78 RPM disc.

*Give me the Moon over Brooklyn*, performed by Guy Lombardo, Rec 1946, released on Decca 23928, 78-RPM disc.

*Brooklyn Boogie*, performed by Kenny Watts and his Jumpin' Buddies, Rec'd 9 August 1946, released on Savoy 618, 78 RPM disc.

*Brooklyn Bounce*, performed by Erskine Hawkins and His Orchestra, Rec'd 21 December 1948, released on Victor 20-3326, 78 RPM disc.

*Eighty-Eight Keys to Brooklyn*, performed by Frank Signorelli, Rec'd 1950, released on Davis JD-130.

*Brooklyn Love Song*, performed by Red Nichols and his Five Pennies, with vocal by Dottie O'Brien, Rec'd for The USMC Transcriptions, August 1950, released on Jump F20B.

*The Yellow Rose of Brooklyn*, performed by the Buddy Rich Quintet, Rec'd 1 September 1955, released on the LP "Buddy And Sweets: The Buddy Rich Quintet", Norgran MGN-1038.

*East of Brooklyn [alt. Title Night Watch]*, written by and performed by Hank Mobley, Rec'd 20 October 1957, released on the LP "Poppin", Blue Note(Japan) GXF-3066.

*Brooklyn Love Song*, performed by Beverly Kennedy 2 December 1957, released on the album "Beverly Kenny Sings for Playboys", Decca DL8743.

*Brooklyn Bridge*, performed by Don Sleet, Rec'd 16 March 1961, released on the album "All Members", Jazzland JLP45.

*Tales of Brooklyn*, performed by Gildo Mahones, Rec'd 15 August 1963, released on the LP "Shooting High", Prestige PR 16004.

*The Brooklyn Bridge*, performed by Mel Torme, Rec'd 7 December 1963, released on the LP "Mel Torme: Sunday In New York & Other Songs About New York", Atlantic 8091.

*The Way to Brooklyn*, written and performed by Takehiro Honds, Rec'd 6 December 1970, released on the LP "Jodo", Trio Records RSP 9018 –

*We like us Brooklyn baby*, written and performed by Roy Ayres, Rec'd 1971, released on the LP "He's Coming", Polydor PD5022.

*Passeggiando per Brooklyn*, written and performed by Henghel Gualdi, Rec'd 1977, Italy, released on the LP "I Cavalli Di Battaglia, Vol. 1", Centotre CNR27005.

*Saudade do Brooklyn*, performed by Bob Mover, Rec'd February 1977, Released on the LP "On The Move", Choice CRS1015.

*Chopin Visits Brooklyn*, written and performed by Mike Garson, Rec'd 20-21 November 1979, released on the LP "Avant Garson", Contemporary 14003.

*Mas in Brooklyn (Highlife)*, performed by Pharoah Sanders, Rec'd 1981, Released on the LP "Shukuru", Theresa TR121.

*Brooklyn Heights*, performed by Claudio Guimaraes, Rec'd 1 December 1981, Rio De Janeiro, Released on the LP "Meu Immao Toca Na Sinfonica", Conraponto CPLP001.

*Brooklyn Heights Boogie*, performed by Bob James, Rec'd March 1983, released on the LP "The Genie", Columbia FC35678.

*Brooklyn Bob*, written and performed by Jim McNeely, Rec'd 22

October 1984 & 22 February 1985, Released on the LP "Heart", Owl

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## Supplemental Clippings

### CONEY ISLAND

Articles Mentioning Freddie Keppard with Tim Brymn's band at Coney Island

**The Shelbourne.**

The "Black Devil Band," led by "Mr. Jazz Himself," continues its bombardment upon the realm of jazz at the Hotel Shelburne, Brighton Beach. Lt. Tim Brymn, the dean of syncopation, continues to shell the dance-mad public with his jazziest, wildest, most intoxicating music which New York has ever experienced. Dance mad New York nightly flocks to The Shelburne to come within range. Sgt. Keppard, the peer of all jazz cornetists, has completed his leave of absence and returned to the big organization. Lt. Brymn is a thorough musician despite his liking for jazz, as many of his compositions prove. When he conducts classical compositions he is as dignified as Leopold Stowkowsky conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra, and his band likewise observes the highest artistic decorum. In introducing the Four Harmony Kings, singers of the sugared songs of the sunny south, Lt. Brymn has given the music loving public just one more syncopation sensation.



**BDE 6/29/19**

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**At the Shelburne.**

Lt. J. Tim Brymn and his "Black Devil" Jazz Band will give a special Decoration Day concert at the Hotel Shelburne, Brighton Beach, both afternoon and evening.

In addition to patriotic airs the program will include operatic selections and several of Lt. Brymn's own compositions. Fred Keppard, a jazz cornet player, is a recent addition to this big band.

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**BDE 5/30/20**

## BASKETBALL AND DANCE

Basketball and Dance event from 1910/1911

**GREATEST OF THEM ALL !**

**BASKETBALL GAME AND DANCE**

Under the Auspices of the  
**N. Y. ALL STAR BASKETBALL TEAM**  
 AT MANHATTAN CASINO, 155th Street & Eighth Ave.  
**FRIDAY NIGHT, DECEMBER 30, 1910**

**FIRST GAME**  
**JERSEY CITY ATHLETIC CLUB (Regulars) vs. ST. CYPRIAN**  
**HEAVYWEIGHT TEAM**

**SECOND GAME**  
**HOWARD UNIVERSITY (Picked Team of Washington, D. C., vs.**  
**N. Y. ALL STARS**

MUSIC BY EXCELSIOR FULL MILITARY BAND  
 First game at 8.45 p.m. sharp. Boxes seating 8 persons. \$2.00

**GENERAL ADMISSION 50 CENTS**

Tickets for Boxes may be obtained at the Box office or any member of team.

**SPECIAL NOTE.**—The players on the Howard University team are practically the same men who play on the Washington F. M. C. A. team who were last season's champions having never been defeated. St. Christopher, Smart Set and Alpha, New York's three strongest teams, were pitted against them, but without success as they defeated St. Christopher once, Smart Set twice and Alpha twice. The New York All Stars, composed of the pick of the players of these three New York clubs, will, on this occasion, endeavor to wrest this enviable reputation from Washington.

Dec 22-21

**... Washington vs. New York ...**

**BIGGEST BASKETBALL GAME AND DANCE**

UNDER AUSPICES OF THE  
**ALPHA PHYSICAL CULTURE CLUB**  
 AT MANHATTAN CASINO, 155th St. & 8th Ave.  
**CHRISTMAS NIGHT (Monday, December 26th, 1910)**

1st Game Jersey City A.C. Jrs. vs. Alpha P.C.C. (Second Team)  
 2nd " Washington V.M.C.A. vs. Alpha P.C.C. (First Team)

MUSIC BY DOUG Preliminary Game called at 8 p.m. sharp

**BOXES, (seating 8 persons) \$2.00** **General Admission 50c**

Tickets and boxes (limited number) may be obtained from any member or at the Club House, 29 W. 134th street. Telephone 3338 Harlem.

**ANNUAL SPRING RECEPTION, April 21, 1911, at Manhattan Casino.**

**MATINEE BASKETBALL AND DANCE**

**ST. CHRISTOPHER CLUB**  
**VS.**  
**SMART SET A. C.**

**NEW YEAR'S DAY AFTERNOON (Monday, January 2nd, 1911)**  
**AT MANHATTAN CASINO**  
 155th Street and 8th Avenue, New York, N. Y.

**ADMISSION - Including Hat Check - 35 CENTS**

MUSIC BY EXCELSIOR MILITARY BAND FROM 1 P. M. TO 7 P. M.  
 GAMES START PROMPTLY AT 3 O'CLOCK  
 Dancing from 3 to 7 o'clock

*The New York Age 12/22/10*

**Basketball Game and Dance Event – Harlem 1937**

**Basketball Game & Dance**

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**Thanksgiving Night, Thursday, Nov. 25th**  
**AT RENAISSANCE CASINO**  
Seventh Avenue and 138th Street

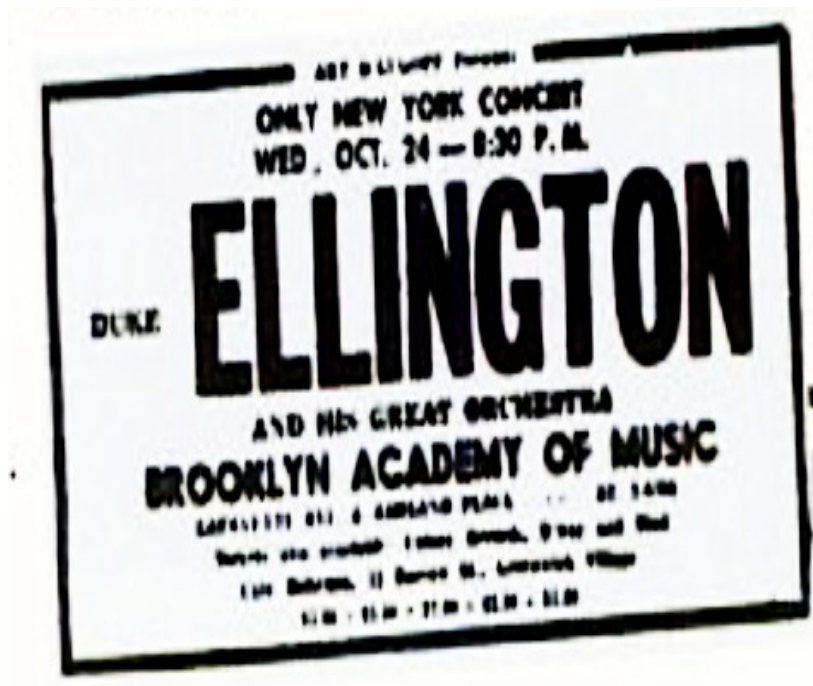
**Phila. Hebrews 'Sphas' vs Renaissance**  
**Y. W. C. A. GIRLS vs. EXCELSIOR GIRLS**

Music by **VEPNON ANDRADE**

Boxes \$3.00 — Admission 75 Cents

***The New York Age 11/22/37***

**BAM Concert with Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, 1956**



**Brooklyn Academy of Music Concert with Thelonious Monk Quartet and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, 1968.**

## JAZZ A CHALLENGE IN BROOKLYN BILL

2,000 at Academy to Hear  
Monk Quartet and Blakey

By JOHN S. WILSON

A combination of challenging jazz and the unchallengeable in jazz attracted an audience of almost 2,000 to the Brooklyn Academy of Music last night.

