

Klaus Pehl

New Orleans Clarinetists – the „*High Society*“ of Jazz



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Contents

Summary	2
Preliminary remarks on musicians' tools	2
Preliminary remarks on a music-historical aspect	3
The piece in the original.....	8
The piece as a New Orleans Jazz standard	13
The Actors.....	17
Selected recordings of “<i>High Society</i>”	22
The Phrasing.....	24
The Transcriptions.....	28
Final Remarks	42
Index of Musicians	47
List of illustrations	50

Summary

From the personal view of an active clarinetist in New Orleans jazz style based on transcriptions of the soli on “*High Society*” by famous New Orleans jazz clarinetists on one hand a typology on the other hand the characteristics of the interpreters are worked out. The analysis is enriched with some notes on music-historical aspects and short portraits of the interpreters.

Preliminary remarks on musicians' tools

It rarely occurs, that an application is made possible by the development of computer technology and new computer software, that long ago could be described in details, whereas its realization was unthinkable.

Since about forty years I have been totally occupied by playing clarinet in the New Orleans jazz style. For me it was equally attractive to learn this musical language as later on to use it in different constellations. At the end of the 50s learning in Germany primarily meant getting heavily involved in working with the available historic recordings. Important components naturally were in addition the co-operation plus the exchanging of knowledge with other musicians. But the highlights were of course listening to the original experts in one of their very few concerts in a local hall¹. The field of work was hardly to be overseen. An almost inevitable method, to reduce the complexness of learning the new language, was what we at that time called „abkupfern“². That is to say, learning more or less exactly the clarinet lines heard in the recordings in regard to melody, metric, dynamics plus tone and try to imitate them as accurately as possible. Many of my colleagues have left out the intermediate step to write down what they heard and then reading the music when trying to learn it by heart. To me transcribing was always helpful because the way from the first listening to a bearable imitation seemed too long without it. At that time I did not know yet, that the transcription of jazz solos had an absolutely long tradition. Already at the beginning of the 30s printed transcriptions of Armstrong's trumpet solos³ or interpretations of the pianist Fats Waller⁴ were published.

How was the copying done in practice? The usual way – very bad for the records - was directing the needle of the record player by hand to the groove where the beginning of the melody line was assumed and to correct if necessary, then listening to a phrase or to a part of it just short enough to

keep it in memory, then lifting the needle and writing down what was heard. The next steps were checking what was written down by listening to the same short piece of music again and correcting the music and so on. In the case of slow pieces a two bar or up to a four bar phrase could be worked out in one step. In up-tempo pieces like for example Barney Bigard's solo in "*High Society*" with Louis Armstrong All Stars in the famous Boston concert (BPM 252) very often only parts of one bar if at all could be transcribed in one phase. That was the very piece for me to recognize the limits of the procedure and to give up. The record was ruined anyway. Fortunately my model at that time was Johnny Dodds. His solo on "*High Society*" with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in 1923 stay at BPM 208. In this case I was more successful than with the virtuoso Barney Bigard and the record stayed in a better condition.

Of course the tricks among musicians were spread around. If the record player could be run besides the usual speed of 33 1/3 r.p.m. or 45 r.p.m. with 16 r.p.m. there were new possibilities. With LPs one could half the speed but the sound went down an octave. If there were melody lines in up-tempo pieces in the low register which was very much used by New Orleans clarinetists and seemed very attractive to me a new limit arose. In the case of EPs using the transition from 45 r.p.m. to 33 1/3 r.p.m. the tempo was slow enough but the sound was a fourth lower and you had to get in transposition troubles. The problems when using tape machines with the different speeds of 4.75 cm/s, 9.5 cm/s or 19 cm/s were about the same. The only advantage was that the records did not suffer.

The desirable application even then could be well-defined. One should be able to listen to any pieces of the music with any adjustable speed in the original pitch. The sound carrier should be treated with care plus it would be helpful, to be able to select definable parts of the music for repetitions, e.g. bar 15 and 16 Tact of the "*High Society*" clarinet solo, that means the break phrase. This application was in the 60s - my learning years - nothing but a dream. So I had to be content with a more superficial study of my musical models. What made it easier was that after years, in the scene the pure „copying“ was less and less recognized and they were joking about the bands which still were strictly following their models. „They even play all the scratches of the old cellacks“ was a usual saying. The first time in the 1970s and 1980s when I had the opportunity to get to know some big personalities of the jazz history (Joe Newman, Clark Terry) it became obvious to me, what professional elements in the personal development copying and transcribing were. But even at this time the wishable support for sufficiently exact transcriptions was only but a vision.

