



BIX BEIDERBECKE

A CENTURY OF JAZZ INSPIRATION

NOVEMBER 18, 2025

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE (OLLI)

PRESENTED BY

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERACTIVE MEDIA

AND

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WITH SPECIAL GUEST DR. TODD KELLY

CHAIRPERSON, BU DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

**THANKS TO DOUG LEUNIG FOR THE ANIMATION,
USING MYHERITAGE SOFTWARE**

**ON NOVEMBER 18, 1928, BIX, WITH THE PAUL
WHITEMAN ORCHESTRA, RECORDED
WASHBOARD BLUES SUNG BY ITS COMPOSER,
HOAGY CARMICHAEL**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkbopYmXnll>

Day

WELCOME TO SPECIAL GUEST

IMPORTANT CAVEATS

BIX'S EARLY LIFE IN DAVENPORT, IA

BRIEF HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL JASS/JAZZ

BIX'S EARLY YEARS IN LAKE FOREST/CHICAGO

FIVE ENSEMBLES

THREE "MYSTERIES": 1 "SOLVED," 2 (PROBABLY) FOREVER UNSOLVED

BREAK

TODD KELLY DEMO

BIX BEIDERBECKE MUSEUM VIRTUAL TOUR

"BIX SITES" VIRTUAL TOUR IN DAVENPORT

Q&A TIME AT END, BUT FEEL FREE TO ASK QUESTIONS AS WE GO.

WELCOME TO SPECIAL GUEST
BEIDERBECKE MUSEUM BOARD ADVISOR

LIZ BEIDERBECKE-HART

PETERSBURG, IL

BIX'S GRANDNIECE

CAVEAT EMPTOR: I STAY WITH KNOWN “FACTS.” HOWEVER:

WAY BACK WHEN:

THE PRESS WAS SOMETIMES NADA;

JAZZ AND MEDIA WERE NEW;

**RACISIM WAS RAMPANT, PROHIBITION FORCED “FUN” LIFE
UNDERGROUND, ANTI-GERMAN SENTIMENT WAS HIGH;**

BIX WAS OFTEN IN MIDWEST & SMALL TOWNS;

VERY SHORT CAREER: HIS LIMELIGHT WAS BRIEF (1921-31);

**NO DEFINITIVE BIOGRAPHY: A LOT OF WHAT WE HAVE WAS
PRODUCED BY NON-PROFESSIONAL WRITERS;**

INTERVIEWS FEED WHAT WE HAVE: BIAS OF ALL SORTS.

ME? BIX IS IMPORTANT TO AMERICAN MUSIC HISTORY, ESPECIALLY
JAZZ.

“BIX-O-PHILE?” NOPE “BIX-A-PHOBE?” NOPE
I’M A FAN, NOT A FANATIC.
WE ARE, LIKE BIX:

In a Mist,
1927

Bix Beiderbecke,

composer and pianist in

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2Ai8dgBko>
1928 recording

BIX, ROY BARGY AND LEONARD HAYTON ALSO PLAYED *IN A MIST* FOR THREE PIANOS

TO A FULL HOUSE AT CARNEGIE HALL ON OCTOBER 7, 1928.



BIX'S EARLY LIFE IN DAVENPORT IA (1903-1921)--1 of 4

- ❖ BORN MARCH 10, 1903, IN DAVENPORT
- ❖ GERMAN IMMIGRANT **GRANDPARENTS: CHARLES & LOUISE.**
- ❖ **CHARLES:** IMPORTANT BUSINESSMAN & CIVIC LEADER;
LOUISE: ORGANIST, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.
- ❖ BIX'S **PARENTS: BISMARCK & AGATHA.**
- ❖ **BISMARCK:** MANAGED THE DAVENPORT FUEL CO;
AGATHA: ORGANIST, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
- ❖ FAMILIES WERE PROMINENT MEMBERS OF GERMAN-AMERICAN SOCIETIES, THE OUTING CLUB (**THE** PRIVATE CLUB IN DAVENPORT) AND AVID PATRONS OF THE ARTS.

BIX'S EARLY LIFE IN DAVENPORT IA (1903-1921)--2 OF 4

- ❖ **MANY RELATIVES LIVED NEAR BIX. ALL HAD MUSIC, ESPECIALLY PIANOS, AT HOME.**
- ❖ **BIX PLUNKED BY 3, COPIED/PLAYED TUNES BY EAR AT 7.**
- ❖ **LOVED CALLIOPE MUSIC FROM RIVERBOATS & SOMETIMES PLAYED THOSE KEYBOARDS.**
- ❖ **PARTICIPATED IN THEATER, MUSIC CLUBS, BASEBALL & TENNIS: BUT MOSTLY MUSIC.**
- ❖ **PIANO LESSONS, MUSIC IN SCHOOL, BIX DID NOT LEARN TO SIGHT-READ; BIX PLAYED BY EAR.**

BIX'S EARLY LIFE IN DAVENPORT IA (1903-1921)--3 OF 4

- ❖ BIX'S BROTHER, BURNIE IN WWI ARMY, POSTED MOSTLY IN KY. BROUGHT RECORD PLAYER & RECORDS HOME POST- DISCHARGE.
- ❖ INCLUDING *TIGER RAG* BY THE "ORIGINAL DIXIELAND JASS BAND," WITH CORNET PLAYER NICK LAROCCA. BIX FELL IN LOVE WITH THE SOUND OF THE CORNET & JAZZ. HE BORROWED A USED CORNET, COPIED EVERY NOTE & TAUGHT HIMSELF TO PLAY CORNET BY REPEATED LISTENING/EMULATION.
- ❖ ODJB ISSUED THE FIRST FORMALLY RECORDED JASS TUNES, INCLUDING "TIGER RAG" (1908).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_aaVxhRU-o