The unchallengeable was represented by Thelonious Monk whose unique style as pianist and composer has remained one of the more steadfast aspects of jazz for the last two decades.

Mr. Monk's quartet shared the bill with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, a group with a long but erratic history. Mr. Blakey's current Jazz Messengers last night proved to be one of the best groups he had led.

The essence of all editions of the Messengers has been a driving, relentless attack, paced by Mr. Blakey's drumming. His soloists have been expected to meet the challenge of producing long, rock-hard solos that can sustain performances that may last 20 or 30 minutes.

The soloists have made the difference in Mr. Blakey's groups. Last night he had a front line that not only met the challenge but that also lifted the audience out of its seats on some occasions.

Billy Harper, a young tenor saxophonist from Texas, was the most electrifying member of the group, although Bill Hardman, a veteran of one of the early, less successful Messengers, played a crackling trumpet that was almost equally effective.

The other members of the group were Julian Priester, trombone, Ronnie Mathews, piano, and Lawrence Evans, bass.

The concert was one of a series being presented at the Academy by Lionel Hampton Enterprises.

*The New York Times* 4/20/68



## THE BROOKLYN PARAMOUNT

The Second Stan Kenton Festival of Modern Jazz November 6, 1954

### Brooklyn Paramount Books Stan Kenton Festival Nov. 6

On Saturday evening, Nov. 6, in Brooklyn the streets will reverberate with modern jazz. Stan Kenton and his Festival of Modern American Jazz will appear on the stage of the Brooklyn Paramount Theater with a fine collection of jazz musicians.

The man responsible for bringing the concert idea to Brooklyn is Gene Pleshette, managing director of the Brooklyn Paramount Theater. Last October, Pleshette had the idea of bringing top name talent to the stage of his theater for one night performances. He planned to pattern his shows after Carnegie Hall, utilizing the concert form.

The experiment began with a show headed by Nat (King) Cole, which proved Pleshette's idea to be so sound that in the months to follow, three more concert shows played the Brooklyn Paramount stage. Because of the number of people turned away by the first show which gave only one performance, the theater began presenting their one-night concerts for two performances.

**Shows Varied**  
The shows were all kinds—from Stan Kenton and his Jazz

Concert to a Mambo Rumba Festival.

"We gave people what they wanted," Pleshette says. "We knew they wanted mambo, so we got the best mambo musicians — Tito Puente and Joe Loco. They like jazz, so we gave them Stan Kenton, Dizzy Gillespie and Erroll Garner. Now we're bringing back Stan Kenton, with Art Tatum and Charlie Ventura."

The second edition of Stan Kenton's Festival of Modern American Jazz, will be presented Nov. 6 at 8 and 11 p.m. Kenton has a new group of artists, including not only Art Tatum Trio, and the Charlie Ventura Quintet, but the newest jazz sensation, Shorty Rogers and his Giants, with Shelly Manne on the drums. Also featured in the show are Johnny Smith, who brings new music to the guitar, and the King of the Bongo, Candido, plus Mary Ann McCall to handle the vocal chores.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 10/24/54*

**The Willie B. Williams Easter Show at the Brooklyn Paramount featuring Dinah Washington, Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross, the Art Farmer/Benny Golson Jazztet, and Maynard Ferguson's Orchestra**

## Williams to Host Easter Jazz Show •

NEW YORK — DeeJay William B. Williams, WNEW, here will host a primarily jazz show at the **Brooklyn** Paramount Theater, Easter Week, starting April 15. Heretofore the **Brooklyn** Paramount has concentrated on rock and roll stage bills during the Easter season.

This year, tho, in keeping with recent trend developments in the record business, the bill, tagged "William B. Williams' Holiday Show," will feature **Dinah Washington**, Brook Benton, the Lambert-Hendricks-Ross Trio, Maynard Ferguson's ork, the Jazztet and Dion and the Belmonts.

Only Dion can be strictly classified as a rock and roll act, altho Miss Washington and Benton, of course, have dual appeal. Also on the bill will be comic Leon DeLyon and the Cha Cha Taps. The show marks Williams' entry into the stageshow field.

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 4/11/60*



Article describing Maxine Sullivan why at the Flatbush Theater with Count Basie, 1940.

## Once Floor Washer, Now Is Swing Star

The chances were about 1,000,000 to 1 that Maxine Sullivan, one of the top swing singers in the nation, would ever get to be world famous. Maxine, who is playing a week's engagement on the stage of the Flatbush Theater, still hardly believes it.

The possessor of the vocal cords which are now worth more than \$1,000 a week was born Marietta Williams in a little frame house in Homestead, Pa. When she was 17 she was graduated from high school and took a job as a domestic at \$10 a week, scrubbing floors, washing dishes, doing laundry. Eight years of this left their mark on the 4-foot-11 Marietta.

About that time her Uncle Williams had a three-piece band around Homestead. She hung around the bandstand at night and sang a number occasionally. Soon she was a regular member of the outfit because of her tiny voice and distinctive style.

Her first big-time job was with Red Pepper's orchestra, in Pittsburgh. At first she was strictly a musician's singer. But it wasn't long before New York saw her at the Onyx Club and, because there were so many Williamses in the entertainment world, she switched her name to Maxine Sullivan.

In 1937 came her noted rendition of "Loch Lomond."

*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 4/14/40*

Brooklynites discussing the departure of stage shows from the Downtown Brooklyn Theaters

# 10 Brooklynites Discuss:

## Stage Shows At Boro's Movie Houses

Stage shows have made a comeback in Broadway motion picture houses and are doing a phenomenal business. Few theaters in Brooklyn, however, have followed the lead of the Manhattan houses.

Would you like to see stage shows at Brooklyn movie houses?

Answers of ten representative Brooklynites follow:

### JOSEPH BUCCINO

6823 Narrows Ave.

Route Clerk, Western Union

Yes, I would like to see a return of vaudeville to Brooklyn. There are a lot of old favorites that we have missed on the stage. I don't know why Manhattan should have a corner on the stage shows.



Joseph Buccino

I enjoy the movies and I think Brooklyn theaters are as attractive as Broadway houses, but it's refreshing to see real people on the stage at the same time.

### Miss HELEN BOYD

354 59th St.

Clerk

Yes. Half the people who now travel over to Manhattan to see a good movie and the latest vaudeville would stay right in Brooklyn if they could get the same thing here.



Helen Boyd

Why should we not keep the business here if we can?

**JAMES TAYLOR**420 Fulton St.  
Stock Clerk

I think it's a fine idea to bring back stage shows in Brooklyn. At this moment I'm waiting for my date, and guess where we're going?—to hear Tommy Dorsey at the Capitol.

I'd prefer to stay in Brooklyn, but where will you get a show like that? So, we go over the river...



James Taylor

**Mrs. MARY BRUNO**121 Dean St.  
Housewife

I'd love to see stage shows in Brooklyn—just because I'm too lazy to go to Manhattan. It's crowded and noisy and a nuisance to travel so far for a show.

Brooklyn is always a stepchild. Why is it the chain movie houses put their best entertainment in Manhattan shows, forcing Brooklynites to go up there for good vaudeville? Perhaps Brooklyn will assert itself.



Mrs. Mary Bruno

**Dr. SAMUEL MESSINGER**39 Linden Boulevard  
Dentist

Yes. I think we in Brooklyn have been slow to catch on to the fact that vaudeville is as popular as ever. People like to see dancing and singing done by live people, and we'd like to see it in Brooklyn.



Dr. S. Messinger

A stage show would be a wel-

BORN ON EAST SIDE

His concern for the less fortunate may easily be traced to his own boyhood. Born on New York's lower East Side, the oldest child of a tinsmith, progress did not come easily to young Benjamin, who sold papers and worked after school to fatten the family purse.

When he was 4 the family moved to the Bushwick section and Benjamin attended borough public and high schools. In 1909, at 21, he was admitted to the Bar after years of combining Gladstone with part-time positions.

It was touch and go that year whether the young lawyer would wind up in the courts or pounding the ivories in a hot spot. A hep cat—or the day's equivalent—he had

come relief from the double features that theaters have been foisting on the public. One good movie and a couple of acts make a well-rounded program. Perhaps the Brooklyn theater managers will get wise to themselves.

**M. J. ROTH**1950 68th St.  
Federal Clerk

I regret very much that vaudeville has died in Brooklyn. I remember the old days when a stage show was as much a part of the program as the movie, and I wish they would return.

There's a lot of money around these days, so Hollywood is throwing any kind of picture to the public and it accepts it. We've been getting a lot of second-rate movies lately, and we'd gladly give them up for a good stage show.