Now - in 1999 - the time has come! As a prerequisite there are numerous editions of historic jazz recordings digitized for CD. The changing to the digital sound carrier did not diminish the accessibility to historical recordings especially for the amateurs of the New Orleans jazz as could be assumed at first sight. And - what is the most important in solving the copying/transcribing problem - there are powerful and affordable multimedia tools for personal computers, so that the application with the old specifications can now be realized. A multimedia PC of the newer generation⁵ and a music editing program⁶ are building the framework. But the principal component is a program typically called „Slow speed CD Transcriber“⁷. The application is even for „normal“ musicians very simple: insert CD, open the program, choose track, start and end time for the sequence as well as slow down factor (time stretch) and adjust pitch if necessary. The specialty of that program is, that no transformations from the CD to a convenient format for files on hard disk nor time stretch actions have to be done which usually last some minutes. The program simulates a normal in real time playing of the CD.

Naturally I continued with the new possibilities just at the point where I had given up in the 60s. I started with Barney Bigard's glorious solo on "*High-Society*".

Preliminary remarks on a music-historical aspect

I don't remember any more, how I got my first knowledge about the special significance for jazz clarinetists of the piece „*High Society*“. It may even have been, that I worked on Johnny Dodds' interpretation in the legendary recording of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band from 1923 (probably damaging the record the way I described above), before I ever heard, that it in that case it was not just one of those clarinet solos in the New Orleans standard repertoire but apparently the very obligatory clarinet solo

for all New Orleans clarinetists. Books and in particular the Cover texts of the LP records – at that time with 30cm at 30cm size still readable without a magnifying glass - have completed the picture bit by bit.

In the meantime additional facts became plain to me, but only since 1999 with the help of the very engaged promoters of the „Maple Leaf Club“ in California, Tracy Doyle and the ragtime pianist Dick Zimmerman, I hold copies of a historical printed arrangement. The piece „*High Society*“ was fixed by **Porter Steele** in 1901. He is stated as the composer. One can hardly find out anything more about him. Corresponding to the habits in the music business of that time Porter Steele might have written down his composition and somehow convinced in his case the publishing house Brooks & Denton in New York to publish a band arrangement, in order to make some profit by selling the music to as many bandleaders as possible. More details to the Copyright one can usually find on the parts of the first violin and the piano. The violinists and the pianist were thought of as the natural bandleaders. There is no source about what music documents were the basis for the band arrangement. The fact that the printed music shows „March & Two Step“ underneath the title together with the following prominence the piece got especially in marching bands is not enough to exclude an original version as a piano solo piece. Scott Joplin's composition for solo piano „*Cleopha*“ from 1902 shows the same subtitle. Anyway, Brooks & Denton published a so-called „Stock arrangement“. Usually there were parts for the wind instruments piccolo flute or flute, 1st and 2nd clarinet in Bb or A, 1st and 2nd cornet in Bb or A and trombone. In rare cases parts for horns in F were added. Even parts for oboe and bassoon could be found, e.g. in an band arrangement of Scott Joplin's „*Original Rags*“. With the strings the parts for 1st and 2nd violin, viola, cello and bass are standard. Not always as in the case of „*High Society*“ the viola part is worked out. A drum part is never missing, very often as in the case of „*High Society*“ giving the main melody for bells. The arrangements had to support any kind of bands if the drummer had bells in mind or not. As a rule the first voice, the melody of the of the piece, is given to the flute parts and the 1st violin. Especially if there are two parts for cornets the melody is in the 1st cornet part. The clarinets voices have a filling function sometimes in unison with the melody sometimes lead as a second voice or to repeat a important note of the harmony. The trombone reinforces either the bass line in a „two beat“ manner along the left-hand hand of the piano or it is in company with the cello giving steady not very moving counter parts to the melody in a medium range. In the arrangement of „*High Society*“ the two principles for the trombone part are compounded. In general the „*High Society*“ arrangement is quite representative for stock arrangement of that time. Top objective was not the originality of the arrangements, but its manifold applicability in different orchestras. As arranger **Robert Recker** is stated. The connections to Porter Steele stay in the dark. He could have been a fellow musician, playing whatever instrument. More probable is that Robert Recker was employed by the publishing house as an arranger, more exactly as an orchestrator, as many of the arrangers of stock arrangements⁸.

