

## Milhaud & the French Jazz Musicians

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### Darius Milhaud and Jazz

Milhaud's name is well known in classical music circles. He was a member of *Les Six* a French group of very influential composers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Milhaud was one of the most prolific composers of the century. But his acceptance of American jazz elements in his music may not be as well known. The best example of his use of jazz elements can be seen in his jazz ballet *La Creation du monde* written in 1923.

During the 1920s jazz was evolving into an art music and while it was having a hard time being accepted as such in America, in Europe it was recognized as something new and valuable to European composers, especially in France, and especially with Milhaud. It was written that "M. Darius Milhaud with his *Caramel mou, Shimmy pour Jazz-Band (clarinette, trombone, trompette, jazz, chant on saxophone on violon a defaut, et piano)*, is out for something new and vital, for folk-music in the making, not for museum pieces and ancient parlor tricks. ...It is good to see Jazz recognized in Europe as something more than the barbarism committed in its name, while we who should be proud of having originated it. Let misanthropic joy-killers spoil our party. ...but save and cherish Jazz for what is best in it." (This appears in an issue of the *Musical Quarterly* in 1922.)

Milhaud came to America in 1923 and in an article in the January 4, 1923 *Musical Leader* he remarked about American Jazz. Within the article asked the question about "how could American avoid the influence of the countries of the old world inasmuch as we were all descended from European forbears. Milhaud answered this in a most unexpected manner:

"The influence lies much deeper than the blood of the older countries. It is that thing which is of the soil and which even now is so powerful that it has crossed the sea and pervaded the whole of France. That is your "*Jazz Band*." France was tired of that filmy, indefinite atmospheric, melting thing. It was ready for something with the strong pulse of the present day. The jazz band came. It struck us in the face like a cold fresh stream of something we needed to freshen up life. Oh, be sure, the jazz band is doing mighty work. Certainly I do not mean that its banality, its vulgarity must come with it – Chopin has shown what could be done with a simple waltz, a polonaise, a mazurka. Also remember what Schubert did with the waltz and what others have done with the polka. See what Debussy did with the "*Cake walk*"; in fact, there are so many examples that I do not even have to go back to the day that Dvorak came to America to find the Negro themes for his "*New World*," and what your American "*Rag-time* has done is also history."

The writer contended that Europe might use the jazz band influence but that if Americans did it, they would call down upon their heads no end of abuse of press and public.

"He is not fit for this life," answered Milhaud calmly, "who cannot stand abuse and go along his way. Nothing great can afford shackles, the shackles of public opinion, the fear of the press, fear of oneself, flight! Freedom! Life! Light - that is the creed of Art."

Once more reverting to the influence of the composers of one period upon the next, Milhaud offered a most original idea in stating that Debussy had exerted little influence, but that Rameau, the fountain-head which logically produced Debussy, had influenced others who traveled along somewhat the same lines. "Debussy could not be imitated," he said, "because Debussy was perfection in his form and would not even imitate or repeat himself. It is a mistake to suppose that the "*Six*" was under this influence, for its day was already run...."

Milhaud was a champion of the American jazz style and while in America often talked about jazz. In the March, 1923 *Musical Observer* we find Milhaud

speaking of jazz in an article entitled “Jazz, Says Darius Milhaud, is the Most Significant Thing in Music Today.” Below is this article:

“We wish we could be present, if Darius Milhaud ever gets into an argument with any of the anti-jazz fraternity who feel that the country is going to the dogs, musically, because of jazz. Mr. Milhaud is one of the foremost composers of the new French school. We hear so much of the French influence on modern American composition that it is interesting to learn, from Mr. Milhaud, that American music is having a tremendous influence on the contemporary French school. But, lest our musical vanity suffer undue inflation, let it be understood at once that it is jazz which the Frenchman says is the most significant thing in music today. “Jazz interests us tremendously.” Says Mr. Milhaud. “We are fascinated and intrigued by the jazz rhythms and are devoting serious study to it. There are new elements of clarity and rhythmic power which were a real shock to us when we heard jazz for the first time. It was in 1919, immediately after the war, that the first jazz band was heard in Paris. To use it was a musical event of genuine import. Music had long been under the domination of the Impressionist School. Poetry was the predominating element. Jazz came to us as a good shock - like a cold shower when you have been half asleep with ennui. It roused us electrically. All the young artists went every night to hear it played. {illegible} dance a la mode in their epochs. Chopin was inspired by the Mazurka, Bach by the Sarabande – always we find great composers responding to the traditions of the times. Why should we not look upon our present day dances as the source of inspiration for our new music?”

“The jazz instruments and rhythms and melodic combinations should lend themselves remarkably to chamber music. My jazz sonata will have the orthodox three movements – allegro, andante and finale. We are all very enthusiastic over this American music. All the melodies of the Blues are so well defined and melody is the prime essential in music.

“When I was studying composition, the students would always bring those enormous symphonic works to class. The master would say, ‘I should like you to write eight bars that could be played without accompaniment.’ That is the real secret of music. All that lies above and below is merely technic. It is necessary to have the technic as rich and complicated as possible. But if there aren’t eight measures you can sing without accompaniment, it is useless to have the most marvelous technic; for you will not have made music.

**“I think the American composer will evolve something typically American and vital if he will turn his ear to the jazz inspiration, using that for his tradition and basis. Of course he will have to transform it – to mold it into the form he wishes. But I believe that will be the starting point for a new American school of music.”**

**It is unfortunate that Mr. Milhaud’s visit is so brief, but he has engagements in Denmark and Belgium which will not permit him to prolong his stay beyond four or five weeks. However, his plans included many important engagements, at all of which he presented new works of the French school – many of them for the first time in America – some still in Manuscript for the first time anywhere. Some of them are his own compositions. He also lectured at several of the great Eastern universities – Harvard, Princeton, Vassar – and before music clubs such as the Bohemians and the MacDowell Club....”**

**Gilbert Seldes in his article “Toujours Jazz” in the August 23,1923 Dial Magazine mentions the importance of syncopation in jazz and Milhaud’s use of it and polytonic and atonic harmonies. He states:**

**“It is syncopation, too, which has so liberated jazz from normal polyphony, from perfect chords, that Mr. Darius Milhaud is led to expect from jazz a full use of polytonic and atonic harmonies; he notes that in *Kitten on the Keys* there exists already a chord of the perfect major and the perfect minor. The reason why syncopation lies behind all this is that it is fundamentally an anticipation or a suspension in one instrument (or in the bass) of what is going to happen in another (the treble); and the movement in which a note occurs prematurely or in retard is, frequently, a moment of discord on the strong beat. A dissonance sets in which may or may not be resolved later. The regular use of syncopation therefore destroyed the fallacy (as I hold it) of the perfect ear; and this is one reason why Americans are often readier to listen to modern music than peoples who haven’t got used to dissonance in their folk and popular music.”**

***In the same article we read that “Mr. Milhaud has told me that the jazz band at the Hotel Brunswick in Boston is one of the best he heard in America.”***

**Milhaud was not the only prominent composer to be influenced by jazz. Others are mentioned in an article by J. Bernoist-Mechin in the February 21,**

1924 Musical Courier in an article entitled "Jazz Band." He states that jazz "sweeps away all our traditions in the outburst of its youth, in its release of rhythms. Stravinsky, Auric, Milhaud, Poulenc, Satie, Hindemith have undergone its initial influences, and those influences are discoverable, though in a hidden fashion, in work as different as Renard's *Eumenides* and *The Creation of the World*....The arrival of jazz in Europe is an event in the history of music."

In the February 1924 issue of the Musical Digest mentions jazz's influence on Milhaud and Stravinsky's use of jazz in some of their works:

"...thousands of young men of today are writing original music, stimulated by arranging other men's music. They have no training or traditions to hamper or color their work. Uninfluenced by any school, they work out their ideas, compose in the spirit of the times, and are developing a real American school of music.

It is time we recognized these composers. For some years, Europe who ignored our music in the classic tradition, has been questioning and searching out or jazz. It is the basis of some of the best work of Milhaud and Stravinsky."

*Gilbert Seldes in the July 19, 1924 issue of Musical America writes about the influence of jazz in Europe and of the first jazz concerts:*

"As far as it is known, the first jazz concert in the world was given in Paris several years ago, under the direction of the brilliant young French musician, Jean Wiener. The first one in America was played by Paul Whiteman in Aeolian Hall on Feb. 12 of this year (1924). The delay in America was due solely to that unhappy familiarity which breeds contempt. Although musicians in Europe had for years been praising American popular music, although Darius Milhaud had been studying jazz orchestration and Stravinsky had written a rag-time. Americans knew the material too well to be impressed by it. It never occurred to anyone that our popular music, our syncopated dance tunes, and our jazz orchestras had musical interest."

*Perhaps one of the most interesting, informative and important articles is penned by Darius Milhaud. It appears in the October 18, 1924 issue of Living Age. (M. Milhaud is a member of 'The Six,' a reasonably famous group of young*

*French composers who lead the modernist van. He writes of American music with authority, having but recently completed a tour of the United States during which he lectured at Harvard University. The conservative will find his article very like his music – infuriating but interesting.)*

"It was in 1918 that the jazz band was brought across the ocean from New York by Baby Deslys and Pilcer of the Casino de Paris. It came almost like a cart of terror, like a sudden awakening, this shattering storm of rhythm, these tone elements never previously combined and now let loose upon us all at once.

We were quick to catch its salient characteristics, among which the following are worth mentioning: (a) The employment of syncopation in rhythm and melody, which, against its background of dull regularity, is quite as fundamental as the circulation of the blood, the beat of the heart, or the pulse; (b) The introduction of percussion instruments – by which I mean the grouping of all percussion instruments together in a simplified orchestration which makes them like a single instrument so perfect that when "Buddy," the drummer of the syncopated Orchestra, plays a percussion solo we think we are hearing a deliberate rhythmic composition, so varied is the expression. This effect is to be explained by the variety of the tone color in the percussion instruments that he plays simultaneously; (c) The new instrumental techniques – that is, the employment of the piano with dryness and precision just as the drum and banjo are used; (d) The increased importance of the saxophone and the trombone, whose glissandos are becoming a favorite effect, and to which, as well as to the trumpet, even the most delicate melodies are by preference entrusted; (e) The copious use of mutes for both these instruments, the use of the portamento, the employment of the vibrato, whether on pedals, stops, or mouthpiece; (f) The clarinet has so shrill a tone and so much strength, making possible so many runs and tone changes, that it disconcerts our best players. Hence the introduction of the banjo, which has a harder, more stimulating, and sonorous tone than the harp or the pizzicati of a quartette; (g) Last of all, here is a whole special technique of the violin, sharply played, employing the broadest of vibratos and the very slowest of glissandos.

The strength of the jazz band lies in the thoroughgoing novelty of its technique. So far as rhythm is concerned, the constant employment of syncopation has forced us to recognize the fact that this music can be produced with the simplest means and needs no rich or varied array of instruments. During 1920 or 1921 one could get an idea of the most perfect jazz-music only

by hearing Jean Wiener at the piano and Vance Lowry on the saxophone or banjo at the Gaya Bar in the Rue Duphot, playing the purest, most authentic jazz with a bare minimum of instruments.

So far as orchestration is concerned, the employment of the instruments that I have described above and the extreme refinement of their special technique have naturally made possible an extraordinary range of expression. To be in a position to judge, one must hear a serious jazz band of genuine musicians who practice together regularly like one of our good string quartettes and who bring their orchestration, as Irving Berlin does, to absolute perfection. There were, however, inferior jazz bands who turned their tones upside down, who lacked technique, and who entrusted their percussion instruments to untrained and tasteless players, hoping to obtain the same results by using false elements such as motor-horns, sirens, rattles, and so forth. Yet it is amazing how quickly these unaccustomed instruments fell out of fashion and were relegated to the lumber-room – even the water-whistle, which has an agreeable sound midway between the human voice and the flute.

It is necessary to hear a serious jazz band such as Billy Arnold's or Paul Whiteman's. There nothing is left to chance, everything is balance and proportion, revealing the touch of the true musician, perfect master of all the possibilities of every instrument. One must hear a soiree by the Billy Arnold band in the Casino at Cannes or Deauville. Sometimes four saxophones are leading, sometimes the violin, the clarinet, the trumpet, or the trombone. Or again one may hear an infinite variety of instrumental combinations, uniting one after another with the piano and the percussion instruments, each with an expression peculiar to itself.

Since we first heard jazz in Europe, a distinct evolution has taken place. In the beginning it was a veritable cataract of tone. Then we began to appreciate once more the value of the melodic element. Then came the period of 'blues,' very simple melodies – bare so to speak – which were carried by a clear sharp rhythm, with percussion instruments scarcely noticeable, almost intimate. Then came the transition from the almost mechanical effects like the Paul Whiteman's steel percussion at the Palais Royal in New York, and then the fine, almost elusive, almost too gripping tones of the jazz at the Hotel Brunswick in Boston.

In jazz the North Americans have really found expression in an art form that suits them thoroughly, and their great jazz bands achieve a perfection that places them next our most famous symphony orchestras like that of the

conservatoire or our modern orchestras of wind instruments and our quartettes – the Capet Quartette, for instance, which is our very best.

They have brought us absolutely new elements of tone and rhythm of which they are perfect masters. But these jazz bands have hitherto been used only for dancing, and the music written for them has not got beyond ragtime, the foxtrot, and the shimmy. It was a mistake to adapt pieces of music already famous – ranging from Tosca's prayer to *Peer Gynt* or Grechanivov's *Berceuse* – making use of their melodic elements as dance themes. This is an error of taste, as bad in its way as the employment of motor-sirens with percussion instruments.