There's a lot of money around these days, so Hollywood is throwing any kind of picture to the public and it accepts it. We've been getting a lot of second-rate movies lately, and we'd gladly give them up for a good stage show.

**ADELAIDE FEIN**570 Linden Boulevard  
Student

I'd like to see stage shows in Brooklyn. Broadway theaters

have become terribly crowded—some of the loose money floating and it's just about these days. If we had the no fun to push and shove your way into a movie.

The Flatbush Theater is a good example of the popularity stage shows have in Brooklyn.



Adelaide Fein

**Mrs. CHARLES SIMPSON**602 56th St.  
Housewife

Yes, it seems ridiculous that we must go over to Manhattan to see a good stage show. We depend upon Broadway for almost all of our entertainment instead of building up our own attractions.

Fulton St. is as accessible as Broadway. Why don't we build up our own great White Way?



Mrs. Chas. Simpson

**JAMES F. KNEE**162 India St.  
Conductor

Yes, Brooklyn ought to get bands.

stitutional Convention in 1937, he came out strongly for young people, too, advocating establishment of a special bureau to coordinate the gap between education and job opportunities.

Mr. Ribman is a member of the Brooklyn Bar Association and Union Temple; a director of Jewish Hospital, former president of Fresh Meadow Country Club, which he organized, and has played an important role in the work of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, the Williamsburg Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association, the Brooklyn Boy Scout Foundation and the Brooklyn Red Cross. He is a former member of the Kings County Democratic Committee and belongs to the Washington Club of the 10th A. D.

stage shows many people wouldn't bother going to Broadway. We would have all our entertainment, shows, night clubs and movies right here.

Movies are good, but occasionally I like to see a good chorus routine, such as the Music Hall gives or the Roxy.

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**BROOKLYN SOCIAL CLUBS****BDE 11/24/34**

## Two Dances This Friday Usher In Social Season

Two affairs which have been planned by two popular groups will help the younger generation to continue to celebrate the first month of the new year. The Ritz Club Complimentary dance this Friday evening at the Brooklyn Palace will attract the sons and daughters of Brooklyn's most prominent families. Claude Hopkins' unit No. 1 orchestra has been engaged to set the tempos so that the debbies and their beaus can strut around the ballroom in lively fashion.

The club world has its eyes focused on the Sonia Ballroom. 'Tis where the Royal Ten will give their "One Night of Love" dance. DeVere Grant, the club's president announced that reservations are sold out completely. Gus Carrington and his Night Hawks will supply the necessary dance music for the occasion. May Dunn, a WM-CA and WHN songbird, accompanied by Lee Gem will warble her version of several popular song hits. Hostesses for the evening will be the charming Cornell Girls. The affair promise to surpass their recent one. Plans for their affair was completed when the lads met at the home of John Nero, 273 Greene avenue, last Friday evening.



*The New York Age 3/9/35*



*The New York Age 12/26/36*

## STEVE PULLIAM

## PROBE LOOTING OF MUNICIPAL COURT

## BROOKLYN

# The New York Age

## LONG ISLAND

BROOKLYN PAGE

NEW YORK, N. Y., SATURDAY, AUGUST 31, 1940

PAGES SEVEN to TWELVE

## Borough Orchestra Gets Fair's First Prize

## Steve Pulliam's Manhattan Sextette First Prizewinners In Fair Contest



<p><b>BOBBY STEVENS</b>, the headliner of the show, presents the up-and-coming American legends with the trophy which they view as the best of the small land down which gave birth to the World's Fair Wednesday and Thursday in 1975. Stevens' nationwide</p>	<p>travelling led to right before the boys are John Jordan (Gailin) the podium which he shouldn't be because he plays golf under a pseudonym. Peter Pollock, leader of the Seattle receiving the trophy. Big the personality of Charlie Davidson, who was threatened had to be</p>	<p>about his, nothing Yarnes heard second, any. To the right Yarnes is Tilmann Davidson to year who hardly has been off the top and top are (the son, first son and Jimmy Yarnes have been is always charged with a lot outrageous trumpet</p>
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**By ALFRED A. DICKERT**

Their enthusiasm responded by a thin grey drizzle of rain, or thousands of interjects around the approval as Steve Pollan's terrific Manhattan Sceptre came winners in a nationwide competition of amateur swing bands the close of a two-day seminar shrieking trumpet, rumbling biddles and tinkling piano. Wednesday and Thursday at the American Commerce at the New York World's Fair.

The contest, sponsored by Fair and Swing Magazine, gave amateur musicians' pulp Bill featuring thirty organizations various name, all competing to outdo to trip first honors.

With some of the more notable

[illegible]

**Winifred's Girls Band**

Most interesting music will be the far-flung division was the Play-Way School Orchestra, "The International Soundtrack of Babylon," an all-girls unit which hailed at the very from Play-Way, Malaysia. There were some lovely results in this

## SHOULD NEGRO VOTER IN KINGS COUNTY VOTE FOR DEMOCRATS OR REPUBLICANS?

(As announced last week, The Age's Alfred A. Duckett and free lance newspaperman Archie Waters are of sharp differences of opinion as to the worth of the two major political parties in the community of Brooklyn. Hereunder Duckett presents his reasons why the Negroes of Kings County ought to string along with the GOP elephant, while Waters presents his conception of the case for the Democrats.)

By ALFRED A. DUCKETT

I think that the more vocalizing way for me to express my opinion is to be in the comparative work of the Republican and Democratic parties to the Negro voters of King County is to ask the readers to imagine that in the following work an official speaker of the Democratic Party is telling a Negro audience why they owe their allegiance to his party if it is

### Fault-Finding GOP

"In the first place, I shall not deal with national issues because it is a matter in which the MR Movement is the only man in the period-charted land of 100,000 Americans who the guide line is in the present time of when it is also evident that most of us are on relief. I know this is your belief. I believe in it. I hope not being a happy-go-lucky but not particularly militant as you put them, and they and all these things, but it is enough for them. Belief is one of the great things that ever happened to any people.

**Vote For Mr. Calloway**  
 "Now, as to local issues, I feel that every true black American of Kings County ought to vote for John Calloway for Borough President. One of the first things Mr. Calloway did when he went into office after the death of Mr. Ingraham, was to accept the resigna-

"But can we do about 'down town' it" against the national policies national defense measures, agricultural area, collective bargaining.

"No, we Republicans can't. Those things - you see the people, I like them. But what we do is to have our Wall Street shirk that the Rooseveltians

By ARCHIE WATERS

Lindsay, great Republican Club President running for reelection, was not afraid to make known a new-famous warning, "Do not change horses in midstream. Republicans today, proving Lindsay, yet want America to switch back" to Roosevelt's actions—actions that their leader, "Farmer Boy Wilkie," endorses in full. In fact, "Farmer Boy Wilkie" is the Democrats' best booster.

### Fault-Finding COP

But, there is an election on. I  
workers of the Republican Party  
nite!" We GOP's must find la  
with the Roosevelt administration  
that the people like so much. W  
Republican must call out our an

"We can't, of course, screen out racialists. Roosevelt's WPA, CCC, GI Bill, housing projects, unemployment insurance—because the people are crazy enough to like the unconventionals. And also the things that protect bank depositors. The old-age pensions and the hundreds of other social legislations that have given the Negro people, even then, isn't it awful?, for example, money—money for food, money for clothing, money for shelter and, oh my wanted list, money for the cultural, social surroundings in their off-time monotonous life."

"No, we Republicans can't. These things -- 'cause the people don't like them. But what we do is to have our Wall Street shriek that the Rooseveltians

**UNCENSORED** by ALFRED A. DUCKETT

ALFRED A.  
DUCKETT



12 According to sources who wrote the truth in their minutes, you might get something like this: Minutes of the meeting of the Royal Society of A. G. August 13, ...The meeting was called by the president who referred to the Chaplain, U. S. Hays to pray while the trustees collected what funds he could get. After this the president did the club that we would have to handle members but another committee should be appointed, seeing that maybe this committee was too busy painting the job and etc.

The chairman of the C. G. company said we had to get the money up and send what did the president want him to do give up his dress and better for the club. He said he didn't see why the Constitution needed to be changed again because the club never went in the past and was again meeting in the past.



**FREDERICK DOUGLASS SOCIETY (CCNY)**  
 cordially invites you to attend its  
**SECOND ANNUAL INTER-COLLEGIATE BALL**  
 at the  
**PALATIAL PARK PALACE**  
 3-5 WEST 110th STREET, NEW YORK CITY  
**FRIDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 7, 1941**  
 2 Sensational Orchestras — Gala Floor Show  
 Professor Steve Pulliam and his MANHATTAN SEXTETTE  
 and Majestic Melodies By  
**EULA WHITE and her EMPERORS OF SWING**  
 (formerly Eddie Bonnemere's Ork.)  
 Continuous Dancing from 10:00 p. m. to 4 a. m.  
**ADVANCE TIX: 65 CENTS — AT DOOR: 75 CENTS**  
**LOGES TWO DOLLARS**  
 Tickets Available At Brooklyn Office, New York Age, 486a Gates Ave.  
 near Marcy Avenue — NEvins 8-1867

*The New York Age 2/1/41*





*The New York Age 8/2/41*

## Nearly 1000 Attend Annual Dance Given By St. Philip's Church

St. Philip's Church, Brooklyn, which is noted for doing many things well, chalked up another win on the score card with the presentation on Friday night at the Park Palace, Manhattan, of its annual dance and entertainment.