In the meantime I got to know some additional facts. Since 1999 with the help of the promoters of the "Maple Leaf Club" in California, Tracy Doyle and the ragtime pianist Dick Zimmermann, I have copies of a historical printed band arrangement: the piece „*High Society*“ was put down to music in the year 1901 by Porter Steele. He is stated as composer. It is hard to find out something additional about him⁹. Corresponding to the habits of the CE-industry of that time he might have documented his work and in his case convinced the publishing house Brooks & Denton in New York¹⁰ to publish a band arrangement to make as much profit as possible by selling the music to band leaders. More detailed information on the copyright are given on the first sheets of the music for the 1st violin and the piano¹¹. The 1st violinist or the pianist were the natural band leaders. It is impossible to tell what kind of a document it was Porter Steele gave the publisher as a basis. The matter of fact, that under the title in the original music there is a description of the genre „March & Two Step“, together with the prominence which the piece later on gained in the repertoire of brass bands, do not exclude that a piano solo version might have existed. The Joplin composition "Cleopha"¹² from 1902 has the same subtitle "March & Two Step". Anyway, Brooks & Denton published a so-called "stock arrangement". A stock arrangement at that time had voices for the wind instruments piccolo flute or flute¹³, 1st plus 2nd clarinet in A or Bb¹⁴, 1st and 2nd cornet in A or Bb and trombone. In some rare cases one will

find voices for horns in F and even for oboe or bassoon¹⁵. For the string section the standard consists of voices for 1st and 2nd violin, viola, cello and bass. Not always - as in the case of "*High Society*" - the music for viola is worked out. Never a voice for drums is missing, in the case of "*High Society*" however the main melody is noted for bells to perform. For band leaders who had accomplished drummers in that sense the music should also be useful. As a rule the first voice, the melody, is put to the flute with some ornamenting notes and to the 1st violin. Especially when there are two voices for cornets the melody is given to the 1st cornet. Clarinets have middle voices. The trombone reinforces either the bass in his „two beat“ in company with the left-hand of the of the piano or it has together with the cello not very moving counterpart voices. In the band arrangement of "*High Society*" both principles are realized.

The band arrangement of "*High Society*" is in general representative for a stock arrangement. The top objective had not been the originality of the arrangements, but their manifold applicability in different instrumentations. As arranger Bobby Recker is stated. His connection to Porter Steele is unknown. He could have been a musician in an orchestra where Porter Steele - at which instrument so-ever - , was a member. It is also plausible, that Bobby was employed by the publisher as an arranger - more exactly as an orchestrator - without any special connection to Steele. Many of the arrangers given in stock arrangements just worked for publishing houses.

However, Robert Recker has allowed himself a special feature: for the main part of the piece with a quiet melody, he provides a moving solo for the piccolo flute. In contemporary band arrangements of comparable pieces, it is quite common that the carried melody of the so-called trio part was embellished by a moving, composed obbligato voice, usually assigned to flutes/piccolo flutes and/or clarinets. Another well-documented example is "*The Moose*" (P. Hans Flath 1909), a piece that was obviously also part of the New Orleans repertoire, as the recordings of Bunk Johnson show. In the clarinet part, the part is placed over the main melody in cue notes with the instruction "Play small notes 2nd time", in other pieces there is the note "Obbligato". In "*High Society*", the obligatory character is reinforced by the instruction 'Solo'. The associated effect goes back to traditions of European marching music of the 18th and 19th centuries. In particular, the influence of corresponding Spanish and French elements in New Orleans music can be proven many times.