BIX'S EARLY LIFE IN DAVENPORT (1903-1921) 4 OF 4

- ❖ **WHEN “JASSY” GROUPS APPEARED ON THE RIVERBOATS, BIX SPENT EVEN MORE TIME LISTENING & SOMETIMES SITTING IN.**
- ❖ **BIX PROBABLY MET LOUIS ARMSTRONG ON OR NEAR A RIVERBOAT AT DAVENPORT, PERHAPS MORE THAN ONCE.**
- ❖ **NUMEROUS BANDS FOR LOCAL EVENTS, PLAYING CORNET IN ENSEMBLES. HE OFTEN “ENTERTAINED” PLAYING SOLO PIANO.**
- ❖ **LOST EARLY GIGS: NO SIGHT-READING, NO UNION CARD!**
- ❖ **UN-ORTHODOX PLAYER: MIXED HARMONIC STYLES, POPULAR/JAZZ/CLASSICAL ON PIANO; USED NON-STANDARD FINGERINGS ON CORNET.**
- ❖ **NOT A GOOD STUDENT. BIX WAS “THIRD-YEAR” HIS LAST YEAR AT DAVENPORT HIGH, BUT ENTERED LAKE FOREST ACADEMY, THE NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR, AS A “SECOND-YEAR” STUDENT.**

BRIEF HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL JASS/JAZZ (1875-1920) 1 OF 4

- ❖ **NO SINGLE “INVENTOR”:** NOT BENNY BOLDEN (FIRST TO ADD BRASS TO THE BLUES IN NEW ORLEANS), NICK LAROCCA (ODJB, FIRST TO ISSUE RECORDED JASS NUMBERS) NOR JELLY ROLL MORTON (PIANIST/COMPOSER FEATURED STRIDE PIANO AND “RAGTIME” RHYTHMS). CERTAINLY NOT “SECOND GENERATION” PLAYERS LIKE LOUIS ARMSTRONG OR BIX.
- ❖ **NEW ORLEANS POST-CIVIL WAR:** WITH NYC, MOST DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE CITIES IN USA. PEOPLE BROUGHT THEIR MUSICAL INFLUENCES AND PREFERENCES WITH THEM FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AND WORLD.
- ❖ **BACKGROUND INFLUENCES:** VAUDEVILLE, MARCHES (SOUZA & JAMES EUROPE), RAGTIME MUSIC, SCOTT JOPLIN, EUROPEAN CLASSICAL IMPRESSIONISTS, MUSIC OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, NATIVE AMERICAN, CANADIAN FIRST PEOPLE, & ACADIANS (ACADIANS BECAME “CAJUNS”).

BRIEF HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL JASS/JAZZ (1875-1920)

“SPECIAL INFLUENCES” IN NEW ORLEANS 2 OF 4

- ❖ **SLAVERY/POST-SLAVERY WORK SONGS.**
- ❖ **SACRED MUSIC/STYLES FROM AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES.**
- ❖ **RAGTIME (ESP. STRIDE PIANO AND SYNCOPATION)**
- ❖ **MARCHES.**
- ❖ **INTEGRATION OF “THE BLUES” INTO POPULAR PLAYING.**
- ❖ **BARS, HOTELS, AND BROTHELS AS VENUES.**
- ❖ **STREET PARADES BOTH “OFFICIAL” (HOLIDAYS, ETC.) AND UNOFFICIAL (FUNERALS/WEDDINGS).**
- ❖ **COMPETITION AMONG BANDS, ESPECIALLY VIA STREET PARADES (THERE WERE WHITE BANDS, BLACK BANDS, AND OTHERS).**
- ❖ **MUSICAL EDUCATION: VERY HIGH % OF PLAYERS WERE TRAINED SIGHT-READERS. BLUES PLAYERS HAD OFTEN BEEN SOLO & DIDN'T READ; JAZZ WAS SCORED FOR ENSEMBLES & SIGHT-READERS.**

BRIEF HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL JASS/JAZZ (1875-1920)

“SPECIAL INFLUENCES” AWAY FROM NEW ORLEANS 3 OF 4

- ❖ **NOV. 12, 1917: BARS, HOTELS AND BROTHELS OF STORYVILLE, IN N.O. WERE CLOSED.**
- ❖ **THEREAFTER, JAZZ MUSICIANS/MUSIC FOLLOWED “THE GREAT MIGRATION” NORTH, UP THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER & “OVER” TO CHICAGO. NYC, KC, ST. LOUIS BECAME HOT SPOTS.**
- ❖ **CAPTAIN JOE STRECKFUS OWNED A FLEET OF MISSISSIPPI RIVERBOAT STEAMERS. STRECKFUS BOOSTED/LAUNCHED THE CAREERS OF MANY MUSICIANS.**
- ❖ **IN ADDITION TO WHITE PIANO PLAYERS & BANDS, STRECKFUS HIRED AFRICAN AMERICAN BANDS FROM N.O.EVEN THOUGH HIS PASSENGERS WERE LARGELY WHITE. PASSENGERS WERE INDIGNANT AT FIRST BUT EVENTUALLY HAD A DANCING BLAST!**
- ❖ **LOUIS ARMSTRONG PLAYED THE STRECKFUS RIVERBOATS BEFORE LEAVING NEW ORLEANS TO JOIN KING OLIVER IN CHICAGO. LOUIS & BIX PROBABLY FIRST MET AT DAVENPORT, ON A BOAT.**
- ❖ **JASS/JAZZ CAME TO THE MIDWEST, AND TO BIX, VIA RIVERBOATS. ONCE IT HIT THE BIG CITIES, PROHIBITION’S SPEAKEASYS, AND THE ODEON’S RECORDINGS, JAZZ SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE.**