Nearly one thousand Brooklynites turned out in response to the hard-working efforts put forth by Dance Committee Chairman Mrs. Lester R. Trice, Sr., and her co-workers. "Jump" music and soft melodies for waltzing were furnished by Steve Pulliam's Manhattan Sextette. A colorful floor show arranged by Dancing Instructor Ann Jones was emceed by Alfred A. Duckett of THE NEW YORK AGE.

A quiet but popular guest was Father John Coleman, rector of the church, who view the proceedings from his balcony box.

To help a child learn how to dress himself, choose garments that can be adjusted easily.

*The New York Age 2/1/41*

# ADDITIONAL BEDFORD-STUYVESANT CLIPPINGS

## The Sonia Ballroom

RAINBOW JOYMAKERS Presents its  
WONDER BAR Featuring  
**CORA LaREDD** AND HER  
RED PEPPERS  
And  
EDNA (Tropical Heat Wave) HOLLY  
Former Cotton Club Attraction  
SONIA BALLROOM, Putnam & Bedford Aves.  
FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 18, 1934  
Reservation \$2.00—Orchestra booked thru Jimmy Evans

Subscription  
**49c**  
(Tax Not Included)

*The New York Age 5/12/34*

You Are Invited To Attend  
"Rockin' In Rhythm"  
A Presentation of the  
**ARISCO GIRLS CLUB**  
Featuring  
LOUIS METCALF & ORCHESTRA  
At The SONIA BALLROOM  
Saturday Eve., Jan. 19  
ADMISSION 65 and 75 CENTS  
Reservations — \$3.00

*The New York Age 1/19/35*

## Brooklyn Apollo Amateur Night

**JOE JEFFERS** Presents  
**WILLIE BRYANT**  
As Star Of His Next Presentation Of Joe Jeffer's Original  
Amateur Night In Brooklyn's Harlem  
**TALENTED AMATEURS - GUEST ARTISTS**  
and **TOMMY HAMILTON'S SWING BAND**  
Plus The Regular NEW Screen Feature Picture  
**ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1937, AT MIDNIGHT**  
at the **BROOKLYN APOLLO THEATRE**  
(Corner Fulton Street and Throop Avenue)  
Tickets On Sale In Box Office At Eleven Fifteen  
ADMISSION — THIRTY-FIVE CENTS

*The New York Age 2/27/37*

**Brooklyn Apollo Gala Celebration with Tiny Bradshaw directing  
Joe Alston's band**

**The APOLLO Theatre**  
(Fulton Street & Throop Avenue)

PRESENTS

A Gala Welcome Home Celebration

FEATURING

**TINY BRADSHAW**

DIRECTING

**JOE ALLSTON** AND HIS  
BAND

Plus

An All Star Cast Of Thirty Artists

Also

**ROY WORRELL'S AMATEURS**

**MIDNIGHT, SATURDAY, JULY 10**  
One Show Only — Doors Open At 11:30

ADMISSION — 50 CENTS  
COME EARLY — AVOID THE RUSH

***The New York Age 2/27/37***

## The Brooklyn Palace w/Bedford Ballroom Mention

### Axim Presents Teddy Wilson At May Pole Prom Saturday, May 4

Axim, aces in Brooklyn clubs, once again makes its bow and offers Brooklyn and its many supporters out-of-town, on Long Island and in the State of New Jersey its annual spring affair. Titled the May-Pole Prom, the dance is booked for the beautiful Brooklyn Palace, Rockaway avenue and Fulton street and will headline the music of Teddy Wilson and his orchestra with lovely Jean Eldridge. The red-letter date is Saturday evening, May 4th.

Fifty clubs will be represented with twenty-five boys and the same number of girls from each organization. Hostesses are to be the Hi-Art S. C., and the Square Girls. Guests will be the Encantadas S. C.; Happy Group and Royal Sports S. C. Tommy Watkins, Amsterdam News columnist, will emcee.

It has been some time since the former star of the Benny Goodman organization has brought his own outfit to these stamping-grounds. The last time Wilson came to Brooklyn—in the days of the good old Bedford Ballroom—he attracted some two thousand people, or a capacity crowd. Axim expects the same sort of turnout this season.

Officers of the Axim Club are Cain Young, promoter and former manager of the Bedford Ballroom, president; Thomas Lawrence, vice-president; Donald Sanford, recording secretary and treasurer; William Etheridge, corresponding secretary; William Talbert, financial secretary and James Sanford, business manager.



Brooklyn is set to attend Axim's Maypole Prom at Brooklyn Palace with Teddy Wilson (pictured above) and his boys. Axim expects a full house and from indications at present, they'll not be disappointed. The date of the affair is Saturday, May 4.

*The New York Age 4/27/40*

The Bedford Ballroom

## DEBS ABOUT TOWN HAVE FINE AFFAIR

Fashionable Youngsters  
Out In Force For  
Benefit Dance

The Bedford Ballroom last Friday night was a scene of festivity and merriment among the most select of Brooklyn's youngsters when the Debs About Town, a popular and exclusive group of girls, presented their benefit dance to raise funds to aid the Home for Aged Colored People.

The appreciation of those present rose to the greatest peak when Joe Jeffers presented the well-known maestro, Noble Sissle, who acted quite efficiently as master of ceremonies. The second presentation was an agreeable surprise in the person of John Henry Lewis.

The Smith brothers, formerly associated with Fats Waller, did a hot dance routine, followed by the Lang sisters, who treated the audience to some fast stepping. This group was formerly connected with Louis Armstrong. Then Lena Horne, a member of the club and a former Brooklynite, now an attraction with Sissle's orchestra, sang "If You Were Mine" to the seemingly unanimous approval of the house. She was ravishingly beautiful in a white linen ensemble.

*The New York Age 6/16/36*

## TO APPEAR IN BOROUGH



LOUIS METCALFE, favorite swing leader, who is in charge of the sensational revue which will mark the opening of Sunday Nite Dances at the popular Bedford Ballroom on Sunday, November 1. Among others to appear are Valda, Chicago dancer, Dickie Wells Revue, Billy Holiday, and Kenny Watts and his Kilowatts. (Other pictures on page 8.)



## **Bedford Ballroom To Have Gala Day**

**Louis Metcalf And His  
Orchestra Are The  
Main Features**

Announcement comes from Cain Young, genial manager of the Bedford Ballroom, of the gala opening of the Sunday Dances at the Bedford Ballroom which met with such enthusiastic response last season. The dances will get under way on Sunday, November 1, when group of top-notchers in the entertainment world will appear. Louie Metcalf and his orchestra plus Kenny Watts and his Kilowatts. Also appearing on the bill is the entire revue from Dickie Wells.

What Mr. Young terms the fastest floor show in Harlem has as its principals Ethel Fray, leading lady of Dickie Wells Revue, Valda Hatten, the sensational Chicago fan dancer, who is now appearing at the Ubangi Club, and Billy Holiday, the latest recording artist, who made "These Foolish Things," a favorite.

Mr. Young expects to make November 1st a red letter day.

**The New York Age 10/31/36**

## Axim Club Has Another Of Its Famous Dances

Entertaining a record crowd of more than two thousand dance-lovers, the Axim Club of Brooklyn gave another of its famed affairs at the beautiful Bedford Ballroom on Saturday evening. Entertaining were Chick Webb, his incomparable orchestra and Ella Fitzgerald, torch-singer unparalleled.

*The New York Age 5/8/37*

Don't Be Left	—	Line Forms To Right
:—:—:	W H E N	:—:—:
<b>THE FOUR ESQUIRES</b>		
PRESENT		
<b>THEIR FIRST SUMMER SPORT DANCE</b>		
FEATURING		
<b>ERSKINE HAWKINS</b>		
and his BAMA STATE COLLEGIANS		
(Direct From The Harlem Uprear House)		
<b>SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 4th, 1937</b>		
at the <b>BEDFORD BALLROOM</b>		1153 Atlantic Avenue Cor. Bedford, Bklyn.
ADMISSION	—	60 CENTS
LUCKY NUMBER DRAWING	—	VALUABLE PRIZES AWARDED

*The New York Age 7/3/37*

## BETA PRESENTS EDGAR HAYES

Realizing that Brooklynites have turned strictly cosmopolitan in their musical tastes, the Beta Boys of Brooklyn, prominent younger social club of the borough, will score aces high when they present their Second Annual



EDGAR HAYES

Dance at the Bedford Ballroom on Friday evening, November 26, featuring the high-class swing aggregation of Edgar Hayes.

Tops in dance! presented by clubs of their class, was the affair presented by Beta Seniors last season at the Bedford Ballroom, at which time the swing affair played up a popularity Ace of Clubs contest, participated in by most of the outstanding clubs of Brooklyn. Ever since their last affair the public has evidenced a growing desire to see Beta swing

out with another swank dance of its type. The popularity of the club as individual members and as a group, plus the stellar attraction which will be the main feature of the evening, the evening of November 26th promises to be a red-letter date in the history of local clubdom.

Officers and members of the Beta Seniors are Daniel Carney, president; Thomas Schell, vice president; Charles Lawrence, secretary-treasurer; also Charles Mitchell, Reuben Rutledge, Chester Johnson, Herbert White, Edward Edghill, Alfred Bowers, Chester Yearwood and Alfred A. Duckett.

### CORRECTION

Inadvertent misinformation caused The New York Age, in a recent issue, to state that the funeral services of the late Anthony Bagley, world renowned traveler and author, were held from the Shepshead Bay Bapt. Church. Correct report should have been that the services were held from the picturesque Bagley home in Shepshead Bay.