These magnificent orchestras need a concert repertoire. Thanks to Jean Wiener we were able to hear Billy Arnold's jazz band on December 6, 1921, in the Salle des Agriculteurs. It was fitting that these wonderful musicians should be heard in a concert. Not only a jazz repertoire, but also chamber music should be written for these orchestras in order to utilize their possibilities to the full. The influence of these American dances has brought us here in Paris the "Steamboat Ragtime," in Eric Satie's *Parade*, and George Auric's *Adieu New York*. Here is a case where the symphony orchestra discourses ragtime and foxtrot. In the *Piano Rag Music* of Igor Stravinsky we have a piano piece which employs the rhythmic elements of ragtime in a concert piece. Jean Wiener in his *Sonatine Syncopee* provides a piece of chamber music which owes its origin to various elements of jazz although it retains the sonata form. This is a great step forward. Instrumental chamber-music and concert sonatas still remain to be written for the jazz band, especially for those instruments which jazz ordinarily brings together.

In harmony, too, there is a marked development for, though originally the jazz-band repertoire was of dance music alone, today it is following the same curve as the rest of contemporary harmony. The succession of dominant sevenths and ninths which so greatly surprised the year 1900 is now being used in the most recent fashionable dances, for example in 'Ivy' and in 'Jimmy Johnson'. There can be no doubt that in a few years polytonal and atonal harmonies will prevail in the dances that will follow the shimmies of 1920. Today we find minor and major chords side by side, as for example in Zez Confrey's *Kitten on the Keys*.

In the United States there is a whole series of theoretical and technical works dealing with jazz, works on the use of the trombone with illustration of the most effective glissandos and the best way of employing them, and others



for the saxophone and the clarinet with all their new technical possibilities in jazz. New York has a school, the Winn School of Popular Music, which has published three methods of playing folk music, ragtime, jazz, and blues, - theoretically of the greatest interest – in which all the special elements of this music are worked out with logical perfection. These studies are extraordinarily valuable, not only as regards technique but also in improvisation and the methods of composition that give this music its special character. I mean, for example, such devices as arpeggios, trills, runs, broken chords, omissions, dissonances, embellishments, ornaments, variations, and cadenzas, which are introduced ad libitum at the end of the parts of various instruments, but in such a way that the rhythmic regularity of the whole does not suffer. Side by side with this music – which, thanks to its careful composition and the absolutely unified and machinelike precision of its ensemble, is a little mechanical – another kind has developed. This, however, springs from the same source. I mean the music of the American Negro.

There can be no doubt that the origin of jazz music is to be sought among the Negroes. Primitive African qualities have kept their place deep in the nature of the American Negro and it is here that we find the origin of the tremendous rhythmic force as well as the expressive melodies born of inspiration which oppressed races alone can produce. The Negro spirituals were the first published Negro music. The religious songs of the slaves, very ancient popular folk-motives, were collected and written down by Henry Burleigh. These songs produce an impression not greatly different from the melody in the 'blues' whose form is the work of Handy. I am thinking of the *St. Louis Blues* and the *aunt Hagar's children Blues*. There is the same tenderness, the same melancholy, the same faith that filled the slaves who compared the sorrow of their lives to the Egyptian captivity of the Jews and longed with all their souls for a Moses to save them (*Go Down, Moses*).

Aside from dance music, whose improvisation gives it a kind of expressiveness and life to be found only among the Negroes, jazz has been employed in the theatre with the happiest results. There are operettas of exquisite musicality like *Shuffle Along*, by Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake, or *Liza*, by Maceo Pinkard, in which singers, chorus, and dancers are accompanied by a jazz orchestra. The orchestra of *Liza* consists of a flute, a clarinet, two trumpets, a trombone, the percussion instruments, - played by a single player – a piano, a string quartette – in which the viola is replaced by a saxophone – and a contrabass. As a matter of fact the technical elements have been much less

changed by the Negroes. In the jazz of the whites everything has been worked out to perfection and studied in the most thorough way. Among the Negroes there is far more improvisation. But what tremendous musical gifts and what power of performances are necessary to bring improvisation to such a pitch of perfection! In their technique they possess great freedom and facility. Each instrument follows its natural melodic line and improvises even while it adheres to the harmonic framework which underlies and supports the piece as a whole. We find this music perpetually employing a rich and confusing interweaving of elements. It uses major and minor chords together with quarter tones, which are produced by a combination of glissando and vibrato technique – an exaggeration of the trombone tones, as well as vigorous vibration of the trumpet pistons and strange uses of the fingers on the violin strings.

The quarter tone has an expressiveness which can be compared with nothing else, fits into diatonic harmony quite as well as the chromatic, and may be regarded as a transition tone in the diatonic scale. It has no relation whatever to the system of quarter tones being studied at present in Central Europe, which is based on a doubling of the twelve notes of the scale, and belongs to the realm of atonal harmony.

Moreover, among the Negroes we get free from the mundane character which the jazz of the White Americans ordinarily possesses. Among the Negroes the dance retains its wild African character. The penetrating intensity of rhythm and melody becomes tragic and despairing. In some little dance-hall – as for example the ‘Capitol’ at the end of Lenox Avenue, near 140<sup>th</sup> Street – one can often hear a Negro girl singing the same melody for an hour at a time – a melody which is often shrill, but quite as perfect as any of the beautiful classic recitatives, - supported by a jazz orchestra which supplies a background of constantly changing melodies. The variations are so numerous that they attain the richness and breadth of a symphony. Here we are far away from the elegant dances of Broadway which we may hear in the Hotel Claridge. Here we are at the first sources of this music, with its deep human content which is about to create as complete a revolution as any of the masterpieces now universally recognized.”

*J. A. Rogers in his article of March 1, 1925 entitled “Jazz At Home” he speaks of the influence of jazz on the French modernists:*

**“And thus it has come about that serious modernistic music and musicians, most notably and avowedly in the work of the French modernists Auric, Satie and Darius Milhaud, have become the confessed debtors of American Negro jazz. With the same nonchalance and impudence with which it left the levee and the dive to stride like an upstart conqueror, almost overnight, into the grand salon, jazz now begins its conquest of musical Parnassus.”**

***In the Harvard Graduate Magazine of March 1925 in an article entitled “Jazz” by Edward Burlingame Hall, he cites the attention paid to jazz by some distinguished composers:***

**“At present, jazz has not only invaded European dance halls, it has also commanded the attention of distinguished composers. Milhaud, Auric, Stravinsky, Casella and Ravel have all felt its appeal.”**

***It is pointed out in Anthony Clyne’s article in the August 1925 Sackbut that “composers like Stravinsky, Milhaud, Debussy, Ravel and others have written rag-time or jazz is not so significant of the potentialities as the gradual development of what may be called the main stream of jazz music, the evolution of, so to speak, genuine jazz composers.”***

***Clyne has made a good point and soon it would be heeded by composers. But, still it is the acceptance of jazz as a serious element in musical composition that leads the way. In Modern Music, in the November/December issue Darius Milhaud authors another article entitled “The Day After Tomorrow.”***

**“The tide of music ebbs, flows, turns, and swells again with a swiftness which disconcerts the hearer, always slow to accept a new idea. Instead of taking advantage of the flood, he watches it ebb without seeing it, and at the moment when it is spent and about to disappear, he wishes to halt it and keep it forever fixed. He who listens to music should, above all others, be indulgent and open-minded rather than rebellious, for in the end he will probably be wrong anyhow.**

**Our beloved Satie serves as an example, for all his life this man was ready to welcome the newest manifestations in our music. Young people starting to compose always received support and encouragement from him. Why demand**

that a youth of fifteen have the technique of a university professor? We should, instead, be patient until he can develop his gifts, and support him during the long period of groping and of doubt while he feels out a number of paths before choosing the road to follow deliberately.

Since the day when the Six made their debut with Satie as their idol, French music has passed through many different phases, has reacted to many contradictory tendencies. It has been the object of influences which have hurled themselves like a hurricane upon it, and have passed on, leaving a deep, significant mark.

In 1918 jazz arrived in our midst from New York and became the rage. A whole literature of syncopation grew up to convince a hesitant public. Strawinsky wrote his *Rag Time* for eleven instruments, his *piano Rag Music*, his *Mavra*; Wiener wrote his *Sonatine Syncopee*, his *Blues*, and almost created a great public scandal by bringing a famous jazz band into a concert hall. During the winter of 1921-1922 in America, the journalists regarded me with scorn when I made out a case for jazz. Three years later jazz band concerts are given in New York, there is talk of a jazz opera at the Metropolitan, banjo classes are organized in the conservatories. Jazz is comfortably installed with official sanction.

Here it is finished. The last works of Strawinsky owe it nothing; they return to a severe classicism and an ascetic sobriety in the *Concerto* and his *Sonate* are sure proofs of this change. The *Concerto* of Germaine Tailleferre leads back to Bach. *Les Biches* by Poulenc carries us into a vast French park, *Les Matelots* of George Auric is unhampered by the precedents of polytonal music on which he based the composition of his work *Les Facheux*.

We are dealing here with proven musicians having behind them a considerable body of work. Let us therefore follow Satie, still exploring the horizon. From behind his spectacles, with his indefinable smile he peers, forever searching, until he discovers. The young people who now approach him for an introduction to the public are the School of Arcueil, Henry Sauget, born in Bordeaux, fond of the sea, of sailors, boats, colored shells and Chopin's music, has never fallen under the spell of jazz. It is chiefly Chopin who influences him. One feels that he refreshes himself by turning over the most tender pages of Satie and Faure. His music has a playful quality, his composition is careful. He has the breeding of a Siamese cat. The stamp of his personality is especially marked in the military opera-bouffe in one act, *Le plumet du Colonel*. It may be said that this is badly orchestrated, but should one expect to find a boy of

twenty-two orchestrating pages of perfect balance in his first attempt? All the music of this score is pleasing and that in itself is rare enough.

His colleague, Maxime Jacob, is only twenty years old. When he left high school at fifteen I showed his first attempt to Satie. How great a facility, what an over-abundance of gifts! In two or three years there followed an avalanche of sonatas, piano pieces, projects for ballets, comic operas, and so on. In all this litter how many hastily written, silly compositions there were, and what severe criticisms and violent indignation they incurred. But Satie admonished us to wait. Time has already done much, for within the last two years this youth's progress has been considerable. He has an absolutely innate sense of the orchestra. At the recent premiere of an overture by him its assured and easy orchestration made a deep impression.

Jacob is a young Jew, coming from Bayonne. Occasionally, racial inspiration urges him to the composition of psalms that reveal a true emotion. But his nature and gifts lead him to write chiefly easy melodies, real melodies like those of Gounod and even Reynaldo Hahn, not to mention Theodore Botrel. His field is, I believe, in light music, operettas and songs'; he has just finished a little comic opera full of gaiety, ease and vivacity.

All this is a tomorrow about to become a today. But what of the day after tomorrow? Satie once said to me, "I wish I knew the music that the four-year-olds of today will compose." Let us not, however, be in such haste; we are getting old fast enough. Let us turn to the generation born between 1905 and 1910, who are just beginning to make themselves felt. At the premiere of his ballet *Relache*, Satie was accosted by three young men who came to express their admiration of him. They spent the evening together. One of them, Robert Caby, never left him. Shortly after this Satie fell ill, and during the long and serious sickness which he suffered, young Caby made one of the little faithful band who put themselves at his disposal and took care of him during the weeks which preceded his death at the hospital of Saint Joseph.

Caby, Dautun, and Letac are the three young men who came to seek guidance for their first steps, at Satie's side. Will the future remember their names? Their first efforts are very strange. They write absolutely atonal music, worthy of the pupils of Schoenberg, and their imaginations seem to follow the fantastic chimeras which attracted Jules Laforgue. It is an epoch that is returning? If so, then what secret need brought them close to Satie the purist, the apostle of a spare and limpid art, whose simplicity in its loveliest ornament? A disconcerting contradiction!

The very small piano pieces of Caby, his vast projects for the theatre, the timid and thoughtful art of Dautun, his curious sonatina for piano and violin, the complex schemes and special orchestration which are the goal of Letac – are these the promise of a new phase of French music? The future will tell, and more quickly than one is wont to believe."

*Milhaud authors another article entitled "Development of the Jazz Band, and North American Negro Music," found in the December 15, 1925 issue of Metronome: It contains some material already given in an earlier article but with additional information:*

"Paris in the year 1918 a Jazz-Band from New York came over and was introduced to us in the Paris Casino by Gaby Deslys and Harry Pilcer. In this regard I need not recall to mind the shock and the sudden awakening experienced, nor refer to the sound elements heretofore never assembled which were now available, nor to the importance of syncopation for rhythm and melody, based on a foundation of inexorable regularity, which is no less important to us than our blood circulation and the throb of our heart; nor to the elaboration of the drums, whereby all percussion instruments whose name figures in the known works on the art of orchestration, are simplified, arranged, and so grouped that they become, as it were, a single complex of such perfect instruments that a drum solo by Mr. Buddy (the drummer) of the syncopation orchestra, we find, is a rhythmically constructed and smoothly flowing composition, with many possibilities of change in expression, which depend on the tone color of the various instruments also played by him; I will not mention the new instrumental technic, whereby the piano takes care of the matter-of-fact expression and the precision of drum and banjo; nor the resurrection of the saxophone and trombone, whose glissandos become one of the most frequent modes of expression, and which are entrusted with the sweetest, softest melodies; nor the frequent use of sordines, reeds, vibratos of slides, valves and keys in the above mentioned instruments; nor the use of the clarinet in the higher registers, with its sturdy attack and its large volume of sound; nor the glissando and suspended tone technic, which can confuse even our most practical instrumentalists, nor of the advent of the banjo, whose tones seem to us more dry, more nervous and more sounding than those of the harp or the pizzicati of the four violins; nor of the special violin technic for sharp,

penetrating tones, which, above all, inclines to very broad vibrati and less rapid glissandos.