From the character of the piece, it is plausible that it was also released as an arrangement for a brass band, as it later reappeared in the New Orleans brass band tradition. In any case, Robert Recker's arrangement is unlikely to be widely distributed. Both the still-active publisher Elmer J. Denton and composer Porter Steele missed the opportunity to renew their copyright in 1929, 28 years after it was first published. Thus, the composition was freely available under a clause in the Copyright Act of 1909. As early as May 1929, the enterprising pianist, promoter and publisher Clarence Williams from New Orleans obtained a copyright entry for "*High Society*". In the same year he made a recording with his "Washboard Band". In the recording "*High Society*" he added "*High Society Rag*" in parentheses, the only reference I found someone made to Oliver's record of 1923.¹ Armand J. Piron was listed as the composer. In the next year's recordings under the title "High Society Blues" with his group "Clarence Williams and His Jazz Kings", Williams himself can be found as a composer. In 1933, Clarence Williams tried to give the piece a new lease of life with a song version, Armand J. Piron as composer, Clarence Williams as lyricist. The Boswell Sisters are depicted on the cover. Up to this time, there is no reference to Porter Steele in the Williams editions, although all the melodies occurring are from the original composition. In accordance with copyright law, the publisher Brooks & Denton could not register any substantial interest in composers or publishers. In other cases, such violations have been prosecuted, as can be seen in the lawsuit between the O.D.J.B. and Joe Jordan over "*That Teasin' Rag*" and its plagiarism, the "*Original Dixieland One-Step*" or in a similar dispute between King Oliver and Duke Ellington over "*Camp Meeting Blues*" and his more famous plagiarism "*Creole Love Call*". A volume version from 1931 was published by Melrose, Chicago. After all, Porter Steele as a composer is called alongside Walter Melrose. The arranger is Fud Livingston. That doesn't

¹ Source: Brian Rust: *Jazz and Ragtime Records 1897 – 1942*. Sixth Edition. Free Personal-Use Edition. Provided by Mainspring Press www.mainspringpress.com . **As of 2023!**

seem to have bothered Clarence Williams. Curiously, in 1938 he reprints *"High Society"* as a song in a collection of sheet music, listing Porter Steele as a composer, but still himself as a lyricist. In concert brass bands prominent beyond New Orleans, such as J. Philip Sousa's or Arthur Pryor's Band, which contributed much to the dissemination of pieces of this genre, *"High Society"* does not seem to have been known or at least not particularly emphasized by them.

The fact that publishers remember *"High Society"* again around 1930 may be due to the film *"High Society Blues"* from that year, not to be confused with the film *"High Society"*, in which Louis Armstrong appears with his All Stars and sings Cole Porter's *"High Society Calypso"*¹⁶ with Bing Crosby.

The earliest sound document available to me is a recording of a concert brass band in the Sousa style around 1910. The musicians of the "Regimental Band of the Republic" are not known. The editors of the CD on which I found the recording suspect that the band overlaps with that of Charles A. Prince, who made an early recording of W.C. Handy's *"Memphis Blues"* in 1914. It is not worth identifying either the piccolo flute player or the clarinetist, because it is clear that the Recker arrangement was not the model. There is no moving obbligato voice in the trio section, but only riff-like repetitive interjections from the woodwinds. It was not until 1974 that the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra delivered the most faithful version. The musicians obviously had the Recker arrangement from the Archives of Jazz at Tulane University in New Orleans at their disposal – a veritable treasure trove of jazz and ragtime-oriented historical sheet music. Essential components of the material come from the estate of the John Robichaux Orchestra. As far as the leading melody is concerned, always performed by trumpets in brass bands as well as in New Orleans-oriented jazz bands, it deviates from the Recker arrangement. There must have been a common adaptation here, because the New Orleans brass bands and jazz bands are pretty much in agreement on the melody. Considering that, in a jazz context, King Oliver's recording in 1923 is the earliest, it is plausible that he either set the standard for the melody himself or was guided by an existing standard. The fact that Oliver recorded the piece under the name *"High Society Rag"* and his reasons for doing so will probably remain a mystery forever. I haven't found any references to this in any of my research.² The fact that Bunk Johnson's recordings of *"High Society"* in the early New Orleans Revival, first in 1943 as a guest with musicians from Kid Ory's Jazz Band and later in 1945 with his own band, are comparable, does not corroborate either assumption, since both trumpeters come from the music world in New Orleans before 1920.