### CHURCH MAKING PROGRESS

The Goodwill Baptist Church, Stuyvesant avenue and Bainbridge street, is experiencing a period of rejuvenation and, under direction of its pastor, the Rev. Chapman, the church now boasts a group of energetic and hardworking men prominent among whom is Joseph Warner, real estate operator. After the very inspiring sermon of Rev. Chapman delivered on Sunday last, we look forward to great things from Goodwill.

**THE COUNT HIMSELF**

Pictured above is the Count himself—Count Basie who will be the Ruler of Riff for the ever-so-popular Bedford 400 Club when they swing out at Bedford on this Sunday evening. Billy Holiday will also be present to make you forget all your troubles. Gangs of Brooklynites will be on hand.

***The New York Age 11/27/37***

**Advertisement misspelling names of both Billie Holiday and Jimmy Rushing:**

**Club Dance Here Will  
Feature Count Basie**

Announcement came last week from Marie Leach and Alfred Foster, president of the Club El Quince and Club Caledonia, respectively, that plans are being perfected for the joint dance to be sponsored by the two organizations on the evening of Friday, June 3rd, featuring the inimitable Sultan of Swing, Count Basie, his orchestra, Warbler Billy Holiday and Torrid Torch Billy Rushing. The affair is scheduled for the Bedford Ballroom, Bedford and Atlantic avenue, Brooklyn.

***The New York Age 5/21/38***



## Ball To Be Given By Sportsmen In Honor Of Joe Louis



As JOE LOUIS rooters all over the country writhed in impatience and anxiety for the big evening when the Brown Bomber defends his world championship title against the assault of Max Schmeling, the Sportsmen Club of Brooklyn made final arrangements for a gala CHAMPIONSHIP BALL to be held at the Bedford Ballroom, Bedford and Atlantic avenues, Brooklyn, on the evening of Wednesday, June 22nd. Featuring the music of Freddie Williams and his stellar orchestra, the dance will also have the unique feature of a broadcast of the fight right from the ballroom floor through a complete and clear broadcast system. Officers of the Sportsmen Club are: Bernard C. Freeman, president; Jesse L. Vann, vice-president; Clarence Sherman, treasurer and Alfred A. Duckett, secretary. The dance is slated to begin at 9 o'clock with continuous dancing until three, except for the short fight broadcast during which hundreds of Brooklyn fans will hear the Brown Bomber knock Der Moxie loose from his dental work.

**Arcadia Hall**

**Picture displaying the size of the Dance Floor. Reportedly Four Thousand people attended this event.**



***Brooklyn Daily Eagle 2/4/14***

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## Monte Carlo Boys Score At First Breakfast Dance

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Approximately 1,500 celebrated Christmas morn at the Monte Carlo Boys "Le Danse Du Matin" a mammoth breakfast dance given at the Arcadia Ballroom Christmas eve night. It was the first of its kind in Brooklyn. The dancers began to arrive in large numbers at an early hour, and by 3 a. m. Christmas morn the dance was in full swing.

Gus Carrington and his aggregation started the battle of jazz ago-ing and righ behind his heels the dashing Louie Metcalf and his boys and the featured band, Luis Russell and his Ole Man River crew starring Sonny Woods and Rex Stewart, alternated.

The entertainment included a song and dance number by little Evelyn Howard, also a song selection by James Evans. Three clubs were introduced, the Blue Eagle Girls of Manhattan, Whoo-pee Girls and the York Club of Manhattan. This was followed by the usual club waltz. Winners of the popularity contest were Regina Brooks, Rose Barns, and Glos-sie Fields. Fred Layne is the president of the Monte Carlo Boys.

Eric von Wilkinson acted as master of ceremonies.

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***The New York Age 1/5/35***

**Duke Ellington at Arcadia Hall-It is unknown whether this dance took place, but Ellington could have surely filled up the 3000 person-plus capacity Ballroom.**

evening at Lucille Saulter's Eastern Parkway chateau??....George Miller, president of the Twelve Oases, is rushing plans to feature Duke Ellington and his band at the Arcadia Hall this fall....Wonder

***The New York Age 9/7/35***

### **Bedford-Stuyvesant Jazz Club Clippings**

**Announcement that Farmer John is converting his produce stand into a restaurant**

is very much married at the present time . . . Farmer John is turning his Bedford-Fulton watermelon mint into a restaurant . . . SCOOP: A

***New York Amsterdam News 10/13/45***

## The Arlington Inn-Carlton Avenue YMCA Benefit

**AT ARLINGTON INN TONIGHT (THURSDAY)**

# Sarah Vaughan Heads Lists Of Stars for AGE-Y Benefit

The New York Age's first community betterment project, the monster all-night benefit show for the Carlton Avenue Branch YMCA is set for tonight (Thursday, Dec. 16) at Frank Krulik's beautiful and spacious Arlington Inn, Fulton St. at Arlington Place, where a galaxy of Harlem, Broadway and Hollywood stars will donate their talents in a dazzling night of fun and hilarity. All proceeds go to the Carlton Ave. Branch YMCA's fund-raising drive.

Heading the list of in person stars is the sultry-voiced Sarah Vaughan, most talked-about singer of the day, Miss Vaughan, who is currently appearing at the Paramount Theatre, told Dan Burley she was making the benefit a "must" on her program and her publicity agent, likeable Jim McCarthy, said he would leave no stones unturned in assuring a big night of frolicking by rounding up many of the famous stars of radio, records and night-clubs who are under his publicity banner.

### OTHER STARS

Kitty Murray, "Rochester's Girl Friend" and one of the foremost comedienne in the business, told Dan Burley when he visited her at Bop City over the weekend that she and Curley Hammer, with whom she shares the spotlight in Lionel Hampton's great revue at Bop City, would bring "everybody whose got legs to walk on. You

know, Dan," she said, "I'll never forget you for you're the guy who made most of our big names in your wonderful writeups and contacts you made for us. You tell those folks over in Brooklyn that all they need to do is be there because we're going to put on a show they'll never forget."

Sammy Price, "professor of the boogie woogie piano," now starring at the Club Riviera, is bringing Art Hodes and others in his show there which is headed by the great Ann Lewis, blues singer. Baby Gonzales and his 3 Bips and a Bop will be there. The great team Slim and Sweets as will Freddy and Flox. Jo Safted, the girl with the velvet voice, Frances Kreckling, Lucky Millinder, Hal Jackson of WLJB, Willie Bryant of WHOM, Trash Gordon of WWRL and Bill Cooke of WAAT, top Negro radio disc jockeys, are all on the ball for this cause and before the night

is over at the Arlington Inn, the patrons will have seen the greatest show outside a movie musical as the stars make things great in Brooklyn.

**Special  
CHRISTMAS  
Trade-In Intro  
OFF**

**The New York Age 12/15/49**

## Town Hill Grand Opening with Cecil Payne, Duke Jordan, Percy Heath

### SWANKY TOWN HILL

Sunday, April 18, marks the Grand Opening of Brooklyn's Town Hill Restaurant and Lounge on Eastern Parkway and Bedford Ave.

. . . The opening celebration will take place every day until May 1.

. . . Among the many sponsors of this gala occasion are the Penna-Zetas, The Comus Club, Friends of the Little School, The Brooklyn Business and Professional Women's Club, Paragon Progressive Assn., Herman Robbins, Jesse Vann and the Bedford-Stuyvesant Real Estate Board, The Q Ives (Omega Wives), Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Lambda Kappa Mu and Mu Chapter, Gerald Duckert, Brooklyn and Long Island Lawyers' Wives, Marjorie Costa and Herbert T. Miller.

During the two weeks of the celebration, dinner will be served every day from 2 p. m. on . . . Also, after May 1, except on Mondays.

. . . Mrs. Doris Kellar will be the official hostess for the popular occasion.

Among the many entertainers will be Freddie and Flo, Don Gordon and his serenaders, featuring Duke Jordan, piano; Percy Heath, bass and Cecil Payne, horn. Also, Charlie Brannum and Myra Johnston.

Mrs. Florence Mills was hostess to the Mu To Or Music Group last Sunday night . . . They are busy making plans for Music Week.

. . . Watch paper for details . . .

New York Amsterdam News 4/17/54

Dinah Washington at the Kingston Lounge for the second engagement in a month's time



***The New York Amsterdam News 4/10/48***

### **Kingston Lounge installs Organ**



***New York Amsterdam News 12/11/48***

### **Kingston Lounge with Ram Ramirez as House Organist**

**Kingston Lounge**  
 Kingston Ave., cor. Bergen St.  
 Presenting Nightly  
**RAM RAMIREZ**  
 A Dynamic Personality at the  
 Hammond Organ  
 Steaks - Chops - Barbecue  
 Our Specialities  
 Jam Session Every Monday Night  
 Guest Artist  
 PR. 2-9752

*New York Amsterdam News 11/8/52*

**Club La Caille Advertisement with Harold Cumberbatch, Al Harewood, and Lloyd Mayers**

**Club LaCaille** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**LOUNGE** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**U** 588 Gates Ave. ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**B** At Thompson Hotel ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 The Only Spot of Lively ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 Brooklyn - Come See! ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 No Cover Charge ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 Dining - Dancing ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 Richard Carroll, Mgr ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 Hubert LaCaille, Prop ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 ★

FRIDAY - SAT - SUN  
 Sept. 5, 10 and 11  
 The One & Only  
**HAROLD CUMBERBATCH**  
 The King of the Baritone  
 A Alto Sax  
 With His Trio  
 Al Harewood, Drums  
 Lloyd Mayers, Piano

*New York Amsterdam News 9/10/55*

## Ruth Brown at the Second Round Robin, held at the Jefferson Bar

### Ruth Brown Sparks B'klyn Round Robin Number 2



**RUTH MAKES THE ROUNDS:** Ruth Brown, the glamorous new First Lady of Song, was the honored guest at the second edition of the Larry Douglas - New York Age Round Robin, staged at Jack Ratner's Jefferson Bar last Wednesday night. At left, the pert, little vocal find is shown greeting a few of the many admirers who beset her on the scene as Sepia Arts instructor Sarah Morehead and Isaac Royal (former Billie Holiday accompanist) look on. Center photo shows a few of the well-wishers who greeted La Brown. Left to right are Lylie Moss, Georgia Spencer (Round Robin official hostess), Jean Pradla, Dick Simon, owner of Turbo Village of Round Robin fame; Mrs. LaVerne Simon, glamorous wife of the wellknown host; and that dashing young man of wealth, Cain Young, owner of the \$90,000 Kingston Lounge at which the Nov. 23 Round Robin will be held. At far right, Ruth Brown gives the act that was made famous by her in song, "So Long" she says as she departs with Blanche Calloway, her manager, and Miss Morehead.

