

QUARTER NOTES

MRP

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSIC REVITALIZATION PROJECT, INC.

JAN/FEB/MAR 2004 VOL 5-ISSUE 1

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year to all our readers! The dead of winter seems to be a time when most of us hunker down in the warmth of our homes and only go out when necessary, preferring to wait it out until the frigid air is just a memory.

Well you can heat things up with the sounds of Jazz. This issue of QuarterNotes highlights this "hot music genre."

And, there is a special event coming up in February that will be worth venturing out for. That event is the annual Attleboro Music Parents' Association benefit concert on February 8. It's a wonderfully entertaining event that highlights the musical talents of the Attleboro High School chorus and jazz ensembles, and features special guests, the Meadow-Larks. Read on in this issue of QuarterNotes for a bio of the Meadow-Larks and how they have contributed to the success of this fundraiser over the years.

It's a great way to spend a winter afternoon and help support the school music programs in Attleboro. See you there!



Dave Rolince

Dave Rolince, Pres. MRP

SCHOLARSHIP TIME!

It will be spring before you know it and that means time to apply for financial scholarships. Once again the MRP will be awarding a \$200 Scholarship to a graduating High School Senior who will be pursuing a college degree in a music related field. Requirements are based on school transcript, letter of recommendation, and a short essay. Scholarship applications will be mailed out to area school guidance and music departments within the coming months or you can call 508-223-5597 and we will send you an application directly. Applications for the scholarship must be postmarked by the deadline of May 31, 2004.

MRP Scholarship Committee

THINK 'MRP' FOR YOUR 2004 CHARITABLE PLANNING!

It's the beginning of a new year and soon you will be inundated with charity requests. Why not plan now on making a tax deductible donation to the MRP! This gives you the benefit of a tax deduction, and helps the MRP continue its work to provide scholarships to music students, purchase music for schools and organizations that lack the financial resources, and sponsor music events in your community that are both educational and entertaining.

THANK YOU

MUSICIANS THROUGH THE CENTURIES:

"Martin Luther King, Jr. of Music": JAMES REESE EUROPE (1881-1919)

Perhaps most astounding of all is the record of this man who, at the very height of success in the white world, expended most of his energies on bettering conditions for black musicians, leaving Eubie Blake to recall him as "the Martin Luther King, Jr., of music." James Reese Europe was one of several notable black composers/musicians that have made an impact on musical styles and racial strife. He is credited with bringing ragtime out of the bordellos and juke joints into mainstream society and elevating Afro-American music into an accepted art form.

Jim Europe was born in 1881 in a small log cabin in Alabama. His parents were both musicians, including his brother and sister. When Jim was 9 yrs. old, his family moved to Washington, D.C. - only a few houses down from John Phillip Sousa. Sousa being the grand master of marches and conductor of the US Marine Band, implemented a music program with the youth of the local black community. It was from Jim's music education with Sousa's top violinist/asst. Conductor, Enrico Hurlei, that Europe learned the violin and piano. A music-writing competition resulted in Europe receiving 2nd place, bested only by his sister, Mary.

At 22, Europe moved to New York and began playing piano in a cabaret. It is known that George Gershwin at a young age of 7 was seen sitting outside of Baron Wilkin's nightclub for hours listening to Europe play.

He helped found an Afro-American fraternity called "the Frogs" and was the musical director of several musical theatre minstrel shows. Around 1910 he founded one of the most unusual African-American organizations of the time, *The Clef Club*. It was unique in that it was part fraternal organization and

part union. Europe became its first president as well as conductor of its symphony orchestra which appeared at Carnegie Hall for the first time on May 2, 1912, and returned by popular demand in 1913 and 1914. Made up of several musicians on a rotating basis the *Clef Club Orchestra* boasted 150 musicians.

Although it has been said that not everyone who was on stage could play an instrument. Some were taught just enough chords to get them through the performance, while others were simply holding instruments with rubber strings.

Music exposure through these concerts gained their respectability among white society, and resulted in many performances of the most elite functions in NY and London. At one of these functions, Europe met Irene and Vernon Castle, famous dancers of the time, and they decided to make him their

band leader. The Castle's famous "fox trot" was conceived under Europe's direction.

The *Clef Club* served as the agent for many entertainers, receiving salaries, transportation expenses, room, board, and was involved in improving the entertainers' working conditions.

Introducing the saxophone to his band, which was mainly a novelty joke in musical acts, gave the instrument status as a respectable jazz instrument for the first time.

At the start of WWI, Europe enlisted as a private in the army, and after passing the officer's exam (the first black to do so), he was asked to form a military band as part of the combat unit. He was given anything he wanted to form this band, "the Harlem Hellfighters." The Harlem Hellfighters would serve 191 days in combat, longer than any other US unit, and reputedly never relinquished an inch of ground, hence their name. It was here that Europe made impact with the "jazz germ," with "jazz spasms" and "ragtime-itis," spreading everywhere they went. Throughout the war, Europe's band was in demand, and he continued to write songs even after being hospitalized



MUSIC REVITALIZATION PROJECT, INC.