However, Johnny Dodds, the clarinetist in King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band of 1923, is not credited with having shaped the standard clarinet solo in *"High Society"*, but with Alphonse Picou, of which recordings of *"High Society"* are only available in the course of the New Orleans Revival from the 1940s. In the "Family Album" Alphonse Picou (18.10.1880 – 4.2.1961) simply reads *"Known as the creator of a celebrated chorus in 'High Society'"*. The inscription is illustrated with a photograph of Picou as an elderly gentleman apparently in a brass band uniform, holding his legendary custom-made clarinet with a metal cup bent like an alto clarinet or a basset horn (c. cover of this text). In 1980, the jazz researcher and co-initiator of the New Orleans Revival Bill Russel had unwrapped it from a plastic bag during my visit to his home in New Orleans and handed it to me, a memorable moment. Today, it is safely well protected in a secure glass display case in a New Orleans Museum.

There was little doubt in the New Orleans jazz music world about Picou's role in the invention. A short, clear statement can be found in the autobiography of Sidney Bechet:

"... Alphonse Picou was one of them. He really was a musician. He was the first to take the piccolo part from the brass band arrangement of 'High Society' and play it on the clarinet. This then became a standard part of 'High Society'. It's always been played that way ever since."

In an interview, printed in the 1955 collection *"Hear Me Talkin' To Ya"* by Nat Shapiro and Nat Henthoff, the younger clarinetist Edmond Hall (1901 - 1967) from New Orleans, member of the Louis Armstrong All Stars from 1955 to 1958, gave his assessment:

² It was until *now* that I found one reference in an information about a Clarence William record. This has been possible because I can use the electronic „Brian Rust“ since a few years (c. footnote 1, p. 5). **As of 2023!**

"'High Society' was one of the test pieces for clarinetists who wanted to play in a band in New Orleans. The Picou chorus was the general standard. At first, it was a piccolo flute solo in brass bands. Picou was probably the first to play it on the clarinet. Anyway, that's the story as I've heard it. Of course, everyone played their own version of the chorus. No one played it note for note. Each musician implements his or her own ideas. I remember well the way Barney Bigard played it. But the Picou version was the basis, especially the first four bars."

In the same collection of interviews, Alphonse Picou himself has his say and confirms the assumption of Edmond Hall:

"... I've composed so many pieces. How did I end up playing the famous chorus from 'High Society'? Well, I was seventeen at the time and I was playing 'High Society' with John Robichaux and before that with the Manuel Perez band. Perez always provided all the old-time music that everyone is asking for today. He bought 'High Society' for me. It was a march. We played 'High Society' at Mahogany Hall at the time. I took the piccolo notes and transposed them for my instrument. It was a good hit. The next night we had to play in another hall, where the Creoles always met. At that time, no black man was allowed to enter. If you had dark skin, you had to stay outside. Now I was there and Manuel Perez was on the way I played 'High Society'. So he shouted in front of the whole crowd "Come in and play 'High Society'!". They let me play the solo all by myself. It became a wonderful hit. My god! They played 'High Society' all night ..."

Presumably, the interview was recorded in the early 1950s and it will not be the first time that the old gentleman has been asked about *"High Society"*. In essence, his version must have hit the nail on the head, but the context sounds a bit like a made-up story, a contribution to the creation of legends: young, a hit was landed that even helped across social boundaries. The most unlikely is the indication of Picou's age at the time of the event. "At seventeen" would have meant 1897 or as early as 1896. The information on the year of birth of Picou is inconsistent. He himself speaks of 1879. Picou has probably predated the events around *"High Society"* a bit. The cornetist Manuel Perez founded his Imperial Orchestra only in 1900 and in the "Family Album" Picou is not even listed as his member. At the same time, Perez was a member of the Onward Brass Band from 1900 until its dissolution in 1930. There, too, Picou is not mentioned among the members. It is plausible that he met Perez in the Tuxedo Brass Band led by Oscar "Papa" Celestin between 1916 and 1925, in which Picou also played Eb clarinet. Especially for this clarinet, a transposition of a piccolo part seems plausible. If Picou with *"High Society"* ever had success in the Mahogany Hall, better known as a noble brothel and workplace for pianists such as Jelly Roll Morton and Tony Jackson, then there is only a narrow window of opportunity for this. Mahogany Hall closed in 1917. An accent that Picou casually adds to *"High Society"* gives a clue. They let him "play the solo on his own," something that didn't fit in with the role of the Eb clarinet in brass bands. In dance bands such as those that led Perez or John Robichaux, the standard Bb clarinet was in demand. However, when Picou transferred the solo *"High Society"* to Bb clarinet and played it 'alone', i.e. not just as a moving upper voice to a solemn main melody as in the brass bands, this could lead to the attention of the audience to an extent that could be called 'a hit', and thus become a standard for clarinetists to emulate.