—Photos by Turpin

**The New York Age 11/19/49**

## Harlem Round Robin's Begin

### Round Robin to Invade Harlem on December 6th

Folk in Manhattan—Harlem especially—had always boasted that they had everything that Brooklyn had besides the Brooklyn Bridge and the Dodgers until the New Age Brooklyn Round Robin entertainment series began. Then and only then — did Brooklyn "have it" on Harlem.

Did the people of Harlem take it laying down?—They did NOT! —They started an avalanche of letters and calls to the Age offices. And now, Harlem is to get its own New Age Round Robin series be-

ginning on Tuesday, Dec. 6 when Doc Wheeler of stage and screen presents the first New Age Round Robin at Lawson Bowman's swank Melody Room on the Hill near the Polo Grounds.

The Round Robin series is a new

mode of entertainment in these days when the bar and grill business is reaching a new low in attractiveness. Through the New Age Round Robins — and only through the New Age Round Robins—has the public been able to guarantee itself one weekly sure-fire night of enthusiastic good fellowship, top-flight entertainment and down-to-earth good time.

**Brooklyn Mother Is Slain in Try To Aid Husband**

**Charge Bartender**

***The New York Age 12/3/49***

**Mr. And Mrs. Herb Abramson, owners of Atlantic Records at  
Sumner Lounge Round Robin**



**RECORDING HEADS HAIL ROBIN:** At least two top-flight recording companies were well represented at the recent Round Robin held at the Sumner Lounge. Among those present were, left to right above: Bob Lindey, Sagram Distillers' energetic representative with Lee Mogid of National Records and Mr. and Mrs. Herb Abramson, owners of Atlantic Records who started Ruth Brown on the road to fame.—Photo by Dave Turpin.

*The New York Age 12/10/49*



**A GOOD TIME:** A very good time was had by all at the recent Round Robin session held at Hugh Lovall's Lucky Spot Wednesday night a couple of weeks ago. Among those who had the time of their lives were, left to right: June Hardy, Larry Douglas, the Robin organizer; sultry Savannah Churchill; AGE columnist Bill Chase; and Juanita Hardy, runner-up in the 1949 edition of the Press Photog's contest.—Lido Studio Photo.

*The New York Age 12/3/49*



## Jimmy Lunceford vs. Billy Eckstine Dance at 13<sup>th</sup> Armory

### Over 6,000 Dancers Throng To Boro NAACP 13th Armory Dance

It was as if a dream had come true last Saturday night when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People staged its annual benefit dance at the 13th Regiment Armory, Sumner and Putnam Aves., Brooklyn. When negotiations for the affair were started and Ike McFowler booked the bands of Jimmie Lunceford and Billy Eckstine to furnish the music, there was some doubt as to whether or not the venture would be profitable after expenses were deducted.

At midnight the Fire Department ordered ticket booths closed due to the fact that the crowd, already present, was so great. It was a near impossibility to handle the massed throng that sought to sway to the strains of two big name bands. More than 1,000 people are reported to have been turned away while at least 5,000 jammed inside to listen to the music.

Such an account bears out the fact that if you give a boroughite

something for his or her money you will not have to worry about being let down. Credit is due the N.A.A.C.P. for accepting McFowler's advice and hiring such formidable aggregations as Lunceford's and Eckstine's. Results of the past extravaganza are sure to inspire the success of the next venture.

The co-operation of the many entertainers and club owners who

*Continued on Page 16*

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***The New York Amsterdam News 1/12/46***

**106<sup>th</sup> Armory Dance with Harold Singer, Dinah Washington,**

**Jimmie Lunceford Orch, Rudy Williams, The Ravens**



**BLOWS FOR BIG BORO DANCE BILL**—Harold "Cornbread" Singer, sensational sax star (above), along with the Ravens, Dinah Washington, the Jimmy Lunceford all star aggregation and sax blowing Joe Thomas will headline a monster dance Sat., Feb. 26 at the 106th Armory in Brooklyn. Sharing in the proceeds from the gala Saturday night event will be the Brooklyn Branch of the NAACP, the Carlton YMCA and the Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Center.

**The New York Amsterdam News 2/26/49**

**Putnam Central Club with "Kenny Watts and his Killowatts"**

## **PUTNAM CENTRAL CLUB INC.**

65 Putnam Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Brooklyn's outstanding membership club wishes to thank its many friends and members for their patronage in 1946.

### **"SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT"**

*Starting Monday January 6, 1947*

### **KENNY WATTS and his KILLOHWATTS**

Featuring: Kenny Watts, piano, just closed a successful engagement at The "Baby Grand" Harlem, with the top singer of today Billy Daniel.

Wilbur Dozier, tenor sax, formerly with Mercer Ellington and His Band; Franklin Skeet, bass, the rave of the street, (52 Street); Hayward Jackson, drums, He was another addition to that fine band of Mercer Ellington.

### **—Saturday and Sunday Show Nites—**

Two Shows Nightly 11:30 and 1:30. Plus Musical Entertainment By

### **KENNY WATTS and his KILLOHWATTS**

**DINING — DANCING — BOWLING**

**EDDIE (HAWK) JOHNSON, Emcee**

**JOHN PARROS and OSMOND DEANE, Managers.**

*The New York Amsterdam News 1/4/47*

**Putnam Central with Bill "Bojangles" Robinson Memorial**

**Nursery Benefit Dance**

## Stuyford Nursery In 'Bojangles' Memory Planned

A free day nursery to be built as a memorial to the late Bill (Bojangles) Robinson is being planned by civic leaders in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area.

More than 650 persons attended a dance and entertainment sponsored by the Committee of the Bill (Bojangles) Robinson Memorial Free Day Nursery held yesterday at the Putnam Central Club, 65 Putnam Ave.

The committee, headed by Noble Sissle and Fred W. Eversley, is set to raise \$150,000 for a general building fund. In addition to a nursery for 50 children, the proposed structure will house a play area, a guidance center and a score of rooms to be used as housing for young single women.

Zone and special committees to be led by prominent figures in the sports and entertainment worlds are being discussed, according to Mr. Eversley, as a means of organizing the fund drive. Among those backing the memorial group are Representative Eugene J. Keogh, Municipal Court Justice Daniel Gutman, Mrs. Elaine Robinson, widow of "Bojangles," Mrs. Maude R. Richardson and Mr. Wilbert P. Blanche.

Music and entertainment for the dance last night were provided by Chie Morrison's orchestra, Wilbert Kirk and the Harlem Harmonicats. Noble Sissle, Billy Banks and other stars from Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe.

***The New York Amsterdam News 3/27/50***

**Putnam Central growing in popularity, moving the concert featuring the celebrity guest musicians to Thursday Nights:**

The accent this week is on two clubs which are fast becoming the jazz centers of Brooklyn: the **PUTNAM CENTRAL CLUB** and Tony's Club Grandean. This Friday at the Putnam you can see one of the coolest trumpet players in the business today in the person of **HOWARD MARGHEE** and a group of all-stars who will make you understand why it is being called one of the jazz centers. **MINGUS** and **PABROS** are making plans to hold the session on Thursday nights where you can hear it each and every week instead of Fridays because of the club being booked on most of the nights. A good turn.

*The New York Amsterdam News 2/10/45*

Max Roach leaves for California, turning over the Putnam Central sessions to Charlie Mingus – beginning of the Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet

**MAX ROACH** who just closed the **Band Box** is headed for California for three months. He has turned over the sessions that are held at the **PUTNAM CENTRAL** each Friday night to **CHARLIE MINGUS** to carry on until his return. The sessions will start again this week with **SPAULDING GIVENS** on the beat as usual.

*The New York Amsterdam News 9/12/53*

**Turbo Village begins "Celebrity Night"**

## Celebrity Nites To Tee Off Dec. 12th

Due to the huge success of the New Age Wednesday night Round Robins in Brooklyn, Brooklynites have awakened to the fact that night life is not dead in the borough and that Brooklyn—indeed—is the best little old borough on that side of the Brooklyn Bridge.

In keeping with this startling awakening, Brooklynites have demanded more weekly entertainment and for that reason Larry Douglas, A G E columnist and boro representative will launch a Celebrity Night to be staged at the beautiful Turbo Village getting underway Monday night, Dec. 12.