BRIEF HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL JASS/JAZZ (1875-1920)

“SPECIAL INFLUENCES”: JASS/JAZZ ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

4 OF 4

MISSISSIPPI
RIVERBOAT



OPEN DANCE
FLOOR ON
STRECKFUS BOAT



FATE MARABLE BANDS ON
STRECKFUS BOATS



BIX'S EARLY YEARS: LAKE FOREST/CHICAGO

SEPT. 1921- OCT. 1923

- ❖ **SEPT. 1921, BIX ENROLLED AS SOPH AT LAKE FOREST ACADEMY (LFA).**
- ❖ **PLAYS AT LEAST 3 SPORTS, IN LFA MUSIC GROUPS, & LEADS AT LEAST 3 BANDS.**
- ❖ **DISCOVERS TRAIN TO CHICAGO: MUSIC, BOOZE, JAZZ DOWNTOWN & SOUTH END.**
- ❖ **EXPELLED FROM LFA MAY 22, 1922. RETURNING TOO LATE; PROBABLY WITH LIQUOR.**
- ❖ **UNTIL LATE 1924, HE'S IN CHICAGO, TRAVELING "AROUND" THE UPPER MIDWEST FOR GIGS, WITH OCCASIONAL TRIPS HOME TO WORK & PLAY MUSIC.**
- ❖ **IN CHICAGO, BIX MET HOAGY CARMICHAEL & SOMETIMES "JAMMED" WITH, BENNY GOODMAN (AGED 14), LIZ HARDEN-ARMSTRONG, & OTHER PROMINENT PLAYERS, INCLUDING LOUIS ARMSTRONG.**
- ❖ **IN 1923, WHILE VISITING HOME, BIX MET FRANK (TRAM) TRUMBAUER AT ONE OF TRAM'S MUSICAL ENGAGEMENTS. THEIR FRIENDSHIP LASTED THROUGH BIX'S LIFETIME.**
- ❖ **IN LATE 1923, BIX BEGAN PLAYING WITH MUSICIANS WHO SOON FORMED THE VERSION OF *WOLVERINES* THAT SERVED AS THE FIRST MAJOR BAND OF BIX'S CAREER.**



FIRST OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX: *WOLVERINES*, 1924—1 OF 2

CLASSIC WOLVERINES LINE-UP

STANDING: PIANIST DICK VOYNOW. SEATED L-R: DRUMMER, VIC MOORE, TENOR SAXOPHONIST GEORGE JOHNSON, CLARINETIST JIMMY HARTWELL, BIX BEIDERBECKE, TROMBONIST AL GRANDE, TUBA PLAYER MIN LEIBROOK, BANJOIST BOB GILLETTE.



JAZZ ME BLUES

TOM DELANEY, 1921

ONE OF THE TUNES RECORDED BY
THE WOLVERINES AT
GENNETT RECORDING STUDIO IN
RICHMOND IN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcDwDZBNh8>

FIRST OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX:

WOLVERINES 1924—2 OF 2

- ❖ ENCOURAGED BY POSITIVE AUDIENCE RECEPTION & IU LAW-SCHOOL STUDENT HOAGY CARMICHAEL'S CONNECTIONS AT INDIANA U., *WOLVERINES* PLAYED MANY SHOWS ON CAMPUS AND AT NUMEROUS INDIANA VENUES.
- ❖ FEB. 18, 1924, RECORDED FIVE TUNES AT GENNETT; MAY 6, 1924, RECORDED FIVE MORE; JUNE 20, THREE RECORDINGS (ONE WAS A REPEAT FROM MAY 6 SESSION).
- ❖ SEPTEMBER 1924, *WOLVERINES* TRAVELED TO AND TOURED IN NY, INCLUDING AT THE NEW CINDERELLA BALLROOM, 48TH & BROADWAY (30 DAY CONTRACT).
- ❖ RECORDED MORE TUNES AT STARR PIANO (PARENT COMPANY TO GENNETT) IN NYC (FOUR AS *WOLVERINES*; TWO AS FRANK TRUMBAUER-LED *SIOUX CITY SIX*).
- ❖ OCT 11, 1924, BIX LEFT THE *WOLVERINES* AND NY; RETURNED TO MIDWEST.