The strength of the Jazz Band lies in the novelty of its technic in every direction. From the viewpoint of rhythm, the study of possibilities resulting from the continued use of syncopation permits the rendition of this music with the very simplest means, without resorting to rich and varying orchestration. In the years 1920/21, it was sufficient to hear Jean Wiener at the piano and Vance Lowry with the saxophone or banjo in Duphot Street at the Gaya bar, in order to be able to fully grasp the Jazz music, which was here offered in pure, unadulterated perfection of form, with a minimum of means.

From the standpoint of orchestration the use of the various instruments enumerated above and their special technical perfection has rendered possible an unusual variety of expression. In order to form a correct opinion on this point, one must hear a serious Jazz Band of thorough musicians, who work together regularly, as is done – for instance – by one of our good string quartets, and who use an orchestration which in its way is impeccable, in the style of Irving Berlin. There have been mediocre Jazz Bands and this very fact has caused numerous errors and misunderstandings; their tonal equipment is inadequate, the instrumental technic scant and the percussion instruments were entrusted to drummers without taste, who fancied they enriched their scope by adding false elements, like automobile horns, sirens, “claxons,” etc. As a matter of fact, it is indeed noteworthy how quickly such exceptional instruments are again out of fashion and go into the discard, even when one considers, for instance, the marine signal whistle, which has a pretty tone color, after all, and is something between a signal whistle and the human voice.

However, one should hear a really sterling Jazz Band, like that of Billy Arnold or of Paul Whiteman. Here nothing is left to chance, everything is done with perfect tact and is uniformly distributed, which immediately testifies to the taste of a musician who is wonderfully familiar with the possibilities of each instrument. Just follow Billy Arnold’s playing at the Casino at Cannes or Deauville during one of his soirees. Once he is playing with four saxophones and again with violin, clarinet, trumpet, trombone – in short it is a constant change of instrumental combinations, which gradually mingle with the sound of the piano and the percussion instruments, and each of which individually taken, has sense and logic, sound effect and possibilities of expression.

Since the first Jazz Bands were heard here, their development has gone forward considerably. After this cataract of sound effects came a noticeable

emphasis on the melodic element; we are coming into the period of the "Blues." The melody is exposed, as it were, and merely supported by a clear, matter-of-fact, rhythmic outline. The percussion instruments are scarcely in evidence and grow more and more emotional. The development starts with the almost mechanical, hard-as-steel rendering by a Paul Whiteman, to the almost imperceptible and, we might say, vague and misty sound effects of the Jazz Band at the Hotel Brunswick in Boston. (Sic: The Leo Reisman Orchestra)

In the Jazz Band the North Americans have actually found a form of artistic expression that is absolutely their own, and their leading Jazz Bands attain such perfection in their performances that they are worthy to share the fame of the well-known symphonic organizations, like our conservatory concerts, or such organizations as our modern society for Wind Instruments, or, let us say, the Capet Quartet, which is our best known one.

The North Americans, therefore, have gained absolutely new sound and rhythm elements that are peculiar to them. But what possibilities are there to make use of them? So far they have used all this only in their dance music and compositions written for the Jazz Band have – up to the present – not left the domain of the ragtime, fox-trots, shimmies, and so forth. The mistake made in transcribing for Jazz orchestra is that famous compositions are used, from "Tosca's prayer" to *Peer Gynt* and the *Berceuse* by Gretchaninoff, to from dance themes based on their melodic elements, this is a mistake of the same nature as using automobile horns, etc., beside the normal percussion instruments, and is in bad taste. These wonderful orchestras lack only one thing; a regular concert repertory. Jean Wiener in his concert of December 6<sup>th</sup>, held in the Ackebau Hall, introduced to us the Jazz Band of Mr. Billy Arnold. It was no more than right and proper that these eminent musicians should be heard by us in a regular concert; but it would have been in order that they played not only their repertory of dance music, but let us hear them perform some chamber music, written in a manner adapted to their special orchestral combination. Under the influence of these American dances the rag-time *packet-boat n Parade* by Erik Satie and *Farewell to New York* by George Auric, were created. In these works we have the picture of a rag-time and a fox-trot before use in the frame of a symphony orchestra. In *piano-Rag-Music* by Igor Stravinsky we have a piano number which gives us the rhythmic element of rag in the form of a concert piece. Jean Wiener in his *Syncoated Sonatine* introduces to us a chamber music work which originates in the varied elements of jazz, but is written in sonata form. This is another step forward. It now remains to us to offer the Jazz-Orchestras



instrumental chamber music works and concert sonatas which are written for the normal instruments of the Jazz Band.”

*By 1926 the European movement to use jazz is sputtering and in the November/December issue of Modern Music (“Jazz Structure and Influence) by Aaron Copland) we read of the structure of jazz and the use of polyrhythms:*

“...The Polyrhythms of jazz are different in quality and effect not only from those of the madrigals but from all others as well. The peculiar excitement they produce by clashing two definitely and regularly marked rhythms is unprecedented in occidental music. Its polyrhythm is the real contribution of jazz.

This has not been appreciated by modern European composers although in other ways our American popular music has to some extent influenced them. In the days of ragtime, Debussy and Stravinsky, in the days of jazz, Ravel, Milhaud, Honegger, Hindemith, Jean Wiener exploited it as an exotic novelty. But with most of them it remained a novelty, a monotonous bass, a whining melody, a glissando on a trombone.....These tricks soon lost their first charm. Meanwhile, however at least one authentic small masterpiece had been inspired in Europe by America, Darius Milhaud’s *La Creation du Monde* – little know, strangely, in this country. But according to Milhaud himself, jazz is now distinctly passe in Europe and not a young composer there is interested in it any longer....”

### Billy Arnold

*Billy Arnold was born in America in 1886 and died in 1954. The Billy Arnold Jazz Band is mentioned by Milhaud as being one of the excellent jazz bands he heard. In two articles written by Milhaud he speaks of the Arnold Band:*

“The Jazz Band & Negro Music” in the October 18,1924 issue of *Living Age*:

...It is necessary to hear a serious jazz band such as Billy Arnold or Paul Whiteman. There nothing is left to chance, everything is balance and proportion, revealing the touch of the true musician, perfect masters of all the possibilities of every instrument. One must hear a soiree by the Billy Arnold Band in the Casino at Cannes or Deauville. Sometimes 4 saxes are leading, sometimes the violin, the clarinet, the trumpet or the trombone. Or again one may hear an infinite variety of instrumental combinations, uniting one after another with the piano and the percussion instruments, each with an expression peculiar to itself.”

*Development of the Jazz Band & North American Negro Music* in the December 15, 1925 issue of *Metronome*:

“...However, one should hear a really sterling Jazz Band, like that of Billy Arnold or of Paul Whiteman. Here nothing is left to chance, everything is done with perfect tact and is uniformly distributed, which immediately testifies to the taste of a musician who is wonderfully familiar with the possibilities of each instrument. Just follow Billy Arnold’s playing at the Casino at Cannes or Deauville during one of his soirees. Once he is play with four saxophones and again with violin, clarinet, trumpet, trombone – in short it is a constant change of instrumental combinations, which gradually mingle with the sound of the piano and the percussion instruments, and each of which individually taken, has sense and logic, sound effect and possibilities of expression.”

The Arnold Band did record about three times between 1920 and 1923. There are a total of 18 tracks attributed to the Arnold Band in the discography by Tom Lord.

The Arnold Band did play in England and on the continent during the band’s career. There is a picture of a Billy Arnold Band, although it may be an earlier edition of the band as only one saxophone is pictured. The personnel of the band in the picture is as follows: Leader Bill Arnold-piano, Charles F. Kleiner-trumpet, Billy Trittle-trombone, Henry Arnold-clarinet/soprano sax, Harry Johnson-alto sax, and Chris Lee-drums. The instrumentation in the picture is of a traditional jazz band, not the larger four saxophone band that Milhaud spoke of in his article. The photograph is the front of a vintage postcard. It was probably used to promote a concert organized by Jean Wiener that was given in Paris on December 6, 1921. Jean Cocteau later remarked that “Billy Arnold’s Band presented the very first Jazz Band concert in France.”

**Arnold spent his entire musical career in England and the continent. Igor Stravinsky and Darius Milhaud did hear this band as well as many others.**

**In “Jazz Away From Home” by Chris Goddard we read about the Arnold band in a narrative that is less than flattering about Arnold’s recording of *Stop It*.**

**“Recordings made by white bands at this time make very sad listening to comparison with this (Sic: a Sidney Bechet recording). One of the earliest examples was Billy Arnold’s version of *Stop It* recorded on December 13, 1922 for Columbia. It is obviously an attempt to copy the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, but with none of their dash and flair. The rhythm section of piano and drums has all the retarded momentum of a Model-T Ford being driven with the handbrake on. The sound of the front line is clogged by an alto saxophone which attempts, very inaccurately, to provide a harmony part for the cornet player, who has a tendency to play flat every time he goes above middle C. The clarinet’s tuning is even more disastrous, and his skirling phrases against the melody line must be one of the most unmusical efforts ever put on record. Only the trombone player makes a reasonable showing, but even he can do nothing to impart some swing to the corny staccato lead and the tuneless twittering of the clarinet. The personnel for this recording was Charles Kleiner (trumpet), Billy Trittle (trombone), Harry Arnold (soprano sax & clarinet), Harry Johnson (alto sax), and Chris Lee (drums). (Sic: This is the same band that is on the postcard.)**

**To be fair, it should be pointed out that when three years later Billy Arnold recorded his version of “Louisville Lou” it was much better than “Stop It.” The band is in tune, and the addition of a banjo does a lot to correct the fluttering beat of the earlier record. Even so, the opening chorus where the soprano saxophone and cornet double the lead still sounds corny even by the not very advanced standards of the day, and the trombone player does not seem to have a very clear idea of his role. He improves in the second sixteen-bar strain, where he plays what is presumably a written lead. The cornet then takes over in the restatement of the original there, and does so with a fair degree of drive and a good tone. The saxophone player dominates the final chorus and manages some well-timed breaks. However, the homophonic arrangement of the piece is generally a long way from the excitement of even the more old-fashioned black bands of the time.**

**All this is important in view of the fact that it was Billy Arnold, not Sidney Bechet, who was attracting attention in both Europe and America as an exponent of jazz."**

**Jean Wiener (mentioned by Milhaud in his articles) was a young concert pianist who, by 1920, had established a reputation as a performer of music by all the most modern composers. He recalls the Arnold Band:**

**"I was a young classical piano player who was fascinated by the music of "Les Six" – Auric, Milhaud, and the rest. I also knew Eric Satie and Stravinsky.....Anyway, for several years I gave concerts which were the first to feature this music – also Bartok's music and Prokofiev's. I was in on the beginning of Diaghilev. But what interested me most was jazz. Not the fact that a piece was called "I Love You, You Love Me," but the influence of jazz on the music of Milhaud, Stravinsky, etc. So the only important thing I could do in music was to get jazz introduced into serious music circles, and I think I had a certain success. For example, the first time I did it was with a band called Billy Arnold's Band. They were in Paris playing in a dance hall on one of the grand boulevards. Somebody told me about it and said, "You simply must go and hear these people – it's extraordinary." They were five or six Americans. So I went to hear them and I was amazed because I had only heard records, and these people were not only musicians, they were clowns and acrobats. They slid down banisters while singing songs and so on.**

**At that time, I gave concerts which were very well attended by the snobbish intellectual set. So I asked this band if they wanted to come and play at one of my concerts. They didn't properly understand at first, and asked if they should come wearing all their funny hats and such like. So I told them, "No, come in evening dress and play for about twenty minutes." They were to appear in the middle of a concert of music by Stravinsky, Milhaud and a Bach concerto. And they played five or six numbers in the middle of this.....And what was interesting about this concert, which was held in the Salle des Agriculteurs, was that you had all the musicians who were then in Paris. You had Ravel, you had Albert Roussel. These were the two great living musicians at that time. . . Albert Roussel got up and ostentatiously stalked out slamming the door behind him. Ravel, on the other hand, came up at the end and said, "How right you were to put that on. It was marvelous." That was typical of the difference between the two men." (Brian Rust's discography (Arlington House), New Rochelle, 1977**

While Milhaud was in London he found the time to make frequent trips to the Mammersmith Palais, where Billy Arnold's jazz band, recently arrived from New York, was playing to packed houses. He wrote:

"By going often to Mammersmith and sitting close to the musicians, I tried to analyze and assimilate what I heard ...Here (in contrast to the trendy sweetness of gypsy music or the crudity of the bals musettes) there was a very subtle understanding of the art of timbre; the use of the saxophone (Sic: invented by the Frenchman, Adolph Sax) destroyer of dreams of the trumpet, alternatively languorous or dramatic, of the clarinet, often high in the upper register, of the lyrical trombone bending the notes a quarter of a tone with the slide on the crescendos, all intensified the feeling. Meanwhile, the piano, together with the drums, whose complete and subtle punctuations provided an inner pulse indispensable to the life of music, held this diverse but never disjointed ensemble together. Their constant use of syncopation in the melody was done with such contrapuntal freedom as to create the impression of an almost chaotic improvisation, whereas in fact, it was something remarkably precise, requiring daily practice. I got the idea of using these rhythms and timbres in a work of chamber music, but first I needed to go more deeply into this new musical form, whose techniques still troubled me." (Ma Vie Henreuse, Darius Milhaud (Editions Belford), Paris, page 100

### Jean Wiener

Jean Wiener was born in 1896 and died in 1982. He was a conservatory-trained pianist and had known Milhaud since his childhood. This friendship enabled him to elite artistic circles in Paris and also to influence a number of avante garde composers that patronized the place that Wiener performed with a jazz group – the *Bar Gaya* after world War I. Wiener was performing there with the African-American banjoist and saxophonist Vance Lowry (also spelled Laurie in some texts). Later the group was enlarged and included trombonist Leo Vauchant. The café gained notoriety as it was the gathering place for Jean Cocteau and the group of composers known as the "Les Six" as well as Maurice Ravel. Within a year the café moved to a larger building and became *Le Boeuf sur le toit*, one of the most popular cafes of the 1920s and named after the Cocteau and Milhaud ballet of the same name.