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The MRP QUARTER NOTES Newsletter is a quarterly publication. Contributions are welcome by writing to: MRP, P.O. Box 709, Norton, MA, 02766. Articles included are at the discretion of the editor as space allows.

1/25 RI Chamber Wind Orchestra - 3pm
2/8 Meadow-Larks All Jazz Concerts - 1pm
2/11, 3/4 AHS Band Concerts - 7pm
3/6 Attleboro H.S. Auditorium
3/8, 9 All East Music Conference, Providence
3/15 SEMSBA Festival Concerts
3/15 76th NE Music Festival Concerts-2, 7pm
Waterford H.S., Waterford, Ct

Youth Music Festivals are playing everywhere. Hear live music at its best from local talented kids that won seats to play in the many prestigious concert band festivals held this year. Check them out:

COMMUNITY CALENDAR:

We are in the final stages of being internet ready. There are many fine features about the MRP and music in general that will be accessible from your computer right from your home. Stay tuned for the grand unveiling.

WEBSITE STATUS

Under the direction of Dan Ferreira, the Meadow-Larks play a wide variety of musical styles including hits from the Big Band Swing Era, Pop, Rock, Jazz, & Contemporary hits for easy listening & dancing pleasure.

Many of the Meadow-Lark musicians have performed with the famous big bands such as Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Dick Jurgens, Buddy Morrow, Blue Baron, Victor Lombardo, and well known artists: Bob Hope, Robert Goulet, Wayne Newton, & Ray Conniff. The talent of these musicians coupled with an extensive musical library of songs form the swing era to today's hits, always provides top notch entertainment pleasing audiences of all ages.

A variety of song titles spotlighting the specific talents of the individual musicians and featuring the instruments from various of the band enables listeners to remember great performances of the past. The excitement generated when witnessing someone mastering a favorite instrument, or hearing a live performance of an all time standard being re-created heightens the audience experience.

If you have music to donate, even if parts are missing-our goal is to complete the piece and make it available to any organization wanting to play it. The MRP also has a budget to purchase new scores for any organization that is having financial difficulty buying music for themselves.

Just contact Doreen at 508-226-6897 if you want to request information, donate or borrow music.

There's nothing better than the experience of hearing them live and in concert.

MUSIC LENDING LIBRARY

The MRP Music Lending Library now has several titles on its shelves for borrowing. Many area organizations such as the East Bay Wind Ensemble, Metropolitan Wind Symphony, S.E. Massachusetts Wind

Attleboro Youth Summer Band have taken advantage of this unique lending system. Music often becomes permanently out of print after the first run. It is the MRP's goal to preserve some of that music by purchasing a piece of music and loaning it to organizations interested in playing it well after it becomes obsolete. The library is free for any music organization to borrow.

Reading about Jim Europe's jazz influences, make a note on your calendars for Sun, Feb. 8, at 1pm, for the 6th Benefit Concert of The Meadow-Larks for the AHS music department. Also performing are the music jazz ensembles of Attleboro High School.

In early 1919, Europe's band returned triumphantly with a ticker-tape parade to NY, and soon began a tour of American cities.

The final concert on the tour was at Mechanics Hall in Boston on May 9, 1919.

Ironically, Europe survived being shot at and gassed in the trenches of WWI, only to die at the hands of one of his own men. It is not precisely known why, but it is said, one of Europe's "percussionist twins," Herbert Wright, was angered by either Europe's strict direction or jealousy of his twin's favoritism by Europe, during a rehearsal/interruption.

Wright attacked the bandleader in full view of witnesses, stabbing Europe in the neck with a pen knife. Musician Noble Sissle recalled: "Jim wrestled Herbert to the ground, I seemed superficial, they couldn't stop the trembling child. Although Jim's wound shook Herbert and he seemed like a crazed, bleeding, and as he was rushed to the hospital he said to me: 'Sissle, don't forget to have the band down at the State House at 9 am. I am going to the hospital to have my wound dressed... I leave everything for you to carry on.' Europe's jugular vein had been severed. The next day the papers carried the headlines: "The Jazz King is Dead."

Sissle's partner Eubie Blake later said of Europe, "He was our benefactor and inspiration, even more, he was the Martin Luther King, Jr., of music."

AND ALL THAT JAZZ: THE MEADOW-LARKS

- Doreen Velmer

After one performance, a French band leader asked for one of his arrangements so his band could play this American Jazz. The next day, he questioned Europe because his bands' version did not sound like the original. Europe listened to them play and tried to explain how the jazz effect was accomplished. The puzzled Frenchman later inspected Europe's instruments claiming the Sun, Feb. 8, at 1pm, for the 6th Benefit Concert of The Meadow-Larks for the AHS music department. Also performing are the music jazz ensembles of Attleboro High School.

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