SECOND OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX: *JEAN GOLDKETTE BAND/ORCHESTRA* (PT.1, 1924)



*Jean
Goldkette*

- ❖ BASED IN DETROIT, GOLDKETTE MANAGED MUSICAL GROUPS & VENUES. HIS GROUPS ALSO PLAYED OVER WWJ RADIO.
- ❖ BIX WAS FIRST WITH GOLDKETTE OCT 15 THROUGH DEC. 8. THEIR MUSIC DIRECTOR, EDDIE KING, DID NOT LIKE BIX'S PLAYING AND LACK OF SIGH-READING ABILITY SO BIX WAS LET GO.
- ❖ IN **FEB. 1925**, BIX WAS ENROLLED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA. BIX'S TIME AT IOWA CITY LASTED TWO WEEKS.
- ❖ BIX ORGANIZED AND/OR PLAYED IN A NUMBER OF ENSEMBLES IN 1925, AFTER LEAVING GOLDKETTE, INCLUDING *BIX BEIDERBECKE AND HIS RHYTHM JUGGLERS*, THE *CALIFORNIA RAMBLERS* (WITH THE DORSEY BROTHERS AND RED NICHOLS), *CHARLIE STRAIGHT'S ORCH.*, THE BREEZE BLOWERS, AND THE *PEPPER BOYS* AMONG OTHERS.
- ❖ HE WOULD LATER PLAY IN ADDITIONAL ENSEMBLES. ESPECIALLY PROMINENT: *BIX BEIDERBECKE AND HIS GANG* AND HIS WORK WITH **FRANK TRUMBAUER**.

THIRD OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX: *FRANK TRUMBAUER'S ORCHESTRA (1925-1926)*



CRYIN' ALL DAY
FRANKIE
TRUMBAUER &
C. MOREHOUSE,
1927
FRANKIE
TRUMBAUER &
HIS ORCHESTRA



- ❖ BY SEPT. 1925, BIX JOINED FRANK (TRAM) TRUMBAUER'S ORCHESTRA FOR AN EXTENDED RUN AT THE ARCADIA BALLROOM IN ST. LOUIS.
- ❖ IN EARLY 1926, THE TRAM ORCH. TOURED THE MIDWEST AS WELL AS PLAYING THE ARCADIA. THE ARCADIA RUN CLOSED IN MAY, 1926.
- ❖ IN ADDITION TO RECORDING TOGETHER WHILE WORKING FOR, FIRST, GOLDKETTE AND LATER, PAUL WHITEMAN, BIX AND TRAM RECORDED TOGETHER UNDER TRAM'S LEADERSHIP IN THE *SIOUX CITY SIX* OR TRAM'S *ORCHESTRA*, BUT NOT WHILE IN ST. LOUIS.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02pefTRN9q4>

FOURTH OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX: *BIX BEIDERBECKE AND HIS GANG (1927-1929)*

BIX BEIDERBECKE (CORNET); BILL RANK (TROMBONE); DON MURRAY (CLARINET); ADRIAN ROLLINI (BASS SAX); FRANK SIGNORELLI (PIANO); HOWDY QUICKSELL (BANJO); CHAUNCEY MOREHOUSE (DRUMS). ROY BARGY, MIN LEIBROOK, AND LENNIE HAYTON SOMETIMES INCLUDED.



At the Jazz Band Ball, 1917.
Nick LaRocca and Larry Shields
Bix and his Gang, 1927.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOxSze6dkdQ>

**SECOND OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX:
JEAN GOLDKETTE BAND/ORCHESTRA—ENCORE!
(PT.2, MAY 1926-SEPT. 1927) —1 OF 2**

- ❖ **GOLDKETTE RECRUITED BIX TO REJOIN & TRAM TO JOIN.**
- ❖ **WHILE “GETTING ORGANIZED” WITH GOLDKETTE, BIX AND TRAM PLAYED SHOWS & MADE RECORDS WITH *BIX’S GANG* AND *TRAM’S ORCHESTRA*. BOTH ENSEMBLES USED PLAYERS FROM GOLDKETTE’S BANDS/ORCHESTRAS.**
- ❖ **PRIMARY PLAYERS INCLUDED RAY LODWIG, FRED FARRAR, IRVING RISKIN, CHAUNCEY MOREHOUSE, STEVE BROWN, DON MURRAY, TRAM, BIX, HOWDY QUICKSELL, DOC RYKER, SPIEGLE WILCOX, BILL RANK, ADRIAN ROLLINI, FRANK SIGNORELLI, EDDIE LANG, JOE VENUTI.**

SECOND OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX: *JEAN GOLDKETTE BAND/ORCHESTRA*—ENCORE! (PT.2, MAY 1926-SEPT. 1927) —1 OF 2

THE GOLDKETTE ORCHESTRA MADE TWO MEMORABLE TOURS OF THE EAST COAST, PLAYED LONG ENGAGEMENTS IN NYC & SUCCESSFULLY COMPETED AGAINST TOP NYC BANDS, FOR INSTANCE, THE FLETCHER HENDERSON ORCHESTRA, IN BATTLES OF THE BANDS.



***CLEMENTINE (FROM NEW ORLEANS)*
HENRY CREAMER AND HARRY WARREN,
1927
JEAN GOLDKETTE RECORDING
ORCHESTRA**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BUexwocNA>

FIFTH OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX: *PAUL WHITEMAN'S ORCHESTRA, 1927-1929—1 OF 4*

- ❖ Press notices so often referred to him as “the King of Jazz,” Whiteman adopted the inaccurate moniker in his advertising & publicity. **He was not the king of jazz.**
- ❖ The Orchestra was not a jazz group. The ensemble played heavily orchestrated music of all types. However, while few symphony orchestras played any jazz, Whiteman featured a LOT of orchestrated jazz but with **little to no improvisation (except Bix).**
- ❖ Whiteman recorded a LOT of jazz tunes.
- ❖ He commissioned Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* & long employed Ferde Grofé as his musical director.
- ❖ Whiteman's groups (both the Orchestra and “The Rhythm Boys--a vocal trio featuring Bing Crosby)--toured and recorded so extensively as to risk exhaustion.