The Parisian composers were inspired by jazz immediately following the war.. It is said that the composers valued jazz less for what it was than for what it could inspire on the European scene. Cocteau even declared that a source such as jazz was not art per se but served to “inspire an artist” much “the same way life does.” From Cocteau’s perspective, jazz represented freedom from pre-war Germanic-European values. If jazz initially fulfilled Cocteau’s goal to break from a Germanic-based impressionism, the paradox that a foreign music could become the basis for a new nationalist music was quickly apparent. Milhaud noted that “the influence of jazz...had disappeared” by 1924.

The behavior of Milhaud and the others illustrated the inconsistencies that aesthetic dogmas can entail. The official rejection of jazz contradicted their actual music practices, for even after having condemned it, they enjoyed the jazz played by Jean Wiener at the Boeuf sur le toit in their leisure time.

Because of his appearance regularly playing jazz at the café he was initially linked to the avante garde movement, though Wiener’s admiration for jazz far outlasted the group of avante garde composers frequenting the café.

By 1925, Wiener’s growing dissatisfaction with avante-garde ideology led him to disassociate himself from the Cocteau and the Les Six. He formed a duo-piano partnership with the Belgium pianist clement Doucet. They were known as the *Jazz a deux pianos*. They began playing in the highly competitive Parisian music hall. While playing in this situation they collaborated with some of the biggest names in French popular music, appearing with Josephine Baker at the height of her career and recorded ten songs with Maurice Chevalier. They gave almost 2000 performances in 13 years throughout France, Europe, South America and the United States.

His early fame and association with Milhaud is mentioned by Milhaud in his articles given earlier and his importance in the progress and introduction of jazz to French audiences is found in a brief statement by Gilbert Seldes:

“As far as it is known, the first jazz concert in the world was given in Paris several years ago, under the direction of the brilliant French musician, Jean Wiener.”

Another quote is given as:

“During 1920 & 1921 one could get the idea of the most perfect jazz music only by hearing Jean Wiener at the piano and Vance Lowry on the saxophone and banjo at the Gaya Bar in the Rue Duphot, playing the purest, most authentic jazz with a bare minimum of instruments.”

It was written that: "These magnificent orchestras need a concert repertoire. Thanks to Jean Wiener we were able to hear Billy Arnold's jazz band on December 6, 1921 in the Salle des Agruculteurs. It was fitting that these wonderful musicians should be heard in a concert."

Jean Wiener also differed with French jazz writers Hugues Panassie and the Belgium Robert Goffin as to the direction and performance of jazz. Wiener also took into consideration the audience he was playing for. Wiener and Doucet brought polished American songs to the concert hall and avoided modernist stylization, tailoring their music to local tastes. As this article is on Milhaud's jazz influence I will not go into this arguments between French jazz critics and Wiener's views on jazz.

Wiener saw that the French thought they understood jazz. Jazz was rhythm and improvisation, which they had neglected for over 150 years. Wiener thought that: "People understood almost too well that jazz was improvisation – but they didn't understand how to do it. So you got jazz bands whose only purpose was to make as much noise as possible – bells, klaxons, drums, revolvers, etc. The music was absolutely foreign to the French at that time."

Trombonist Leo Vauchant relates his experiences playing with Wiener and the group of composers that frequented the famous café:

"In that place, there were four other men besides Ravel who met regularly in 1924. Honegger-32 years of age, milhaud-32, Poulenc-25, Auric-25, and Ravel was 49.....I know that those four guys were intrigued by what I was doing with the trombone. We were playing a jazz that was saccharine-coated by Wiener and doucet. And the one who caught on the best was Maurice Ravel....He asked me one day – I played on a trombone that was bigger than French trombones, bigger in bore – "It's amazing,<" he said. "Is that a tenor trombone?" I said, "Yes." "How come you play an octave higher than any other trombone players I've heard, with a bigger instrument?" At the time I remember that I said: "I am ambitious." He laughed. He was known for having a good sense of humor, so I thought I'd throw things at him, you know. Also, I used to play drums every now and then. The drummer played an alto sax – not too well you know. So he'd play and I'd sit in and play drums. And I used to play a mess of drums...I mean on things that he, Ravel, would dig. So he said, "Look, I'm open on Friday, because usually I come to town. Could you come?...anyway, he explained to me how to get to the Belvedere at Montfort L'Amaury where he lived. He asked me. "Could you spend the afternoon with me?"

Together Wiener and Doucet made a formidable team. They were a big influence on Milhaud and the other French avante garde composers. Besides their interest in jazz they had a desire to promote and perform works by all the most modern composers, such as Schoenberg and Stravinsky.

Doucet seems to have had a special talent for American popular music. His technique of tracing melody with the thumb of his right hand, while his other fingers filled in the harmonies and his left hand marked an unfaltering rhythm, astonished musicians who came to Le Boeuf. His performances were all the more legendary, so the story goes, for the fact that he used to read detective stories while playing. Somehow he manages to turn the pages with his left hand without losing the beat. This is what Milhaud and the others would hear at the café along with jazz.

*Chris Goddard in his book "Jazz Away From Home" gives a bio on Wiener in Wiener's own words:*

"I'm not at all a specialist in Jazz. Nevertheless, I was amazed the first time I heard syncopated music. It was before the First World War at the Casino de Paris. There was an English dancer called Harry Pilcer who was with a very pretty girl called Gabby Deslys. And they did a number - it was something by Handy I think. This was absolutely the first kind of ragtime. It was incredible. I can't remember now if it was a French orchestra or not. The details escape me but it was certainly not black musicians.

Then the war came. And there I met British troops who had records – "St. Louis Blues" and such like. I spent a lot of time with British troops and in addition we began to get American records – Handy, Gershwin and so on. When the war was over I came back and I had a friend called Jean Cocteau who was a kind of genius, although he didn't realize it at the time because he didn't take himself too seriously. He was very charming, very elegant and sophisticated. He went to bed very late and did a lot of crazy things. He was a great writer, couturier, film-maker, decorator and knew a lot about music. I saw a lot of him around 1919. I met him through one of my brothers, who was in class with Cocteau, so he used to come by the house a lot as a boy. And then I ran into him above all because I was a great friend of Darius Milhaud – that was since about 1911.

What struck me about jazz were two things. The first was that the trumpets and trombones let themselves go freely – you could almost say "rhapsodically" – while all the while the tempo remained fixed. This was



something which classical music has lost. That's why the team of two pianos of Wiener and Doucet used to give concerts of Bach and Mozart and then Handy and Cole Porter. Our point was that there was no such thing as great music and small music – only music which was good or bad.

I never learned to play jazz, perhaps because I had a grandfather who was black, but I never learned. The musician whom I studied the most was Bach because, as my teachers used to say, I had a metronome in my stomach and that's what you need to play jazz also. And that's what I wanted to demonstrate in my concerts also. At that time there were perhaps ten people in Paris who got the point of all that. The rest understood nothing. For me it's the metronome regularity of Negro people and their music – it's very close to Bach.

What interested Stravinsky and the others was above all the syncopated rhythms. But for me the Negroes are naturally expressive. Their traditions are aural, not intellectual like ours. I'm not at all religious but one of the most remarkable experiences of my life was when I was in America in 1931. I was making a big concert tour with my colleague Doucet. And we were invited by the black university at Tuskegee near St. Louis. It was a splendid university with a library of forty thousand books. And they asked us if we'd like to go to the Sunday service. It was one of the greatest memories as a musician I've ever had. The rector was all dressed up in his regalia with a cane with a gold top to greet us at the gates of this huge park. There was a trumpet and trombone fanfare when we arrived – it was extraordinary. Then they led us across the park with the band in front until we got to the church. It was indescribable. It still brings tears to my eyes when I think about it. There were about two hundred choristers – a hundred boys and a hundred girls all wearing the same thing. No cheerleader. There was no orchestra in the church. And for about three-quarters of an hour they sang. If anything was going to make me believe in God that would have done it. It was of such an extraordinary musicality. It began with two hundred people humming with their mouths closed. And it got louder and louder and more and more hypnotic. And after about forty minutes there were two or three women passing out. It was so beautiful it was unforgettable.

Also I was often up in Harlem. And if you knew where to go you'd end up on the fifth floor of some particular building – “First door on the right” – and there would be some huge lady behind the piano who was singing and playing fantastic stuff. It was all a bit wild but fabulous. Then there was the Savoy – big as the Gare St. Lazare. From five in the evening until five in the morning people came to dance. The maids and butlers came early in the evening and then the

rich blacks came later on – because there were a lot of rich blacks. And by three o'clock in the morning it was complete hysteria. And all around the edge you had mother and grandmothers who sat knitting. And when a couple began dancing a bit too violently one of the grandmothers would throw down her knitting and would go on the floor and stop them. The dancing was out of this world – no comparison with Europe at all. You felt you were very close to the roots of music.”

Milhaud mentions in one of his article about Jean Wiener, in his concert on December 6,1921, that was held in the Ackeau Hall, introduced a jazz band to Paris – the band of Billy Arnold.

### Leo Arnaud/Vauchant - Jazz Trombonist

He was a good friend of Maruice Ravel and helped Ravel with a portion using trombone in Ravel's Bolero. He was one of the early influences of the French introduction to jazz with his jazz trombone playing to the Les Six while playing at the famous “Le Boeuf sur le Toit Café in Paris, France in 1924. He also orchestrated for Fred Waring and others. He was nominated for academy awards and one an Oscar for his scoring for Mary Poppins and Unsinkable Molly Brown. He wrote the famous Olympic fanfare for the 1968 Olympic games that was played over TV for years by ABC. He scored countless movie scores, orchestral scores, made CD's and was one of the top arrangers for Hollywood. All of the above was accomplished by the same man, Leo Arnaud/Vauchant.

Leo Vauchant was born in Cauzan, France on July 24, 1904. At age 14 he was playing drums in the Marigny Theater when Louis Mitchell's Jazz Kings were part of the show.

*Bill Kinney in his article “The assimilation of American Jazz in France, 1917-1940” writes about Mitchell's Band and other Black bands in France:*

“Michell's Jazz Kings and most of the early American groups played for the wealthy set on the right bank of the Seine. The post-war years brought a thirst for entertainment and Parisian high society was amused by things Black and Exotic. Many Black American soldiers, out-patients at the American Hospital

in Naeuilly, entertained in cafes and spread the idea of Black American nightclub entertainment. The growth of appreciation for Black music as an art form grew quite slowly thereafter and this kind of music appealed only to a very tiny minority of French people before World War II. Throughout the 1920s there were black and white American musicians playing swinging music in Paris but it was not until the early 1930s that real evidence appeared of a well-rooted French jazz community of French musicians, fans and jazz writers.”

He led a jazz group in 1917 when he moved to Paris. He was heard by the Les Six and Ravel at the Café Le Boeuf sur le Toit where the cultural elite gathered. He became a good friend of Ravel and was an adviser to Ravel in some of Ravel’s compositions, especially the trombone solo in Bolero. He played with the Chicago Hot spots in 1924, Paul Gason’s Band in 1925, The bandleader and percussionists Fred Mele, Irving Aaronson in 1927; Lud Gluskin in 1927-28; Jack Lylton (In England and Germany) in 1928-30, and Gregor in 1930. He appeared with Ray Ventura from 1929 . He migrated to the USA in 1931 and played and arranged with Fred Waring from 1931-36; the Casa Loma Orchestra in 1932; Roger Wolfe Kahn also in 1932. He was the first French jazz trombonist to become well know. He settled around Los Angles and became one of the leading orchestrators for movie scores during his long stay on the West Coast

### Billy Mitchell

*While in the pit orchestra of the Marigny Theater he heard the Billy Mitchell jazz band and wrote about his impressions of this first jazz band to play in Paris:*

“There were no good improvisers in those days....it started with that orchestra, the Mitchell one. It started with that and it was a long time before anyone else showed up. But right way, there were French orchestras going all over who didn’t know what they were doing. They were just awful – but they played. When that thing started all the little theaters had to have a jazz band. The jazz band meant the drummer. “Who is the jazz band at the Olympia?” They didn’t know that jazz band meant an orchestra. The Follies Bergeres, all those theaters, were copying from each other. There was a guy playing C-Melody sax reading from the piano copy, and there was no bass. There was a banjo, there was a violin and there was a drummer – that was it. It was atrocious.”

The pit band would accompany the Mitchell Jazz band on stage usually during the finale. Leo listened to all the jazz bands he could:

“I got what I got from listening to this Mitchell band... Mitchell formed a Tempo club above Joe Zelli’s club and I was the only white guy in that outfit....I liked the way they approached dance music. It was rhythmical, and the tempo never varied within the tune. Whereas, when the French would play, there was no sense of beat. They were playing things with rubato – there was no dance beat. It didn’t swing. It didn’t move. The blacks, on the other hand, seemed to be skilled musicians. They knew about chords....Most of the bands were out of tune. They never tuned. They just started to play. And those pianos were not too well tuned in those joints either.”

Interested in arranging, Leo helped some shows in Paris to give the music played an American twist. He remarked “I knew the tunes, I knew the tricks they were doing. So I fixed all the trumpets and the glissandos on the trombones. But it had to be written out before the French guys could play the syncopations.”

Leo’s reference to the “down-beat” was correct. The French were used to playing things in 2/4 or ¾. Afro-American music preferred a larger number of beats to the bar giving them chances to stress the weak beats with 4 beats per measure. In pointing out this variation to the beat he had put his finger on the single biggest obstacle to the assimilation of African elements into European music.