**SAVANNAH**

To be featured on the first Celebrity Night set to at Turbo Village

is sultry Savannah Churchill, who sparked a recent New Age Round Robin event. In addition to Savannah, other features on the initial event will be Duke Williams, Bill Greaves, tenor man Wardell Gray, Jimmie Breedlove and others. The Celebrity Night event is intended to tide the boro over until each Wednesday night when ever-changing lineups of stars are on hand for the sensational Round Robins.

***The New York Amsterdam News 10/12/49***

**The Coronet with the George Scott Quintet, who replaced Freddie Cole and his Trio in October 1959**



BROOKLYN'S NEWEST AND MOST TALKED ABOUT PLACE  
THE FABULOUSLY SWANK  
**CLUB CORONET**  
1200 FULTON ST. ST 2-8804  
PRESENTING ENTERTAINMENT NITELY  
BOSTON'S SENSATIONAL  
**GEO. SCOTT QUARTET**



Special Attention For  
PARTIES — RECEPTION — COCKTAIL ZIPS  
Serving the finest of Steaks — Chops — Sea Foods  
in our celebrated air conditioned Gold Room

*The New York Amsterdam News 10/31/59*

**The Coronet Jazz Festival 1965**



## **Jazz Festival For Brooklyn At Coronet**

A Summer Jazz Festival has been launched at Brooklyn's new Club Coronet, 1200 Fulton St.

Featured the week of June 22-27 is the multi-talented sax man Roland Kir. On June 29 to July 6 for two weeks is Max Roach. Again for two weeks, July 13-25 is Yusef Lateef and from July 27 to Aug. 1, organist Shirley Scott and Stanley Turrentine will be featured.

Jazz parties are featured every Sunday afternoon with Monday night set aside for jam sessions. James Lowe is producing the shows.

*The New York Amsterdam News 6/26/65*

The Blue Coronet with Richard "Groove" Holmes followed by the Horace Silver Quintet 1969

**GREAT  
JAZZ . . . . .**

**RICHARD  
"GROOVE"  
HOLMES**

*at the Organ . . . . .*

Opening Tues. June 10th  
HORACE SILVER quintet



**the BLUE CORONET**  
**1200 Fulton St. (nr. Bedford Ave.)**  
**Brooklyn, N.Y. • 789-4474**

*The New York Amsterdam News 6/7/69*

## Miles Davis Shot after playing at the Blue Coronet, October 1969

### Extortion Threats Figure In Miles Davis Shooting

Trumpet star Miles Davis, 42, who can be a pretty tough customer in an encounter, indicated he might have been shot for refusing to knuckle under to extortion threats four days earlier from an unidentified caller who demanded he give up part of his earnings to appear at Brooklyn's Blue **Coronet** Club. In any event, Davis, in a bizarre tale reminiscent of gangland controlled Chicago in the early 1920s, told police he finished his show early that day and drove Marguerite Eskridge, 24, to her home in East Village. He said he was sitting in the car when another auto carrying three men (black cats) drove up. One of the would-be assassins got out, Davis said, while two others crouched low in the seat. The lone man fired five or six shots point blank at him with a .25 calibre pistol but the heavy steel doors of the foreign-import Ferrari sports car deflected all but one. The three men fled in the car, and Davis was treated and released at Columbus Hospital for a slight hip wound. Miss Eskridge was not hurt. Davis was later booked on charges of narcotics possession when a small bit of marijuana was found in the car. The charges were later dropped. An assistant district attorney said the car had been driven from California recently and it could not be proved when or where the marijuana had been put in the car.



*M. Davis*

***Jet Magazine 10/23/69***

**Blue Coronet Jazz Festival 1981**

## Blue Coronet Jazz Festival

The Blue Coronet, the very famous jazz club located in the heart of the Bedford Stuyvesant community, is announcing the kick off of its 1981 summer jazz festival. This famous house of jazz has continually for the past fifteen years featured the finest names in modern jazz music.

This summer, Richard Habersham-Bey, the young and equally popular entrepreneur responsible for this steady diet of Black cultural music, is opening the Festival with Sonny Stitt, the renowned saxophonist extraordinaire.

Sonny Stitt cut his eye teeth in the streets of Harlem many years ago. Among the jazz giants that Sonny learned with during those fast moving days are: Charlie Yard Bird Parker, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Curly Russell, Max Roach and other great, great jazz musicians. He will be entertaining from Tuesday, April 21 to Sunday, April 27. Shows begin at 10 o'clock in the evening and continue until the wee hours of the morning.

Following Stitt, the club will be featuring Ms. Irene Reed and company, on Friday, April 24, to Sunday, April 26. This show will be



**SONNY STITT**

repeated on the following weekend on Friday, May 1, to Sunday, May 3.

The incomparable Lonnie Youngblood and his entourage arrive on Friday, May 8, to Sunday, May 10, and return again the next weekend on Friday, May 15, to Sunday, May 17.

Closing out the month of May will be the master organist Jimmy McGriff. Jimmy will provide his usual brand of jazz and fun on Friday, May 22, to Sunday, May 31.

***The New York Amsterdam News 4/25/81***

**Kenny Dorham playing at La Marchal**

Henry Le Tang . . . **Kenny Dorham** has formed a new quintet which is making its debut four nights a week at the Club Lamarchal in Brooklyn. **Kenny** continues to work at his day job of salesman for a Manhattan musical instruments store . . . Gloria Lynne got a \$20,000 bonus for sign-

**Jet Magazine 1/31/63**

**Black Panthers Benefit organized by Cal Massey**

## **Panthers Benefit Planned**

Cal Massey, a veteran jazz musician-composer, is getting together some of the best known artists for a benefit concert for the Black Black Panthers legal defense fund not only in New York but throughout the country.

Massey, who has produced numerous benefits in his career, said he is writing a suite, "Newton Movement" for the concert scheduled Feb. 22, and Alice Coltrane, widow of John, will be featured on harp. The concert will be held at 1310 Atlantic Ave., a child care center.

Among the top musicians already lined up for the 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. concert-show are Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, Archie Shepp, Leon Thomas, Pharoah Sanders, Joe Lee Wilson.

Teenage talent will do the first part of the concert, said Massey, a trumpet player, who returned to his home in Brooklyn just recently after a tour of Europe and Africa with the Shepp band.

Massey said an original



**CAL MASSEY**

composition of his called "Quiet Dawn" was given to Duke Ellington whom he met in Paris last November. The Duke, he said, asked him to do the piece and another original.

"Cry of My People", his latest composition is scheduled to be released next month by Lee Morgan on the Blue Note label, Massey said.

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**The New York Amsterdam News 1/31/70**

**Jazz Concert at the Cocp Club 1970**

<b>HERBIE HANCOCK</b> SEXTET	<b>LEE. MORGAN</b> QUINTET
LAST POETS <b>CHARLES DAVIS</b> QUINTET	
<b>KENNY DORHAM</b> TRUMPET	<b>SONIA HAMILTON, VOCALIST</b>
SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 1970      8 P.M. Until	
<b>At THE C.O.C.P. CLUB</b>	
681 Fulton Street, Downtown Brooklyn, N.Y. Corner of Ashland Place, 3 Blocks East of Flatbush Extension	
<b>DONATION \$4.00</b>	For Information Call: <b>467-2702</b>

*The New York Amsterdam News 6/13/70*

**Gems Paradise Club w/Sarah McLawler, Richard Otto, and Joe**

**Medley**

THE NEW	
<b>GEMS PARADISE CLUB</b>	
Presents Lovely <b>SARAH McLAWLER</b>	
<b>RICHARD OTTO and JOE MEDLEY</b>	
In	
<b>4 Shows Nightly</b>	
Starting Friday, December 20th through January 1, 1958	
For Reservations Call Vivian Williams, Hostess      PR 3-8830	
260 Kingston Ave.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
(between St. John's and Lincoln Pl. one block east of parkway)	
George Mason, Mgr.	Sybil Gray, Prop.

*The New York Amsterdam News 12/21/57*



**Dance at the Labor Lyceum in Bushwick with Charlie Ventura,  
Jackie & Roy, and the X-Rays**

**JOE BOSTIC**  
presents  
**Monster Battle of JAZZ & DANCE**  
**THIS SUNDAY NIGHT, MARCH 6**  
From 8 P. M. to 1 P. M.  
**LABOR LYCEUM HALL**  
Myrtle & Willoughby Avenues, at Stuyvesant  
**TWO GREAT RECORD STARS IN PERSON !!**  
**CHARLIE VENTURA and BAND**  
with  
**JACKIE CAINES — ROY KRAL**  
with  
**THE X-RAYS COMBO**  
with Milt Larkin  
Positively! Only appearance of VENTURA in B'klyn this season.  
— **TICKETS — \$1.65 at door     \$1.25 in advance**  
**TICKETS ON SALE**  
BROOKLYN AMSTERDAM NEWS ..... 1440 Fulton St.  
SIEGEL'S RECORD SHOP ..... 1329 Fulton St.  
EAGLE OUTFITTERS ..... 1329 Fulton St.  
LADY'S LITTON ..... 513 Willoughby St.  
Admission on Labor Lyceum — Myrtle Ave. and Broadway — 10 Myrtle Ave.  
Doors open 7:30 p.m. Tickets sold from 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. and 10 p.m.

***The New York Amsterdam News 3/5/49***

**Leonard Feather begins Bop concerts at Soldier Meyer's-1949**

Hall. . . . Musicman Al Postal and wife celebrating 18th anniversary, and his 23d in the trade. . . . Leonard Feather moves his bop session tomorrow to Soldier Meyer's in Brownsville. . . . TV's Johnny Stearns says some bobby-soxers have turned to, following the Arts—Shaw, Mooney and Godfrey.