PAUL WHITEMAN'S ORCHESTRA (circa 1927).

Left to right : Chester Gaylord (vocalist), E. Pinder (trumpet), Austin "Slim" Young (vocalist), Min Leibbrook (bass), Rube Crozier (sax), Charlie Strickfadden (sax), PAUL WHITEMAN, Kurt Dieterle (violin), Frankie Trumbauer (behind tuba, without moustache), Bill Rank (trombone), Jack Fulton (trombone and vocalist), BIX BEIDERBECKE, Boyce Cullen (trombone), Goldie Goldfield (trumpet). *At piano* : Roy Bargy—Lennie Hayton (nearest piano). *Left to right from tuba, after Dieterle* : Mischa Russell (violin), Matt Malneck (violin), Charlie Margulis (trumpet), Willie Hall (trombone), Mike Trafficante (bass), "Red" Maier (Sax and Flute), Chester Hazlett (saxes). *Seated in front* : Izzy Friedman (clarinet), Mike Pingatore (banjo), George Marsh (drums).

FIFTH OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX: ***PAUL WHITEMAN'S ORCHESTRA, 1927-1929—3 OF 4***

❖WORKING FOR WHITEMAN: PROS

- ❖HIGH PAY SCALE, REGULAR CHECKS, LOTS OF WORK.
- ❖TIGHTLY ORGANIZED WORK.
- ❖BETTER TRAVEL, SLEEPING, FOOD ARRANGEMENTS THAN MOST MUSICAL GROUPS.
- ❖LOTS OF RECORDING.
- ❖DIVERSE PLAY-LIST ACROSS STYLES.
- ❖AUDIENCES SHOWED UP AND LOVED THE MUSIC.

- ❖GRINDING SCHEDULE OF RECORDING & LIVE SHOWS.
- ❖NO IMPROVISATION: ALL MUSIC WAS CHARTED.
- ❖ALL WHITE GROUP (INTEGRATION WAS NOT EXPECTED ANYWAY BUT THE MUSIC SUFFERED AS A RESULT).
- ❖DIVERSE PLAY-LIST ACROSS STYLES BUT REPETITIVE PERFORMANCES TO THE POINT OF NEAR MADNESS FOR THE PLAYERS.

❖WORKING FOR WHITEMAN: CONS

FIFTH OF FIVE PROMINENT ENSEMBLES WITH BIX: *PAUL WHITEMAN'S ORCHESTRA, 1927-1929—4 OF 4*

❖ BIX WORKING FOR WHITEMAN: **PROS**

- ❖ HIGH PAY SCALE, REGULAR CHECKS, LOTS OF WORK.
- ❖ TIGHTLY ORGANIZED WORK.
- ❖ BETTER TRAVEL, SLEEPING, FOOD ARRANGEMENTS THAN MOST MUSICAL GROUPS.
- ❖ LOTS OF RECORDING.
- ❖ DIVERSE PLAY-LIST ACROSS STYLES.
- ❖ AUDIENCES SHOWED UP & LOVED THE MUSIC
- ❖ BIX DEEPLY APPRECIATED CLASSICAL MUSIC SO ENJOYED BEING IN A LEGITIMATE GROUP THAT PLAYED SOME.
- ❖ WHITEMAN SUPPORTED BIX, EMPLOYED HIM & PAID FOR REHAB & HEALTH CARE (TO NO AVAIL). THEY LIKED EACH OTHER.

CHINA BOY,
1929
PHIL BOUTELJE
& DICK WINFREE
PAUL
WHITEMAN AND
HIS ORCHESTRA

https://archive.org/details/78_china-boy_bix-beiderbecke-paul-whitemans-orchestra_gbia/00299902

❖ BIX WORKING FOR WHITEMAN: **CONS**

- ❖ GRINDING SCHEDULE OF RECORDING & LIVE SHOWS WORE ON BIX ESPECIALLY.
- ❖ NO IMPROVISATION: ALL MUSIC WAS CHARTED. BIX'S PARTS WERE WRITTEN OUT (THOUGH HE OFTEN VARIED).
- ❖ ALL WHITE GROUP (INTEGRATION WAS NOT EXPECTED ANYWAY BUT THE MUSIC SUFFERED AS A RESULT).
- ❖ DIVERSE PLAY-LIST ACROSS STYLES BUT REPETITIVE PERFORMANCES TO THE POINT OF NEAR MADNESS.
- ❖ THE WORK AND THE TRAVEL TOOK A HEAVY TOLL ON BIX; HIS DRINKING & HEALTH WORSENE.
- ❖ SOME FANS/CRITICS CLAIM THAT PLAYING FOR WHITEMAN RUINED BIX.