Leo spoke of the Chicago Hot Spots:

“It was a band that used to play on the Mississippi riverboats. It was real Dixieland, but good. The Americans were in quite a different league to the French, and everybody learned from them. They probably played more jazz – more solos – than anybody else around at that time. There was a man called Frank Guarante who had a band called the Georgians, and they were good too, but it was more ensemble playing than solos. With the Georgians it was mainly the sound that was different – the tone and the vibrato. But those Chicago Hot Spots were good. They had numbers like “Sensation Rag,” “Panama,” and tunes that were known in that style. Actually they played them wrong. They should have harmonized them from the chords. But instead they moved up and down a third away from the melody – atrocious! But that’s the way they played them you know. Anyway, the solos were the hottest thing in town.”

## **Frank Guarente (Guarante)**

Grove's Dictionary of Jazz relates another story of Gaurante's musical career:

**"Frank Guarente {Francesco Saveriol) was born in Montemiletto, Italy, on Oct. 5, 1893. Died ?New York, July 21, 1942) Trumpeter. He emigrated to the USA in 1910. After playing in various groups he joined Paul Specht's orchestra (1921-24) and directed the Georgians, a group within the band that was modeled on the original Dixieland Jazz Band, recording with them from 1922 to 1924. He toured Europe with his own New Georgians (1923-1927), then worked with the Savoy Orpheans and others in England. He returned to the USA, rejoined Specht (1928-30), played first trumpet in the bands of Victor Young (1930-1936), Jack Teagarden, the Dorsey Brothers, and others, and also accompanied popular singers in recording sessions."**

It is reported that Leo was a friend and admirer of such great black cornet players as Freddie Keppard and King Oliver. From the recordings of the Georgians it is obvious that the Georgians were coping Oliver's style of collective improvisation. The band included: Guarante on trumpet, Buck Weaver or Russ Morgan-trombone, Joe Murray-piano, Freddy Flick-banjo. In 1924 the personnel were: Chauncey Morehouse-drums, Arthur Schutt-piano, Russell Deppe-banjo, Frank Guarente-trumpet, Johnny O'Donnell-sax, Dick Johnson-clarinet/sax, and an unknown sax player.

The Gaurent family moved to Allentown, PA in 1910 and then to New Orleans in 1914 where it is said that he took trumpet lessons from "King" Oliver. Frank served in the army in world War I. In the 1930s Frank played trumpet with the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra.

### **More on Leo Vauchant/Arnaud**

Ravel, after hearing and talking to Leo at the Le Bouef sure le Toit Café invited Leo then 20 years old, to his home at Montfort L'Amaury and thus began a relationship which seemed to benefit both: Leo in relating his knowledge of jazz and Ravel giving Leo composition studies. Leo recalls his experience with Ravel:

**"So I went there the first Friday with the trombone. He said, "Look, I know what you're doing. You're playing around the melody. But the notes you**

play, how do they come to you?" "Well," I said, "it's a style, like the Hungarians do. The Jews have their way too...They are modes that apply to racial background or something. And if you like it, it grows into you, and you apply it to whatever you want." He said, "OK, I'll give you a C scale. What are you going to do?" I said, "Well, I know what I am not going to do," because all the fellows I know, the violinists, even some of the great ones, would take a C scale and just play the seventh arpeggios based on the notes of the scale. "The first note I would play on a C chord is Eb." He said, "How come?" "Well, I said, "it's the augmented ninth. Since you have a tenth, it could be a flattered tenth. You have both intervals, but you have to say raised, although it's really flattened because you get off it and come back, but it doesn't lead upward." He said, "Yes, I've noticed in Gershwin there's a lot of that. But where did he get it?" I said, "It comes from the blues – American stuff." He said, "OK, I'm going to play a piece." And he played one of these billets-doux from one of those horrible farces. So he said, "I'm going to play the melody, and on the second chorus, I will only play accompaniment. See what comes to you." And I said, "Well, I'll do one around the melody, but played with syncopation....Then the next thing, you play the lead and I'll blow a straight chorus over the top of it." And he was happy. He said, "Why has nobody thought of this before?" I said, "You'd be amazed how many people are doing it." He was out of his cocoon you know. He had no idea how many people were aware of those things and, consciously or not, were using it. To him, it was a big discovery."

Leo spoke of Ravel seeking his advice about jazz:

"Ravel got to understand a lot of what jazz was all about. If you see his piano concerto, people say there's a lot of Gershwin in it. No. There are a lot of jazz ideas in it – not Gershwin. He wasn't a student of Gershwin. He was a student of what we were doing and of what was going on at the time...he was such a marvelous man! People would drop by the house, and he'd always introduce me as his colleague..."

Leo talks about an interesting incident concerning Ravel's Bolero:

"I played that piece before anybody else did. I had him change the key from D to C. I told him, "The trombone and the bassoon are not going to make

those E flats above top C, eleven of which are consecutive.” So he said, “How about a tone lower?” So he put it down a tone. Then he said, “The trouble is, the way you play it, I can’t write it.” And I said, “I know. It’s even incongruous for me to play it this way because the other instruments don’t. If I were you, I would let the other guys interpret it the way they feel it. Don’t write in the slurs and so on - –let them phrase it.” So now everybody’s playing it the way he wrote it with no expression marks at all!”

Eventually Vauchant found the jazz scene in Paris so limiting that he took commercial work in England and finally moved to America. Around 1928-29 Leo played with the Ray Ventura Band . In 1930 Leo toured with Gregor’s Gregorians in South American.

*There is an article on Vauchant in Goddard’s book in which Leo talks about his early jazz career in France and mentions some about the history of jazz in France:*

“The first jazz band that came to France – the first black one – was Louis Mitchell’s. He was a drummer – a very good drummer too. I imitated him. I learned from him. Whatever he did, that was the way I was doing it. I played timpani and snare drums when they first came. I also started playing trombone with that band. The next time I heard them Leon Volters of the Casino de Paris had got them back from England. This time I was playing cello and drums with a tango band. And I listened to those Mitchell guy – I had a trombone back home – and right away I knew I could play all that stuff that guy played with them.

Later on things got better because other bands came. Art Hickman was one. There was another orchestra called the Georgians who had a trumpet player called Frank Guarante. There was a drummer called Jimmy Lennon whose brother has some kind of an orchestra now. So there was always something the guys could copy. I was still going on what I had picked up from Mitchell. I never heard Art Hickman. I was working. I had no way of going to listen and there were no records available to French people. There was only Salabert who published a few stocks and then put his own name on them as arranger so he could collect something. But he hadn’t written them or arranged them either.

I learned jazz more or less on my own. I started analyzing a bit what those Mitchell guys were doing – just by hearing them play. I didn’t have the records. I knew the tunes they were playing. I could hear the phrases and I was trained. I

knew the names of the intervals and the degrees of the scale. If you look at a chord as a question they were giving the answers by playing a certain phrase. I could readily see what they were doing because there are only twelve notes and some are automatically tabooed. In fact in the C chord which is tricky is the F and nowadays they all use it.

To the blacks, life in Europe was like heaven, I can tell you. One good reason was the white women. But it was also being able to go any place, and live where they wanted. Also they were looked up to as stars. And that must have been pretty pleasant after life in the States. A lot of French guys resented the blacks going off with their women. But every guy I knew found himself a white broad – Montmartre women mostly, not necessarily whores. They met them as hostesses who danced with them and they got a tip as an escort.

I started as a professional musician at the age of eight. Later I went to the Conservatory in Lyons. I graduated there when I was about sixteen. This would be about 1920 or 1921. I didn't get the first prize that year because I took my sabbatical. I went to study with Weingartner in Berlin. While I was in Germany I played trombone with an Hawaiian band. They had an English trombone player called Bligh who went back to England to die. I replaced him on trombone and got someone else – a Turk – to replace me on drums. I found him working in a furrier. I went there with this woman, and there was this guy with two long sticks beating all hell out of the pelts. He had a fantastic rhythm, rather like those guys here in America who used to shine your shoes. I said, "Let me see you do that while you tap four to a bar with your foot." So he did, and I asked him, "Could you do that to music?" He said, "Easy," I said, "You want a job as a drummer? I have everything you need." So I showed him what was wanted and I found he could even do a roll. So that afternoon Raged Osman the Turk was dressed as a Hawaiian and played the tea dance with us. The other guy in the band was a fellow named Lewis. I forget his first name. He was English and played very good jazz violin and also soprano sax. I played trombone. We were the only two horns in the orchestra. There was another guy, a Dutchman called Freddy van Root, who played piano. The rest of the outfit were Hawaiian. The Hawaiians had a good feel for American stuff. They were very much like Americans. We played a lot of American tunes. It was easy to get piano copies so our repertoire was way out. Most of our music came from England. Some guy got them from there. I can't remember his first name but his last name was Levy.



Anyway, I was playing with tango bands when that Mitchell band came back to France. I was playing cello mostly. If I played for pit orchestras I'd play timpani and snare drums. I stopped that around 1922. From then on I played jazz trombone whenever I could. I played jazz drums too. At the end of 1917 I was playing with a very small orchestra --about five pieces. I played double drums. You had to play cymbals and snare drums as well as bass drums. Most people used to do it by hitting a cymbal with the left stick and have the drum on the right side. I was doing it with two cymbals and I played the drum with one stick. The conductor was a man named Fred Melly. He became the conductor at the Moulin Rouge later and made some horrible records there. At that time it was a burlesque house, but arty. You know, they have the girls come on bare-breasted with big hats on which they held with their hands because it helps the façade! The sketches usually ended in a blackout. And the girls would be in the wings waiting to go on stage looking their best. And usually the fireman on duty would be back there – stage right let's say. And before the girls would go on they'd ask this guy, "Would you do my nipples?" And the fellow would oblige and start sucking them until they were ready to go on for the big number. I heard about it. And I see that the girls come from both stage right and stage left. I was stage left in the pit. So I used to go there until the very last moment when I had to come back to play the choral at the end of the sketch. And I was doing what the fellow on the other side was doing. This was at the Gaiete Rochechouart Theater. The shows would be a series of acts. A guy comes on first and he sings or tells a joke, or maybe a dancer would come on. Then there'd be intermission after the finale with the girls. The second act – you're going to laugh – an act of *Faust*. From the opera *Faust* – with twelve musicians in the pit! It was like a burlesque house, as I say. There was nudity, but it was not prurient. It was just bare-breasted and they held those hats. It was the poor man's Follies Bergeres.

My father yanked me out of that place. I had to quit that job. We made eight francs a show. We only had one matinee, so we made sixty-four francs a week. So I got myself a job at the Restaurant Pagille, where I was getting fifteen francs to begin with, a meal, and the tips were often fifteen francs or more. I had to wear a smoking-jacket. I was supposed to get one made or find one my size. I was quite small – I was only fourteen years old. My father took me to a place called the Cahut in a district called the Temple, close to Notre Dame, where you bought second-hand things. Smoking-jackets in those days were a big deal. They were all too big for me. People used to get married and buy one,

then they sold it right away. You couldn't rent them like you can today. So we went there and found a suit that fitted me. It had lots of pockets inside, outside, everywhere. So we bought it very cheaply. I just tried it. The guy turned me around in front of my father and said, "You like it?" My father said, "take it off," and they wrapped it in newspaper. It had seven vests with it; all kinds of colors – pearl grey, tan, white, black. We got home and I put the suit on for my step-mother to look at. And she started laughing. This suit belonged to a magician who, unfortunately, was a hunchback. Anyway she fixed it. She made me put it on inside out. She removed the lining from the back, opened it out and made it fit. Then she sewed it up, and put the lining back. I had a tuxedo for maybe ten dollars with seven vests.

So I started working at the restaurant Pigalle for two hundred francs a week, where before I'd only been getting sixty-four. The World War One air aces used to come in there. Guinmere was the big shot. But they all came. They were gods in those days. They had the Croix de Guerre loaded with palms for each plane they'd shot down. They were allowed to design and determine the color of their own uniforms. One son-of-a-bitch shows up in pink! I adored that man. I said, "Man, foyou're for me!" Anybody that had the guts to assert himself that way.

In 1918 Saint Saens was in Bourbon La Cambeau which is near Vichy for his arthritis. He was there with Andre Messager, another composer. They were our best customers. My Dad played bass, I played cello, and there were two violins and a piano. We played everything, right up to condensed versions of operas. We played light stuff and heavy stuff but arranged for that kind of combination. And Saint Saens used to come in to have coffee with one or two of his friends and a big St. Bernard dog. He didn't pay much attention to what we played. One day somebody went to him. There was a big hotel converted into a hospital, and they decided they would hold a Mass for all the badly wounded people who would be carried into the church on litters. And they asked Saint Saens if he would do an organ recital. He said no, but if they could find somebody to do the Ave Maria he would accompany. They looked all over and they couldn't find a singer. So the next best thing is a cello. And so they got me. I said, "Fine, but I'll have to get with the organist." They said, "He's right over there in the hotel," So I went to see him in his suite and I said, "Maitre, I understand I'm going to play with you next Sunday." He said, "Yes, that's right." I had my cello in its little canvas case, I said, "Would you like me to rehearse with you?" He said, "You know it?" I told him I knew it and that was that. We

didn't rehearse. We went to the church on the Sunday morning, and he just dragged his cane up and down the keyboard – the white keys. It worked. And then it came to be time for us to play. You know, you just get a nod from the Abbe and we start. I come in right on time and the accompaniment is going along fine, and suddenly there's a grating noise. The Bb's not working. There's a Bb and an F sharp that are not on the white keys, and they're both out of commission. And I can hear Saint Saens muttering, "Now we're bugged. Why don't those assholes fix this thing?" And I can hear this swearing going on and I'm trying to hit the notes. So we went through to the end, and after it was over I asked him if I had played properly. And he tapped me on the cheek and said, "You did very well. But that damned organ – instead of spending all that money on candles, why don't they fix that bloody organ?" In 1970 I went back to France and I stayed in the same place and they still haven't fixed that organ!