***The New York Amsterdam News 10/13/49***

**Soldier Meyer's article advertising Jackie & Roy, and also stating names of future performers**

## **Soldier-Meyers**

Brooklyn's gay night Club SOLDIER-MEYERS, located at 451 Sutter Ave., in the Brownsville sector (where Symphony Sid goes every Sunday afternoon) is presenting Leonard Feather (WMGM Disc Jockey) in a series of Bop Concerts. SOLDIER-MEYERS features such names as, Mike Davis, Fats Navarro, Wardell Gray, Stan Getz and such Brooklyn names as, Max Roach, Terry Gibbs, J. J. Johnson, Ernie Henry, Sonny Stitt and many more. This week SOLDIER-MEYER will feature straight from Bop City, Jackie Cain and Roy Krall. Real kicks will take place at SOLDIER-MEYERS, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Mention my name (Larry Douglas) for special care.

NY Amsterdam News 11/19/49



## Appendices

### **Appendix I – Jazz at the Philharmonic Concerts held at The Brooklyn Academy of Music:**

Nov. 13, 1946-Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, Buck Clayton, Charles  
Drayton, Jackie Mill, Kenny Kersey, Illinois Jacquet, Trummy Young,  
Helen Humes, Rex Stewart.

February 4, 1947-BAM

Wednesday September 24, 1947-Illinois Jacquet, Flip Phillips, Coleman  
Hawkins, Howard McGhee, Bill Harris, Hank Jones, Ray Brown, Helen  
Humes- BAM

Wednesday March 30, 1949-Flip Phillips, Coleman Hawkins, Shelly  
Manne, Fats Navarro, Tommy Turk, Sonny Criss, Ray Brown, Hank  
Jones, Ella Fitzgerald

September 18, 1951-Ella Fitzgerald, Gene Krupa, Illinois Jacquet, Flip Phillips, Lester Young, Roy Eldridge, Bill Harris, Ray Brown, Hank Jones and "Canadian Pianist" Oscar Peterson.

September 18, 1952-Ella Fitzgerald, Flip Phillips, Buddy Rich, Lester Young, Roy Eldridge, Charlie Shavers, Ray Brown, Hank Jones, Barney Kessel, The Gene Krupa Trio, The Oscar Peterson Trio-BAM

1954- European Tour- February 1954

1955- 4<sup>th</sup> European Tour-February 1954

Possibly Late September 1955

**Appendix Ia–Listing of the number of times that a Jazz at the Philharmonic Tour either began or ended in Carnegie Hall or at BAM, resulting in two New York City dates in close proximity**

Second Tour – Second To Last Date@Carnegie Hall

End of Third Tour – 11/13/46 BAM – **1<sup>st</sup> time**

Beginning of Fourth Tour – 2/6/47

End of Fourth Tour – Carnegie Hall Possibly several weeks May 1947 –

May 24, day after Billie Holiday bust in Philadelphia and subsequent

escape to NYC, performed at Carnegie Hall JATP on intermission from

gig at Club 18 (Formerly the Onyx Club) on 52<sup>nd</sup> street-**2<sup>nd</sup> Time**

Beginning of Fifth Tour – BAM 9/24/47

End of Fifth Tour? – Carnegie Hall 11/29/47 **3<sup>rd</sup> time**

1948- Scheduled European Tour cancelled 1948;reason for sporadic

bookings on Beginning of Seventh Tour-Carnegie Hall 11/6/48

Beginning of 8<sup>th</sup> Tour-Carnegie Hall 2/11/49-Ella Fitzgerald's first JATP

End of 8<sup>th</sup> Tour-BAM 3/30/49 **4<sup>th</sup> time**

During 16<sup>th</sup> National Tour- Late September 1955, after 2<sup>nd</sup> date at

Carnegie Hall on 9/17/55 –**5<sup>th</sup> time**

**Appendix II – Names of Dance Bands which played Bedford-Stuyvesant Social Club dances and other functions:**

**\* = Brooklyn Based Band**

Clarence Berry and his Orchestra\* (Ray Abrams Band)

Joe Alston and his Orchestra\*

Kenneth Hollon and his Rhythmaires\*

Charlie Skeete's Orchestra\*

Buddy Riser and his Harlequins\*

Mac Boyce and his Rhythm Aces-Arthur Herbert played drums in the mid 30's (Brooklyn-see clipping)\*

Fess Gittens and His Phanphanalians\*

Marty Middleton and his Orchestra\*

Leon Williams and his crew of Pirateers\*

Bill World and His Orchestra\*

Arthur Herbert and his Rhythm Masters\*

Steve Pulliam and His Manhattan Sextet\*

Tommy Hamilton and his Broadway Ramblers/Renaissance Orchestra

Hy Clark and his Entertainers/Hy Clark and His Missourians

Willie Bryant and his NBC Orchestra

Cora LaRedd and her Red Peppers

A.G. Prince and His Radio Orchestra

Bernie Brown's Augmented Orchestra

Gus Carrington and His Orchestra(Or His Night Hawks)-  
Manhattan Syncopators Orchestra

Ed Bonelli's Lido Society Orchestra (Lido was a Manhattan Ballroom)

Ted Eastmond and His Original Prince Orchestra

Cito Chapman and his Twelve Medians (Or his Social Pledge Orchestra)

Evans Thompson's Orchestra

Bobby Miller and his Masters of Swing

Freddie Liscombe and His Saratoga Club Orchestra (or His  
Congo/Kongo Knights-Saratoga Club was a Manhattan Club)

Carl Wylie and his Saratoga Congo Horn Blowers (Manhattan-Saratoga  
Club)

Leon Williams and his crew of Pirateers

Johnny Peeler and his Orchestra

Claude Barnes and his Ten Pennies

Clowning Brownie and his Orchestra

Shifty Harris and his Orchestra

Al Johnson and his Orchestra

William Scott and His Orchestra

Fitz Morris and his Irving Club Orchestra

Charlie Johnson and His Smalls Paradise Orchestra

Louis Metcalf and His Orchestra

Reggie Johnson's Saratoga Club Orchestra

Claude Hopkins Orchestra

Dave Martin and his Club Ubangi Orchestra

George Boyce and his Melody Syncopators(Possibly Mac Boyce)

Jimmy Smith and his Savoy Night Hawks

Harvey Williams and His Ramblers

Joe Gordon and His Orchestra

Buddy Walker and his Orchestra (Possibly Brooklyn)

Joe Gordo's Orchestra (Possibly Brooklyn)

Ozzie Brown and his Harlem Heat Waves

J. Cordy Williams and his Arabian Nights

W.M. Rennix and his Monarch Melodians

Vernon Andrade's and his Orchestra

### **Appendix III - Names of Bedford-Stuyvesant Social Clubs: (126 Clubs)**

Mystic Knights of the Sea



Square Deal  
Les Dames de L'Heure  
Stardust Gurls  
One Minute to One Girls  
Brooklyn Aces  
Monte Carlo Boys  
Tau Alpha Tau  
Pyramids  
Twenty-Nines  
Beta Boys  
Entre Nous Bridge Club  
Twelve Oases  
Club Entente  
Aristocrats  
Axim Social Club  
Royal Twelve  
Royal Ten  
Royal Twenties  
Loyal Eight  
Blue Rhythm Girls  
Mayfair Bridge Club  
Rosebud Bridge Club  
Big Sisters Club  
Debutantes

Sub Debutantes

Aristocratic Girls

Club Charmante

Juanita Co-Ed Social Club

Club Supreme

Gay Senioritas

Ideal Associates

Doric Society Girls

Zeta Ithna Pala

Brooklyn Clef Club

Heartbreaking Girls

Melody Boys

Aldolians Club

La Tours

Krusaders

Minute Boys

Ideal Boys

Nine O’Clock Club

Ultra Exclusive

Doric Girls

Beaux Arts

Club Rio

The Elite of Brooklyn

Nine-O-Ettes

The Rainbow Joymakers

Guardsmen

Los Toros

Ritz Club

Kings Club of Brooklyn

The Alton Arrows

Monte Carlo Boys

The Tigers Social and Athletic Club

Zeta Juniors

Blue Flame Girls

Club Sartoris

Semper Firmi

Whoopee Girls

Heart Breakers

Jack 'O Hearts

Jonquil Girls

The Lucky 15

Merrymakers

Musketeers

Swagger Debs

Avelene Jr. Sorority

Viking Social Club

Superba Girls

Jevon Social Club

Silver Leaf

Arrowettes

Hampton Club of Brooklyn

Tide Water Boys

Harmony Hitters

Irrestible High Hatters

Les Pierrettes

Monarch Social Club

Modernistic Debutantes

Queen of Hearts

Edmonian Social Club

Individualist Social Club

La Tour Social Club

Laissez Faire Social Club

Avalene Social Club

Club 120

The Half Moon Maidens

Claver Girls

Claver Boys

One Minute to One

La Majestic

Melody Sorority

Seven O' Hearts

Sleepy Timers

Royal Horseshoe

Monarch Boys

Amity Girls

Golden Link

Monte Carlo Clique

El Paso Girls

Senana Girls

Buffalo Steppers

Unique Circle

Brooklyn Turf Club

Oriental Debutantes

Harlem Ace

Tuxedo 400

Jack of Heats

Personality Queen

Minute Boys

Mid Winter Social Club

Blue Bells

Colony Club

La Bonita Pals

Club Topaz

Arisco Girls

Wee Wull Club

Just Tures

The Big Four

The Paramounts

Fideles Club

Monte Cello Social Club

Oronto Girls