**THREE “MYSTERIES”:
1 “SOLVED,”
2 (PROBABLY) FOREVER UNSOLVED.**

- ❖ **The Mystery Woman.**
- ❖ **The Incident.**
- ❖ **What Killed Bix Beiderbecke?**

MYSTERY 1: THE MYSTERY WOMAN– 1 OF 2

- ❖ JUNE 16, 1931, BIX WROTE HOME THAT HE HOPED TO MARRY ALICE O'CONNELL. BIX LISTS HER FATHER'S LAST NAME AS O'CONNELL AND HER MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME AS WEISS. BIX SENT A PHOTO HE SAID WAS TAKEN IN A PHOTO BOOTH (SHOWN HERE).
- ❖ THE RETURN ADDRESS WAS THAT OF FELLOW MUSICIAN, BASSIST REX GAVITTE'S HOUSE.
- ❖ BIX LATER INTRODUCED HER TO HIS FRIENDS AS ALICE WEISS.
- ❖ ALICE HELPED BIX MOVE FROM LONG ISLAND TO SUNNYSIDE.
- ❖ BY THE TIME BIX DIED, AUGUST 6, ALICE LIVED IN THE SAME APARTMENT BUILDING (BUT NOT WITH BIX).
- ❖ AMONG THE ENTRIES IN THE VISITORS AND DONATIONS BOOK AT BIX'S SERVICES "FRIENDS WHO SENT": ALICE O'CONNELL, NY; WEISS FAMILY, NY.



MYSTERY 1: THE MYSTERY WOMAN– 2 OF 2

- ❖ THE MYSTERY OF HER IDENTITY, & RELATIONS TO BIX, REMAINED UNTIL, 2012 WHEN CHRIS BARRY, NOW ONE OF OUR BB MUSEUM BOARD MEMBERS, WENT ON A SERIOUS SEARCH FOR ALICE. AS A BY-PRODUCT OF THAT SEARCH, LONG-TIME BIX EXPERT ALBERT HAIM TRACKED DOWN BIX' LAST PIANO, THE ONE THAT WAS IN HIS APARTMENT AT 43-30 46TH STREET, SUNNYSIDE NY.
- ❖ CHRIS BARRY DISCOVERED THAT "ALICE" HAD ARRANGED FOR BIX TO ACQUIRE THE PIANO AND HAD TAKEN POSSESSION OF IT AFTER BIX'S PASSING. ALBERT TRACKED IT DOWN AND WE NOW DISPLAY IT IN THE MUSEUM.
- ❖ CHRIS BARRY ALSO LEARNED THAT ALICE REGINA WEISS WAS THE DAUGHTER OF THEODORE WEISS AND HELLEN O'CONNELL (BIX HAD REPORTED THE NAMES REVERSED).
- ❖ WHEN SHE MET BIX, ALICE WAS MARRIED TO REX GAVITTE. BEFORE BIX MOVED TO HIS FINAL APARTMENT, REX BROUGHT BIX HOME TO HELP HIM RECOVER HIS HEALTH; APPARENTLY ALICE ADMINISTERED TO BIX.
- ❖ A COUPLE OF YEARS AFTER BIX PASSED, ALICE DIVORCED REX, WHO DIED OF COMPLICATIONS FROM ALCOHOLISM SOON THEREAFTER.
- ❖ THE NAME GAME? ALICE MIGHT HAVE BEEN AN ASPIRING PERFORMER, MARRIED TO ONE, HANGING AROUND WITH MANY, AND WORKING ON "STAGE NAMES."
- ❖ ALICE'S LETTERS INDICATED SHE WAS AWARE OF BIX'S INTENTIONS TOWARD MARRIAGE BUT DON'T INDICATE HER INTENTIONS TOWARD HIM.

MYSTERY 2: THE INCIDENT – 1 OF 4

- **APRIL 22ND 1921, A DAVENPORT POLICE BLOTTER REPORT NOTED THAT THEN 18-YEAR-OLD BIX BEIDERBECKE WAS ARRESTED AND BOOKED FOR A LEWD ACT (THE DAY BEFORE) WITH A 5-YEAR-OLD GIRL (APPARENTLY THE DAY BEFORE). THE GIRL, LISTED AS SARAH IVENS, WAS SIGHT-IMPAIRED.**
- **THE GIRL SAID THAT SHE WAS TAKEN INTO A GARAGE TO GET OUT OF THE RAIN, THEN INTO A CAR & THAT WHEN THE MAN CLOSED THE DOOR OF THE CAR SHE SCREAMED.**
- **WHEN THE GIRL SCREAMED, TWO NEIGHBORHOOD BOYS (JAMES DUNCAN, 18 AND MAHLON BAILEY, 16) RUSHED IN. BIX WAS ARRESTED, BOOKED, & RELEASED ON \$1,500 BOND. THE BOYS AND MISS IVENS WENT HOME WITHOUT THEIR STATEMENTS BEING RECORDED.**
- **THE NEXT DAY, THE BOYS' INDICATED THAT BIX WAS PRESENT.**

MYSTERY 2: THE INCIDENT-2 OF 4

- **SEPTEMBER 15, BIX ENROLLED AT, AND BEGAN ATTENDING, LAKE FOREST ACADEMY**
- **JUST PRIOR TO THE GRAND JURY DATE, SEPTEMBER, 26, MR. IVENS FILED A REQUEST THAT THE CASE BE DROPPED. IVENS CLAIMED THAT HIS DAUGHTER TOLD HIM HER ASSAILANT “SAID SOME AWFUL THINGS TO HER,” THAT HE’D RUN TO THE GARAGE BUT THE POLICE OFFERED NO DETAILS, THAT HE’D TRACKED DOWN THE BOYS THE NEXT DAY & THE BOYS IDENTIFIED BIX.**
- **AT THAT POINT, SARAH REPORTED THAT BIX HAD PUT HIS HANDS ON HER OUTSIDE HER DRESS AND ASKED HER TO “SHOW HERSELF.”**
- **IVENS ASKED THAT THE CASE BE DISMISSED IN LIGHT OF SARAH’S AGE AND THE HARM GOING TO TRIAL WOULD CAUSE HER.**
- **THE GRAND JURY REPORT LISTS “NO BILL FILLED” ON SEPT. 26: INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE FOR A TRAIL AS THE GIRL’S FATHER, MR. IVENS, DROPPED ALL CHARGES, NOT WANTING TO PUT HIS DAUGHTER THROUGH FURTHER PAIN.**