About that time I cottoned on to something else. At that time there was another jazz band that came up. Some agent got a bunch of guys together. There was a Belgian drummer who spoke English. It was in a roller skating place at the Alcazar next to the Ambassadeurs in the champs Elysees. They had a bowling alley like you have now. They were the first to do that. So we played there – it was a jazz band. And the drummer was making ten times what we were making. And I used to watch what he did. He could play a one-step. He'd learned that much, I don't know, maybe in London. He was making a hundred francs a day. We were working for maybe eight or ten. So I said to myself, I'm going to get into that. So my Dad, he made me a bass drum – he made the whole instrument, and it didn't look at all bad. And I started doing this too. I was a lot better than that crap band was.

Around 1924 I was playing with a tango band again – cello as usual. And there was a band called the Chicago Hot Spots. It was a band that used to play on the riverboats from Chicago to New Orleans on the Mississippi. There was Vic Sells. There was a fellow called Tracy Momma who played clarinet. Real Dixieland, but good. There was a fellow called Webb somebody, a sax player. He left and another guy came. Homer Vance Pybrock his name was. And Freddy Flick was the banjo player. Again no bass. Anyway their trombone player got homesick and left. So they asked me if I knew of a trombone player who could fake. I said, "Yeah, I'll get you one tomorrow." So I got a dep in for me on cello and I went and played trombone with them. They didn't know I played trombone. I knew every note that guy played. And I knew the tunes.

Even if I didn't know the trombone part I could make it up, knowing the tune you know – harmonizing. So I got to learn those tunes anyway. I didn't learn any jazz with them. But I learned those tunes. About three months before joining them I was playing cello, but I was learning all the time through listening to what they were doing. There was a big repertoire of what they call Dixieland. Everything was Dixieland at that time. You didn't have sections, but they were easily harmonized three ways. This Dixieland thing didn't move me too much, but to tell you the truth I didn't have to try too hard. I liked the music OK, but what I really liked was the life it made for me and the money I was making. So I played the music – it was a means to an end. I wasn't a jazz buff in any way. I liked it. It was creative in a way, and to a certain extent, as I started to write stuff for it, it was difficult too.

But the life was the thing. I couldn't get over it. A kid of fifteen years old. I could stay away from home because I was making money. There's no kid in the world who doesn't like to stay up and make money. And there were plenty of girls around too – even when I was fourteen. Oh, yeah. I was an old-timer at fourteen. So making money, I was able to get out of that lousy life. I came from a pigsty. My father and his second wife – she gambled the money. I don't really know what she did with it. We were two men working for one woman, and there was never any money for food. I got one day's pay a week to keep for myself, but I was spending it on food. A kid should be able to buy something he likes for himself. I was spending it on ham sandwiches and beer. At intermission I would run one block the other way. I had just discovered pistachio ice-cream. I would take it in a glass and drink it. The next day I'd return the glass and get another one.

Andre Ekyan was one of the first to play jazz. Also he played flute before anybody was playing jazz flute. And there was Roger Fishback, a very fine sax player who also played violin. He died quite a while ago. There was another guy who called himself Harry Parsons. His real name was Henri Pruniau. There was a fellow who lives today on Riverside here in Burbank, called Maury Cutter. His name was Maurice Couteau. He was from Nice. I was Leo Vauchant. Here's no name more un-American than that. We never got together in jam sessions. We'd play on the job. There were some good piano players. There was a fellow called Colleaubonner, is Swiss. There was a fellow called Bergerer. There was Romans, who is still around. A good band could have been made in France with the people who could play. But there was always one among the rest who couldn't make it. There was no money to get the guys together. To us the

money was good because we played with people who all earned much less than we did. They wanted what you would call a star – a guy who could stand up and pump it out. But you couldn't get a band – a decent band even with three brass instruments and four rhythm. You couldn't get anybody that would pay the guys that could play. There was a band – Ray Ventura's band. I started in his band as a pro with a bunch of college kids. There was a fellow called Bandale who played trumpet. Montaigne also played trumpet. Eddie Foy played sax and there was a baritone sax guy called Jean Gompel. Guy Pacquinet played trombone with him for a time. Also Rene Weiss. I played with him a little bit at a few recordings and things. So he got together a few elements that could play, but they were mainly college kids who weren't very good.

Hugues Panassie started quite early you know. Serge Gliksen the sax player took me to see him one day. He wanted me to transcribe something for him from a record. He would work the record and keep going back because it takes time to get all those notes. So I would write down the things he heard on records. I wasn't interested to go and listen to this or that record, but he was a nice man you know. I don't remember whose recordings they were. Some could have been black but some were white too. I can't remember their names now. Maybe Roy Matson was one. Sammy Lewis, an American trombone player, maybe was another. I heard maybe four records in all, and not necessarily good ones.

By this time I was laying jazz full-time. I didn't play tangos after I played with those Chicago Hot Spots. The things I learned from those guys! I'd never seen anyone eat bread and butter with soup. They all did it. I also learned about Listenine – it's a disinfectant that Americans can't live without. I also learned about those PVD's they were wearing. It was an underwear that has a little trap-door at the back. The girls that we knew who went with those guys would describe the PVD. How they laughed. In France, you see, we had shorts and shirts made of silk. WE couldn't believe that guys would have underwear that goes through the knee – all in one piece with all kinds of things which cross over in the front so you could open it, and at the back there was as trap door that you lower. Soon after working with those guys I left home and I never went back. K knew a girl who went to Ostende to work. And she wired me to say they were looking for a guy who played all kinds of instruments. So I went there with the trumpet and the trombone. I left home and I was only sixteen. The fellow that had the band had a drum kit so I could played runs as well. I never went home again.

The theater shows had a big effect – *Blackbirds* and those others. However, the first show to come was a white one. It was at the Marigny Theater in 1918 and the only black element in it was the Mitchell band, and they were hardly concerned with the show. They were brought in as an attraction for the bar when the people came in at intermission. They put them on stage but they didn't play by themselves. They played with the pit orchestra. They weren't even featured, they just played the finale like everyone else. The show played for about a month and then closed. I remember we didn't get paid. You know, one night we got there and the place was closed. We couldn't get it. So we got an injunction. I came the next day and I got my bass drum – the one my father had made me – my snare and all my other stuff, and Louis Mitchell said to me, "Hey kid, you're not getting paid?" So I said, "No." I spoke English after a fashion. I had learned it in military school with an English instructor. Mitchell got a big kick out of that because I was a good scholar. Also he liked me because we played the same instrument, and I played the show on timpani and opened his eyes too. We respected one another. I did things he didn't know how to do and he did things I had never heard of. We were friends. I'd go there early when the people came in and they're playing in the bar. I loved those guys. Frank Withers, he was old enough to have been my father and I was like a son to him. We talked music. I was fortunate to be able to speak English – that was the thing. And I told them where they could buy the salami or where to get a slide fixed. I was one of the boys. That's why, when they started that Tempo Club, they invited me in. So anyway, Mitchell says to me, "You want to get your money? Come with me." And there was a fellow either by the name of Hopkins, Hawkins or Perkins – I don't remember which. And Mitchell was a big guy, with a thin waist like you and broad shoulders. So we knocked on the door of the office. And they said, "Who is it?" He says, "Louis Mitchell." He says, "You open that door or I'm going to break it down." So the fellow says, "There's nothing I can do for you here." And Mitchell says, "You open that door or I'm going to shoot the lock off." And he was a very refined gentleman. Anyway the door opened and we got in. And the fellow starts to give him a song and dance you know. So he pulled the gun and said, "You owe me so much for the band and this kid gets his shares." So I got paid.

The cats in the Mitchell band, they saw what was happening in the pit orchestra. They had found out that I was fixing the arrangements more in the manner in which they were laying the same numbers. And they said, "Hey, you got something." Because Cricket Smith couldn't have put down what he played.

And they said, "There's a guy that can hear us from the other side of the room, and he can fix it." At that time I was playing drums. Then Mitchell said, "Come on over and visit our club, we'll make you a member. So I went. I had my trombone under my arm. In those days we didn't have cases. They were made out of men's trousers. You put the horn in one leg and the slide in the other, and that's the way it was done. Anyway I went along, and there was Maisie Withers practicing the piano and she had a trombone on the floor underneath. And Frank was there. He used to play with her. So he said, "Hey, we're going to play." So he gave me the notes and I played. So I started to write stuff for the three of us. The Temp Club! That was the name of it. It was upstairs next door to Zelli's where Tom Waltham had the band. Members could go to the Temp Club and drink – no license you understand. There was a big black guy. Where they got him I don't know. He was a good cook, what you call a short order cook. He did all the stuff Americans like: hash and chile con carne. To me it was America. I wanted to come to America so much, you've no idea.

They started a thing – Frank Withers and some other guy. They called it the Synco symphony. It was kind of an orchestra. About fifty guys. And it laid an egg. They had gotten all the violinists who played in the tango bands who could play rhythm instead of just schmaltzing away – because the real tango is very close to jazz, there's a big Latin influence. And we'd work with this. And Frank had made all these arrangements which were very clever.. And I went and played trombone. In that club there would be a lot of sitting in. Other black guys would come by. It was the first time I heard jamming going on. We just sat there and played the tunes that we knew. They were tunes like "Arizona," and I guess "Hindustan," was already in. We didn't play the Dixieland tunes – more sort of ballads and the tunes that were in vogue at the time, but we improvised on them. This would have been around 1920. I remember it was from that club that I got word to go to Ostende and play that job. Then I came back. Then I went to Germany and the money fell down and I came back to Paris and resumed with those fellows.

I can't remember the names of other black guys that were there. There was one man, a clarinet player – Sidney Bechet. I heard him. He played great. But I don't remember him playing in that place. He came by for a beer maybe, but I didn't play with him. I talked to him I think. I heard him play where he was working because you could hear it from the outside. It was on the Rue Caumartin. It was with his own outfit – five musicians maybe. Those clubs couldn't afford a band. He'd got a little contract as well as his job with Sissle.

In those days everything was new to me. Tom Waltham, who worked in Zelli's underneath the Tempo Club, was a fine musician. He played good dance piano. He would have made you dance just playing the piano alone. He'd pull the time around and anticipate the beat. He would get the chord and with the top note anticipate down to the chord. I hadn't heard any black piano players other than Parrish who played with that band. But he never took any solos. They played the tunes all together. They never stopped for a solo. So Waltham was the first pianist I heard who really played different – American. He composed a lot of tunes. He must have made a lot of money in royalties. He died recently.

When the black theater shows started to come in – I didn't see most of them – I was working, and not always in France either. I was in Germany, I was in Spain, I was in Turkey. So I wasn't aware of them. I do remember one show. That was *Blackbirds*. There were lots of shows that followed it. *Blackbirds* was in 1926. At the same time there was Paul Whiteman, Noble Sissle and Sam Wooding. The following year it was Irving Aaronson and his commanders with a white show. It was 1927. I remember Cole Porter wrote the music for that Aaronson show. Fred Waring was at the Ambassadeurs in 1928 with a white show. I don't know where they had the *Blackbirds* but it wasn't at the Ambassadeurs. In 1929 I don't know what was happening because I was in England. In 1930 I was in England. 1931 I was in South America so I lost track.

As far as the black shows and the dancing in those shows was concerned, the types I saw in them until I came to America were the type you saw in the minstrel shows. They wore baggy pants, although they weren't using that black-face make-up. I never saw Negroes in fabulous suits until I came to New York. The ones in Paris did humorous dancing. They'd raise their foot on the heel and then use the other foot to press it down again. They'd do the same thing with their Adam's apple and the tie that wobbles. They could spin a derby hat on their heads and they did tap dancing. They were very good – not just better than whites, there were no whites doing it.

There was a fellow in France who was famous. His name was Harry Pilcer. He was a dancer and he liked jazz. He used to work with the Dolly Sisters. And he also worked with Gabby Deslys. I knew Harry very well because I used to fix up the orchestra parts for him. One night he" come and he" say, ""Hey, you did something I liked." It wasn't written down, you see. We used to improvise a lot of stuff for those people. Really he walked around doing very little. He wasn't a tap dancer. So he' just glide around the floor, put his arms up over his head and



fall on his knees on the floor. Then he'd straighten himself up again as he put his arms down. That was his big trick. Girls used to do the same thing. They would do a backwards thing and then stand up. So Harry would slide around the floor doing a one, two, three and slide a little bit looking at the people as if to say, "Here I am – well dressed." He had a pearl worth half a million dollars. I picked him up one day on sunset boulevard years later. He told me he was waiting for a cab. He wasn't waiting for a cab, he was waiting for a bus. So I gave him a life and he talked. They were making a picture about the Dolly Sisters and they wouldn't hire him to do anything. He said, "Can you imagine? They do a picture about the Dolly Sisters and nobody wants to hear from me." Back in Paris he had his own club. He liked jazz. He had some Negro musicians playing for him. There was a fellow called Seth Jones, a drummer, and a fellow called Vance Laurie, a sax player – real great. I never heard of either of those two guys again.

As far as the black shows and the dancing in those shows was concerned, the people who could afford to see those shows didn't learn anything from them because they were dummies. Some of the kids may have been able to get something out of it, but not many. So it was strictly the music that did it. Of course at that time there were no sound pictures. But there were American tourists. They were the ones who brought the Charleston, the black bottom and the varsity drag, etc. so the gigolo dancers in those places would look and look and the next day you would see them doing something you wouldn't believe – it was awful. The next day I could do the Charleston because I was a dancer. And I would teach the gigolos at the Perroquet the easy way to do the Charleston with another person. I don't mean how to do an exhibition by themselves, but the step the way it was, turning the feet.