MYSTERY 2: THE INCIDENT – 3 OF 4

- ❖ FROM HERE ON OUT, IT'S ALL SPECULATION.
- ❖ THE BOYS DID NOT IDENTIFY BIX UNTIL THE DAY AFTER THE INCIDENT.
- ❖ WERE THE BOYS JEALOUS OF BIX FOR HIS MUSIC OR SPORTS OR BECAUSE HE WAS A MEMBER OF A PROMINENT GERMAN FAMILY IN TOWN? WAS ANTI-GERMAN SENTIMENT AT WORK?
- ❖ WAS MR. IVENS PRESSURED TO DROP THE CHARGES? BY THE BEIDERBECKES OR BY DR. PALMER (WHO WAS TRYING TO START HIS CHIROPRACTIC COLLEGE)?
- ❖ WAS THERE A COVER-UP OF FACTS? MOST ACCURATE INFORMATION DIDN'T COME OUT UNTIL THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 2000s.
- ❖ WAS THE INCIDENT THE REASON BIX WAS SENT TO LAKE FOREST ACADEMY, OR --AS STATED BY THE FAMILY--WERE HIS POOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS, TO BLAME FOR THE SHIFT OF SCHOOLS? WAS LFA PUNISHMENT, BANISHMENT, OR SAFE HAVEN?
- ❖ DID THE INCIDENT CONTRIBUTE TO BIX'S DRINKING/ADDICTION, EITHER BECAUSE HE FELT GUILT OVER THE ACT OR BECAUSE HE WAS INNOCENT BUT EMBARRASSED/UPSET OVER BEING ACCUSED?

MYSTERY 2: THE INCIDENT – 4 OF 4

- ❖ WE WILL NEVER KNOW WHAT “REALLY” DID OR DID NOT HAPPEN. BUT CONTEXT IN SUPPORT OF BIX IS APPROPRIATE.
- ❖ INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY. NO INDICTMENT, NO TRIAL, NO CONVICTION.
- ❖ EVEN WITHOUT MR. IVENS’ REQUEST, THE GRAND JURY MIGHT HAVE NOT RETURNED AN INDICTMENT: THE CASE WAS VERY WEAK.
- ❖ EVEN IF THE CASE HAD GONE FORWARD, CONVICTION AT TRIAL WAS POSSIBLE BUT VERY UNLIKELY.
- ❖ BIX HAD “LIKE-AGED” FEMALE FRIENDS IN GRADE SCHOOL AND DATED “LIKE-AGED” GIRLS IN HIGH SCHOOL (INCLUDING AT THE TIME OF THE CHARGE) AND WHEN PLAYING MUSIC AT COLLEGES. BIX DATED MANY “LIKE-AGED” WOMEN THROUGHOUT HIS SHORT ADULT LIFE (INCLUDING INVOLVEMENT IN A NEAR-PREGNANCY).
- ❖ BIX HAD AN OLDER SISTER AND MOTHER LIVING AT HOME. CERTAINLY, BY AGE 18, HE’D SEEN WOMEN’S UNDERWEAR AND/OR FEMALES SCANTILY CLOTHED (OR LESS).
- ❖ IF BIX’S DATING AND PEER GROUP HADN’T “CLUED HIM IN,” HIS BIG BROTHER OR FATHER MIGHT HAVE.
- ❖ CURIOSITY IN A 5-YEAR-OLD? FOR ME, POSSIBLE, BUT UNLIKELY.

MYSTERY 3: WHAT KILLED BIX BEIDERBECKE? TWO ISSUES-- 1 OF 3

- CLEARLY BIX DRANK-- A LOT.
- THE LIQUOR, HIS WORK AND LATE-NIGHT/LITTLE SLEEP HABITS, LEFT HIM OPEN TO ILLNESS.
- CORONER'S REPORT SAID **LOBAR PNEUMONIA**. HE'D BEEN SICK WITH IT FOR AT LEAST 3 DAYS. SUFFERED A SEVERE **SEIZURE/FIT OF DELIRIUM TREMENS** AT THE TIME OF HIS PASSING.
- NO AUTOPSY SO NO OFFICIAL STATEMENT(S) REGARDING ALCOHOL-RELATED DAMAGE TO ORGANS, ETC. NO TOXICITY REPORT.
- THE MOST COMMON ACCOUNT: BIX DRANK HIMSELF TO DEATH AND WAS NOT PROPERLY TREATED FOR PNEUMONIA.

MYSTERY 3: WHAT KILLED BIX BEIDERBECKE? TWO ISSUES-- 2 OF 3

- ❖ **FIRST**, BIX SPENT A MONTH AT THE **KEELEY INSTITUTE IN DWIGHT, IL.**
- ❖ THE “CURE?” FOUR-TIMES-A-DAY SHOTS CONTAINING A PATENT MEDICINE.
- ❖ THE ORIGINAL FORMULA: CHLORIDE OF GOLD AND SODIUM IN PILL FORM; LATER MODIFIED TO APOMORPHINE, 20% ALCOHOL, ATROPINE, STRYCHNINE & ARSENIC AS AN INJECTABLE LIQUID.
- ❖ PATIENTS WERE FREE TO WALK THE GROUNDS AND TOWN & COULD CHECK THEMSELVES OUT AT WILL (BUT IF THEY DID, NO RETURN).
- ❖ MOST STAYED 6 WEEKS; A MONTH WAS THE LOWER ALLOWED LIMIT.
- ❖ PATIENTS WERE OFFERED ALCOHOL, TO THE POINT OF FORCE. THE SHOTS COMBINED WITH THE BOOZE TO MAKE THEM VIOLENTLY ILL.
- ❖ THE CONDITIONED RESPONSE LED TO CESSATION OF DRINKING FOR SOME. FOR HOW LONG? NO ONE KNOWS.
- ❖ THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF THE POISONS IN PATIENT’S SYSTEMS? NO ONE KNOWS.

MYSTERY 3: WHAT KILLED BIX BEIDERBECKE? TWO ISSUES-- 3 OF 3

- **SECOND**, BIX MAY HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORT TO POISON “ILLEGAL” LIQUOR DURING PROHIBITION.
- BIX MUSEUM VICE PRESIDENT & BOARD MEMBER RANDALL (RANDY) SANDKE’S ARTICLE “WAS BIX BEIDERBECK POISONED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?” DETAILS “THE CHEMISTS’ WAR” AGAINST BOOZE.
- TO ENFORCE PROHIBITION, GOVERNMENT CHEMISTS DEVELOPED VERSIONS OF DENATURED ALCOHOL TO BE ADD TO BOOTLEG BOOZE & RENDER IT UNDRINKABLE:
 - “BY MID-1927, THE NEW DENATURING FORMULAS INCLUDED SOME NOTABLE POISONS— KEROSENE AND BRUCINE (A PLANT ALKALOID CLOSELY RELATED TO STRYCHNINE), GASOLINE, BENZENE, CADMIUM, IODINE, ZINC, MERCURY SALTS, NICOTINE, ETHER, FORMALDEHYDE, CHLOROFORM, CAMPHOR, CARBOLIC ACID, QUININE, AND ACETONE. THE TREASURY DEPARTMENT ALSO DEMANDED MORE METHYL ALCOHOL BE ADDED--UP TO 10 PERCENT OF TOTAL PRODUCT. IT WAS THE LAST THAT PROVED MOST DEADLY.”
- APPARENTLY, BIX INGESTED BOOZE IN CLEVELAND IN NOVEMBER OF 1928 THAT CAUSED PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY (LEGS AND FEET), CHRONIC PNEUMONIA, AND LIVER AND KIDNEY DAMAGE (ALREADY WEAKENED BY HIS DRINKING).

LET'S TAKE A 10-MINUTE BREAK UP NEXT: PROFESSOR TODD KELLY

***TODD KELLY'S
WATER STREET STOMPERS***



***CENTRAL ILLINOIS JAZZ SOCIETY
BAND LED BY TODD KELLY***



PROFESSOR KELLY IS CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF MUSCI, BRADLEY UNIVERSITY

TODD KELLY IN/WITH “FOUR OTHER BROTHERS” *SINGING THE BLUES* IN DAVENPORT, IA

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2V8ZCMoRrEc>

BIX MUSEUM EXHIBIT GUIDED TOUR

- ❖ <https://bixtours.stqry.app/1/tour/17414>
- ❖ **NOTE: THIS TOUR WAS INTENDED FOR GUESTS AS THEY WALKED THROUGH THE MUSEUM.**
- ❖ **I'LL REVISE THE TOUR FOR THE NEW LOCATION AND FOR BETTER IMPLEMENTATION ONLINE.**

BIX SITES WALKING TOUR

- ❖ <https://bixtours.stqry.app/1/tour/17546>
- ❖ I COMPLETED A REVISION OF THIS WALKING TOUR LAST YEAR; IT'S GOOD TO GO.
- ❖ YOU CAN "TAKE THE TOUR" ONLINE.
- ❖ YOU CAN ALSO LOG ONTO THE TOUR SITE AND THE TOUR WILL "FOLLOW/GUIDE YOU" AROUND TOWN VIA GEO-LOCATION.

Q & A

- ❖ **THANKS FOR BEING A GREAT AUDIENCE.**
- ❖ **SPECIAL THANKS TO TODD KELLY.**
- ❖ **GRATITUDE TO JIM PETERSEN, BIX MUSEUM BOARD MEMBER AND BIX'S SECOND COUSIN AS WELL AS MUSEUM DIRECTOR NATHANIEL KRAFT FOR CHECKING THIS PRESENTATION. ANY ERRORS THAT REMAIN ARE MY OWN.**
- ❖ **I HOPE THAT, NEXT YEAR, WE CAN PRESENT BRIEF MATERIAL HERE ON CAMPUS, THEN LOAD UP AND VISIT THE MUSEUM AND THE BIX SITES IN DAVENPORT, AS A DAY TRIP.**
- ❖ **I'LL DO MY BEST TO ANSWER AS I CAN.**
- ❖ **YOU NEVER KNOW, MAYBE LIZ WILL BAIL ME OUT IF NEEDED!**