I didn't know Bricktop personally. You see those clubs were fairly expensive and functioning at the same time as I was working. And they weren't the sort of places you could crash to go jamming for instance. I knew of her. I never saw her to tell you the truth. She had the place. She moved around quite a bit. She had a club that was closed for some reason and then opened another. She was a personality. She knew every American that came in. but she made herself well known and she could bring 'em in. Joe Zelli had a speakeasy in New York. Every American came in – he used to say he gave them the Royal Box – that was his phrase. And he was an Italian American who went back to France and started that place. And it was a jazz place, you know. Except it was limited to just that one band. But anybody could sit in. It was Tommy Waltham. It was a white band, but black guys would come in and sit in. It was Tommy Waltham,

**Freddy Holt, the drummer, Billy Williams on alto sax, and Emile Christian on trombone. It was really a jumping place and he added another orchestra who played tangos. It was called the Ad Lib and run by Joe Zelli. It wasn't too expensive. It was in Montmartre – Rue Fontaine. And you could go there and four guys could go and have a bottle of champagne. And that wouldn't kill you then you know. And if you were a musician there wouldn't be any cover charge. In the early evening he probably had four girls and four fellows who pretended to be customers. If there was nothing happening nobody came in the place. If they saw somebody come in they'd dance together because nobody wants to be the first. It got things going. The music was basically fox trot. It was pretty formal stuff but it was already very jumpy.**

**I had a band at a place called the Abbaye Theleme. It's on Place Pigalle. I ran the band there. Roger Fishback was on sax, there was an English drummer whose name I forgot. I tell you how we got that band. I was working for a man called Jimmy Lennon, brother of the Lennon with the society orchestra in New York. He had a brother who played piano – very inexperienced and very bad piano player. And we had trumpet, trombone and saxophone. I forget the name of the trumpet player, piano and drums. We got a job through this Mr. Lennon and his brother the pianist. And collections were made twice a night for the orchestra. We hadn't signed a paper. He kept that. So we said, "We participate in this. It's not for the Lennon brothers that they take up a collection. They make it for the orchestra, and we are the orchestra." And he said, "Well, you should have thought of it before. You work for so much a week and that's it. So I got an idea. I went to see the boss. I said, "How would you like to see the same orchestra with another drummer and another pianist?" He said, "OK with me." He said, "How much do you get now?" I said, "Well we get so much. How much do the other two guys get?" He said, "Same price." But he said, "I have to break the contract with the other two guys." So the next night we got a ...like a solicitor....who makes a stipulation that at the starting time the orchestra is not there. The brothers were there, but no trumpet, no trombone, no saxophone. We didn't show up. So he broke the contract with them. And an hour later we brought the pianist. It was Freddy van Rupp the Dutch guy who was with me, and that English fellow who played drums and sang. He used to sing "Mother McCrea." So I said, "We got two Americans to replace the other." So we used to say, "Where you from in the States, Mr. Van Rupp?" He used to say, "Cleveland." He had never been to America in his life. It was a nice clean nightclub. At one time I think it was one of the Voltera brothers, Joseph I think,**

who owned it. And he had a man, a personality guy who would dance with his partner, Maurice Mouvet. He had been one of those like Fred Astaire guys who did the one-step, the two-step and the waltz, with a girl, I forget her name, an English girl, beautiful. And the tulle dress, you know. Sop that was the only entertainment apart from the band. It was a place where people went to dance and eat. Sort of supper and champagne.

There was plenty of improvising in that band. The trumpet was strictly a guy that plays with syncopation. We worked it out a little, but it didn't take off. But Fishback and I did. And van Rupp played some stuff.

I was at the Kit Kat with Jack Hylton. And one day I was driving home along Hyde Park to Victoria, where I lived. And I stopped my car and a cab pulls up and stops right at the back of my car and a fellow comes out and he orders fish and chips. I was eating mine right there in a newspaper. And he turned around – he had been at the Kit Kat. He said, "You're the chap who plays trombone with Jack Hylton." I said, "Yes Sir," And I said, "You're the chap who used to sit in on drums with my band at the Abbaye Theleme in Paris." He said "Rather," or something like that. And it was the Prince of Wales. I didn't take much notice of it. I had worked at the Ambassadeurs, where we had the Prince of Wales, King Alphonso XIII of Spain, King Carol of Romania. They were customers there. And Elsa Maxwell was there, chevalier, and the Dolly Sisters. They moved around, you know.

We did one party Elsa Maxwell organized for Rothschild. There were some Americans in Paris more or less stranded and they were friends of Irving Aaronson and his Commanders and they had booked his band to play at the party and they couldn't make it. So she got a band together fronted by a man named Maurice Loupiau. He was a dancer – very tall and thin. And he jumped around in front of the band. He was a very handsome boy. And there was Danny Polo playing clarinet and Dave Tough on drums. He had lost one of the pegs that kept the drum from slipping. So he had put a glass that would just catch one of those metal rods. But while playing, the drum would move and each time he would hit the cymbal, the whole thing would turn around, and everything would spill on the floor.

Elsa Maxwell was a hustler. She got them to spend money and got most of it herself. Gloria Swanson used to come to those affairs. She was married to the Marquis de la Falaise. There was a woman – Pearl White. She had been in pictures and lived in Paris. She was in *The Perils of Pauline* and all that stuff – those serial things that went on forever.

I'm trying to think of those names. I knew Bennett Cerf....that might have been a little later. Because I spoke English I knew some guys – Americans that I met. I would live in a hotel in Montmartre when I was away from home – I was about sixteen or seventeen already. And I would meet some guys and they would say they wanted to buy something. I'd say, "I'll help you." They'd say, "Well, would you meet me at Harry's New York Bar at five o'clock tomorrow?" So I would go there at five and I'd meet the guy and they were people that I'd met at the club. I met Fitzgerald, Joyce. They were hanging around there all the time....Bennett Cerf, he was a publisher for Random House. He died recently. But he had his fling. I never met Hemingway. And they were impressed because I knew Maurice Ravel. That's much later. But at the time I had played already at Proust's house. They had a name for themselves. Not the Expatriates – some other name. Gertrude Stein was one of them. I never met her either. I want to tell you, to me it meant very little at the time. I was no more impressed by those people at the time because they were very young and hadn't accomplished anything. It all happened later on – forty years later, fifty years later. But I knew them You'd just see them at the bar. Actually they weren't that brilliant there in a bar. They'd start, "Did I pull one on last night! Jesus Christ!" It was a long hangover for most of those guys.

From 1924 to 1928 I worked with Ravel, except for a little lapse for a few months when he came back in 1927 – he made a tour of the United States. But he came back and took up where he left off. Let me tell you a bit about that Boeuf sur le Toit. It was in the Ruse boissy d'Anglais. There was a piano team of Wiener and Doucet. They played ricky-ticky piano....but they were good pianists and very nice. They played during the cocktail hour and the dinner. Then after that a bass player, a drummer and myself would come around and we'd play for dance music. There are a lot of things written about Les Six. I never saw all the six there. I saw members of Les Six. And others who were not members of them as a little group.

When Ravel and I worked together we developed some rules, loosely speaking. Things that are fashionable, things that one should avoid, playing loose syncopation instead of the jerky kind which was fashionable. So he got that. And then he said, "Look, I want to play some tunes the way you do. And I'm going to see what comes to me not doing arpeggios and not doing scale." We'd already gone through the chromatic, so you had E, Eb, D, Db, C. I analyzed it after, to see how I could explain that. And I found out that there were some pretty concrete things that almost made a rule. Ravel was trying to understand

what I was doing. That might have been the only club he ever went to , that place....And I never saw him anywhere else. For instance, at the Abbaye Theleme, I used to see Rubinstein. He'd been alone with a bottle of champagne and some nuts. And he probably went to other places – always alone. I don't know for what reason he was there. Not getting drunk or anything. He'd just look around like a bird looks. He'd look right and left. He'd never speak to the musicians. I think he was listening. He was never affected by it in any way that I know of. He enjoyed the atmosphere I guess.

Ravel wrote the rhythmical *Bolero*. The way it's written is more Spanish than jazz, but for that matter, "Ain't She Sweet" is not a jazz piece either; "Sweet Sue" is not a jazz piece. They're little songs. People have made them so. Anyway, I tried to make my portion of the *Bolero* a jazz piece.

Milhaud's interest in jazz was to copy everything he could from the Americans. Listen to his *Creation of the World*. If I were going to write a symphonic piece in those days I would have got the ideas from the Americans but not the notes. Not note for note. Like the "Royal Garden Blues" he put in that thing of his – written by Spencer Williams who also was in Paris. Ravel was the best. He was the most interested and the most appreciative of what was being done. I learned a lot from him too. I'd study and analyze his scores to see what made them tick. It was the orchestration mostly. What to double, what not to double. Where to find something better to do. He never acted as a teacher, he was like a friend.

In 1927 I was conducting an orchestra at the Bouffes Parisiennes. We did good shows there, you know. Legitimate things. With a legitimate orchestra – no jazz, nothing like that. And then I used to go to the Perroquet and play jazz till five o'clock in the morning. And sometimes you would see me in the church on the Boulevard St. Michel, St. Germain des Pres. And we'd have a string quartet and we'd play with him for something that maybe he had written and so forth. After having conducted the show and playing till five, I am in church there playing the cello. But I would say the most enjoyable thing for me would be nine till five at the Perroquet, playing jazz. It was the freedom. Making a living and feeling that I was a free man. You played the notes you wanted to when you want to. You used the position of the slide that you wanted to.

Of course I had a lot to do with the band. I was the arranger. And I called the tunes you know. . . called the shots. Gluskin had the band and he had a very good band – very good players in it. A lot of American fellows in it from Detroit. There was a fellow called Russ Goudy. Much later, he played and I played with

Zinky Cohn the pianist and Nat King Cole's brother, Eddie Cole. He played bass with us. And he played good jazz piano. He died in Hawaii I understand. I never saw him since. Zinky was with the act that I came with to American, Arlene and Norman Selby. Before he came to Paris Zinky had replaced Earl Hines with Jimmy Noone's orchestra. So I'd ask Eddy Cole, "Hey man, you want to go and jam some place?" And we'd go out in Montmartre and he'd play real great. We'd just play together, you know. By the time we finished the show things were jumping in lots of clubs. We'd find one club where there's nothing much happening and we'd go and we'd play the blues. He'd hit the chords – Bam! And then we'd go. When you get through he hits another. We'd play games that way you know. It was very good.

Gluskin started by joining a French band. He was an American. He was a drummer. He joined a band – the man's name was Paul Gazon. He was a saxophone player – great technique, lousy tone, but great execution. The band was French and the only American was Gluskin. Gluskin worked his way. He got the band away from Gazon. He got some guys from Detroit to come and work. Gluskin did great for himself. He had a brother who was a criminal lawyer who worked things out for him. He was head of CBS music at one time. Now they've faded away. You see he had a bunch of guys who didn't want to make it in music necessarily. One was Ted Gobal, who owned the Brewery. He died. Gene Prendergast came back. He's lost a lung now. He's tuning pianos now to make a living. He played alto before but when we were jamming the other day there was a tenor lying down and he picked this tenor up and wow! He played great.

We had a regular job at the Perroquet. That was the most fashionable place. That's where Louis Mitchell had played years before. We'd be playing for nightclubs – midnight supper and dancing. No show. We played straight jazz. The other band played the waltzes. They played passadobles, tangos, maybe a waltz every now and then. But we played solid jazz. And we took all the choruses we wanted. Nobody could get in the place to sit in. I'd go and sit in those little clubs where you could afford to have a ham sandwich and beer. I could only see the world through a ham sandwich and a beer in those days.

I got to know Cole Porter. I did his first piano copy of "Begin the Beguine." The thing Eddy Haywood made a hit out of. He was nice. To me he was great. I heard plenty of things about Cole Porter. I met Cole Porter in Paris. He was a rich man, very elegant, very society conscious. Not necessarily a snob. He was a man who enlisted in the French foreign Legion you know. He was very gifted. He lived at the Waldorf Astoria. That's where I saw him after I met him in Paris, for

that "Begin the Beguine." We were to do it with Waring and there wasn't a piano copy of it although they were doing it in the show already. So I made it and then they did a piano copy of it. I did it in a Latin version. Nobody heard of the beguines there in South America. It was Brazilian and it was also Zhaitian. I had seen the Balle Noir in Paris where they played beguines. When I did the Waring arrangement I did that and I sent him a copy of it. I only spent about two hours with him at the Waldorf. In Paris I spent more time, because he was at the rehearsal of the show. He was a very refined, very gracious person. We weren't that close. It was a question of a very rich man who'd written the show, and I was just a guy who played trombone in the band who did a little arranging for straightening out things. He wasn't what I'd call a scholar musician. But he was a smart pianist. He had a gift for that. It wasn't like Irving Berlin, who can play in only one key. Irving Berlin had a piano where he could switch the keys around. AS far as jazz was concerned, he had the feel that all Americans have who write – the syncopation of it, not the notes necessarily. They just fish for something different. Hoagy Carmichael was much closer to jazz than any other composer except Harold Arlen. Arlen used to do all those Harlem shows. He was a very gifted man. He loved the idiom and he knew the idiom. "Stormy Weather" is an Arlen tune you know. He did a lot of those things. You know the blues at one time – most blues singers were white Jewish women. At one time they were more numerous than black blues singers. Sophie Tucker would have been a blues singer but she couldn't make a living out of it.

I was with Jack Hylton in 1929. While I was in England I used to fly over to Paris to play in jam sessions with Joe Hayman. There was another guy with him called Edwin Swayzee. He later played with Cab Calloway. For a long time I thought Hoe Hayman was Ben Carter. I was doing a radio show from Paris every Sunday. At that time there were no commercial shows in England. At the end of 1930 somebody got the idea for a program of dance music – I think it was the Barley Soup people or some cigarette firm, I forget. So I used to fly to Paris with the mail. There was a guy there called Felix Passeron who played tenor sax. Later he became the percussion teacher at the Conservatoire. He was also playing drums at the opera. He sometimes did recordings as an extra drummer with the London symphony. He contacted the musicians I needed. I would send the music on ahead. Then I would come over to rehearse the band and do the show. That was Sunday afternoon. Afterwards there was nothing to do. So I'd go somewhere to jam. I'd go to the Abaye Theleme or Zeilli's – anywhere. I knew all the musicians so I could go where I wanted. Most of the trombone

players were guys that sat there and played from the stocks. So I could go anywhere and be welcome. I wouldn't go to the big places. I'd go to the little clubs and sometimes there'd be black Americans and we'd play till about five o'clock in the morning.

I was always especially glad to play with the black guys. It was always better to play with them. In the first place I liked to speak English. Talking about jazz in French always seemed to me to be ridiculous. It didn't ring true. "Hey, stay in Bb for the first ending." That meant something. The language has a lot to do with it. In America, even today, musicians dress differently, talk differently, they even shake hands differently. It's another life. In 1934 I was offered the spot as first trombone with the Boston Symphony. I turned it down. What I was doing with Fred Waring wasn't very glamorous, but I was making more money. When Waring heard I was going to leave and go with the Boston symphony he gave me an extra fifty bucks a week. So I didn't leave because I always watched the money angle. I never had a manager or an agent. I did everything myself. Besides, I liked the jazz. I never let go of illegitimate music.

Before I went to the States I went to South America with Gregor. Stephane Grappelly was with us, but we never saw him. He wasn't exactly a cagey guy but he didn't have any friends in the band that I knew of. Not that they didn't want to be friends with him. While we were there we had Michel Emer and Stephane Mouglin as pianists. We enjoyed going to a place where there was a piano and jamming but Grappelly would never come. He had other things to do I guess. He was a dull boy as far as the orchestra was concerned. We had our jokes – he never did. He was very talented. He played piano very well for the jazz stuff.

Eddie South was the best on violin around. Nobody played the violin the way he did. I used to see him in clubs late at night. He'd go there to play or sometimes he worked there. I never played with him. He was incredible. He'd never do the same thing twice. He'd do it the way it hit him. It was so sweet and in such good taste and good jazz. Even in a slow tune. He could play a fast tune but he didn't like it. He liked to expose the real beauty of a tune and whatever notes he added were just gems. Eddie South was like Coleman Hawkins. Grappelly was a guy that liked to play a lot of notes but Coleman Hawkins never played sixteenth notes in his life and if he played eighth notes he wouldn't go on indefinitely. Eddie South concentrated on the beauty of tone and the feeling – never went for the tricky stuff. Now Grappelly had his own style. He's playing great today. In those days I didn't think he had his own style.



After Gregor I went to the States and joined Fred Waring. There I met Jack Purvis. Jack Purvis put his head in the gas oven. He called someone first. They called the police and they came to get him. If they catch you in the act of suicide they take you down to the station and charge you. So they did just that. They said, "Come on, we're taking you down to the station." He said, "Let me put my coat on. Do you want me to die of pneumonia?" You know what he did? When we started at the Roxy Theater he got himself an apartment in an adjacent hotel. And he put it in the newspaper that the first trumpet with Fred Waring had inherited a lot of money. It wasn't true of course. So he goes to the hotel and he says he's Jack Purvis. He always wore a black homburg hat and an English greatcoat with an inverted pleat at the back and a sort of half belt. Like that he always shows up like he's chamberlain or somebody. He said, "I want the best suite you've got." So they showed it to him and he finally said he'd take it but they had to remove all the furniture. So he went to Ludwig Bowman and he bought himself a bed and everything. He didn't say he was Purvis. He was "Mr. Purvis' valet" and he showed them the piece in the paper saying that he'd inherited 350,000 dollars. So they delivered everything. He even rented a harp. He didn't play the harp but he liked to have one around. And he stayed there – he didn't pay any rent. He didn't bother with trifles like that. We played that engagement for exactly six months. So Purvis leaves a month before we did. First he got about a hundred dollars out of everyone in the band. He didn't get me – I knew the guy. But he got everybody else. Everyone thought he was loaded so it was OK. Then he left town and we never saw him again. Some guy!

We used to go to Adrian Rollini's place. It was in the basement of some hotel around 48<sup>th</sup> Street. That was the place where Joe Venuti bust the teeth of Johnny Davis for no reason at all. We were having a good time and Joe Venuti resented it. Anyway, we used to go to this place to listen to the group. It was Adrian and his brother and guys used to sit in. Sometimes Purvis would sit in or some of the others would. WE also used to go to the Famous Door on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. It was speakeasy time you know. I loved New York when I first came there.

I was with Fred Waring but I wasn't playing with the band. I was just arranging. Waring had a fellow called Listock who danced. He didn't play an instrument, he just held a trumpet or something. He had an act with Dan Dailey. He used to teach Judy Garland how to dance. He was a fine actor. We were room-mates. We were in Chicago. We'd finished our part of the engagement so Waring said, "Why don't you two take a couple of days off before we finish

here? You can drive my car to New Orleans with Listock and you can see a bit of the country.” So we did. I had my trombone with me. And we got someplace – Louisiana somewhere. And there were these black guys and women picking cotton. And this guy Listock played a little guitar – he knew a few chords. So he gets his guitar and I got my trombone and we take off on a blues right there in the field. Nothing! They still go on picking cotton. They must have thought, “What are these idiots doing?”

I was with Roger Wolfe Kahn. His father was a millionaire who at one time was practically supporting the Metropolitan Opera single-handed. Roger was the guy that wrote that tune “Crazy Rhythm.” He played several instruments, not well but all the same pretty smart for a rich kid. He knew what was going on in the orchestra. We made a few records. He had good arrangements. It was a very good band. There were three saxophones only: there was Arty Shaw, there was a fellow called Max Farley who played clarinet and oboe and there was Larry Binyon who played tenor sax. We had Chauncey Moorhouse on drums and Charlie Teagaden was one of the trumpeters. I was first trombone and the other guy was Danny or Andy Russo, I never remember which. Perry Brodtkin was the guitar player. He was with Russ Colombo later. I think that the pianist was Marlin Skyers. We opened at the Fordham Theater. Then we played the Palace, which is as high as you can get in New York – the best gig in vaudeville. On the bill was Ethel Waters and her pianist Art Tatum. And we had a music room downstairs where the orchestra tunes up and where there was a piano. We used to get together and play. That was the time they discovered the whole tone scale and we’d mess around improvising on that. It fits with practically anything. I would put some bass notes down on the trombone and sustain them to make the scale less crude. If you put it over a pedal it’s better. They would play it all ways – in thirds and picking odd notes but just keeping to those six notes of the scale. And Ethel Waters would come down there and sit and knit. She had the most wonderful smile. She was a wonderful singer in that style. She used to sing “Stormy Wetter” – not weather, wetter. It was so natural. Not forced like Yves Montand. She was very southern and very black but very good. She was magnificent in *Cabin in the Sky*.

The quality of the black guys is to be natural. I haven’t been that close to them because I spent thirty-six years confined to the studios doing something entirely different. When it came to doing a jazz scene for Hollywood we used the guys from the studio because they were good. Anyway, when I was with Waring we used to go uptown. There was little Frankie Zulo, Purvis, the three

trumpet players in the band – they were the swingers – and I used to go with them. We'd get four girls from the show and we'd go to Harlem to see a floor-show. Usually the band was Don Redman or Fletcher Henderson. There were a lot of bands that were very good. Those floor-shows were amazing. I'd always been dreaming about that kind of entertainment. I was a sucker for tap dancing. I used to see two guys going it together in Paris. I don't remember their names but they were great dancers. You very seldom see Sammy Davis doing it now. He jogs along these days. But the Sammy Davis girls are still great. He lent them to a show with Isaac Hayes which I played and I've never seen anything like it. They broke themselves in two jumping over chairs and then they did a thing where everybody does their own step. That's very exciting. You applaud one number and another one starts. I like it when they have those groups and all the girls take turns dancing with the others clapping and cheering them on."

### Arnaud and Hollywood

Leo married Broadway actress Blanche Baw in 1934. Through her connections they soon moved to Hollywood. This was the beginning of his career orchestrating for the movies and his important role in the "MGM Years" – the Golden Age of movie musicals.

His first orchestration for a musical was *Born to Dance*. It was released in 1936 and starred Eleanor Powell, James Stewart, Virginia Bruce and Buddy Ebsen. Many more were to follow and Leo's move activities included an arranger, composer, vocal coach, and conductor. Leo says: "The first thing I did – everything I wrote that had some dance stuff or jazz – four trumpets, four trombones. He used the 8 man brass section when writing for *Born to Dance*. While it would be impossible to name all the movies Leo worked on – to name just a few: *Gone with the Wind*, *Captain from Castile* (1947), *Gilda* (1946), *One Touch of Venus* (1948), *Easter Parade* ( 1948), *Stars and Stripes Forever* (1952), *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954), *The King and I* (1956), *South Pacific* ( 1958), *Dr. Zhivago* (1965), and was nominated for an Academy Award for *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* (1964).

### Ravel, Vauchant & the Bolero

Ravel was one of the first composers to use the 'new' style of trombone playing in his some of his compositions. Vauchant gave us a unique insight into how Ravel meant his trombone parts from 1924 onwards. *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, *Bolero*, the *Concerto for Piano Left Hand and the Piano* concerto in G minor, all have lyrical trombone passages with some kind and aspects of distinct jazz influence, whereas none of Ravel's music before this does. The most apt example is the solo in *Bolero*.

During his visits to Ravel Vauchant performed the *Bolero* solo for Ravel privately and also in the preview performance of the ballet with the Monte Carlo Symphony and the Ballets Russes in 1929 for a small invited audience. Vauchant was said to have performed the solo with a lot of vibrato, no articulation when this was possible, with no glissandi and with some mordents where he felt it was appropriate. Vauchant remembered that Ravel wanted the solo to be in the style of "a gypsy woman singing bare-chested as she put out the laundry." Vauchant also recalls that Ravel was fascinated by the way that the solo begins using the first two slide positions, then adds a third, then a fourth, fifth and finally the sixth position.

When the solo was performed by Andre Lafosse, the principle trombonist of the Paris Opera Ravel was unhappy with the rigidity of the solo and told him to "do like Arnaud, do a little jazz." Lafosse had included some glissandi, but this solo and recordings are significantly different from those used nowadays.

Edward Solomon has written on the trombone solo and states: "The positions used in the solo will depend entirely on the player. There are many alternate positions which can be used for the very high parts, though once the line descends below E in the 9<sup>th</sup> bar, the positions are more typically going to be the shortest available, reaching down to 6<sup>th</sup> position for the last note."

Tom Erwin also has written on the solo in *Bolero*:

"There are many challenges in performing this solo. They include waiting through so many "verses" before you get to play, making a perfect "bulls-eye" entrance, using an excellent ballad legato, and maintaining accurate control as the pitches descend. Also keep in mind that this solo has long phrases which may require the performer play louder than they might like. In relation to that, it is important to keep a good, full sound throughout, especially at the end. The glissando to the high Db is also a challenge.

Some extra breaths will be necessary if the general dynamic level of the orchestra is high or if the tempo is slow. I prefer to breathe after long notes as one usually does. I'll also breathe after the second high Db in measure 5, not

because I need a breath at that moment, but because I will need it later. I also usually breathe right after the middle C, after the middle G two bars later, after the Eb, and after the low Db if I have any doubts about as strong finish.

I like to use vibrato in this solo, and in this range my safest vibrato is with the slide “a la Dorsey” on all notes longer than an eight note. It can easily be “switched off” if the conductor requests.

Vibrato should only be used when playing this line solo. When the trombonists plays it with other instruments one shouldn't use vibrato. In the final “verse”, the performer can breathe wherever necessary and remember to blend and balance, not compete. Most conductors will want the final “glissandi” as written rhythmically, on the beat, not scooping into the beats.....Two final tips: Practice Bolero at a wide variety of tempos so that you are prepared for anything. Check pitches with a tuner, as this is an uncommon scale and an unusual range is involved.”

The solo contains some syncopation with some notes played in a portamento style. Arnaud remarked he didn't use glissandos but did use vibrato on certain notes. There is no doubt that the solo is jazz influenced and is one of the hardest trombone solos in classical literature

George Broussard interviewed Arnaud and wrote the following:

“Dr Arnaud suggests staying in the first two positions until bar 7 (Ab). In bar 9 the F1 is played in raised fourth and in bar 12, he uses raised fifth for E1. The second F in bar 15 as well as the one in bar 16 is in sixth. Ravel wanted to do one position, two, three, four, five...five, six – it's the right order. I said, but you don't ever use the seventh position and Ravel said to me in French (expletive deleted) the seventh position.

Leo's singing and playing use vibrato and mordents to impart a jazz style, the b-flat, C2 and Db2 in bar four are accented heavily and the final notes of the phrase (bar 7) are eased back to release tension. The accents in bars 11 and 13 are fairly heavy also as is the accented 2<sup>nd</sup> sixteenth of bar 14. Accents on the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat of bar 15 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> beat of bar 16 are used to build into the coming tutti passage.

Ravel felt that the trombonist who was to play the November, 1928, premier was playing somewhat stiffly. “He told the fellow, ‘Do like Leo, do a

little jazz,,’ All the fellow could think of was glissandos. I didn’t do any. I put sometimes some turns, if I felt like it, I said something, that’s all.”

Composers are always looking for new styles in incorporate and use in their music, then often go on to other newer styles. This is a natural experience and the jazz style used by Milhaud and the others soon, after becoming an example for American young composers, went on to other ideas, with the Americans developing jazz into an exciting new style that continues to progress and develop