The transfer from the piccolo flute to the high Eb clarinet could have been expected from any capable brass band musician. But perhaps it was Picou's merit to have transferred the *"High Society"* voice from the brass bands to the repertoire of dance orchestras as a clarinet solo. Be that as it may, Picou was well-known in New Orleans. His funeral in 1961 during Mardi Gras must have been one of the city's great events. It is specifically mentioned in the "Family Album". Presumably, he was not an important role model for the younger clarinetists of the city, but as an illustrious figure he had landed something of a local hit with his *"High Society"* interpretation and this had a multiplying effect on his colleagues.

Another great New Orleans clarinetist, Barney Bigard (1906 - 1980), in addition to his 14 years in the Duke Ellington Orchestra, as well as Edmond Hall for his time with the Louis Armstrong All Stars, later announces a very ambivalent testimony. After a period of training with the help of his uncle Emile, Barney was looking for a promising teacher at the age of 15. He had heard a lot about Alphonse Picou and Lorenzo Tio. A friend helped him decide:

"We're going to go to the Lyric Theater on Monday, where Picou will play "High Society" with the John Robichaux Orchestra. We will be there early and sit right behind Picou. He always sits in such a way that the notes on his desk can be seen by the audience. I want you to watch him read his notes.' I had no idea what he was after, but the next Monday we did it exactly as planned and sat right behind Picou. After a few bars I realized that the old man wasn't playing a single piece of music and I asked Amos what was going on. "He plays by ear," he said. 'Damn it,' I said to myself when I thought about the choice between Picou and Tio. I was really disappointed with Picou's "High Society" and found out in later years that all his fame came from the little pieces from 'High Society'. In reality, it comes from one of the Sousa marches. That was all, but it made him famous."

A few years later, Bigard obsessively rehearses this "little piece of 'High Society'" in order to shine with it in sessions at New York's "Mexico's". Louis Russel, pianist from New Orleans, had given him the idea. "Mexico's" was a meeting place for musicians. Duke Ellington also frequented it. Barney is certain that Duke heard him there, which ultimately led to his engagement in his newly enlarged orchestra for the Cotton Club. Wellman Braud of New Orleans was the intermediary. The "family" from New Orleans also stuck together on the East Coast.

Picou's self-assessment suggests otherwise. He describes how, as a musician with a good footnote, he experiences the charm of playing "only by the ear" for the first time. Bigard's assumption about J. Philip Sousa as a source does not have to be taken literally. The method of the obbligato voice over the melody of the trio section was common, or Sousa actually also played "*High Society*" according to Porter Steele's templates, according to the same templates that Perez Picou had procured "*High Society*".

It is striking that almost all clarinetists from New Orleans had "*High Society*" in their repertoire and liked to record, while it is rather rare for clarinetists from other music centers, unless they get into the immediate vicinity of musicians "from home" such as Peanuts Hucko at Louis Armstrong's All Stars. Sidney Bechet, who left New Orleans at an early age to seek his fortune in Europe and elsewhere, has recorded the piece more than twenty times since 1938. For the famous representatives of the white clarinet school, who had played themselves to the fore in the swing era, "*High Society*" does not seem to have been a challenge. Even the white music scene of the early jazz years in New Orleans passes by "*High Society*" without leaving a trace. Neither the O.D.J.B. nor the New Orleans Rhythm Kings are known to have made recordings of "*High Society*".

Literature references can be found in the endnotes, some in footnotes.

The piece in the original

The composer is Porter Steele. In 1901, Brooks & Denton, New York, published an orchestral version with the voices "Piccolo, 1st Clarinet in A, 1st & 2nd Cornet in A, Trombone, 1st & 2nd Violin, Viola, Cello, Bass, Piano, Drums". This was the common form of a 'stock arrangement' at the time. The key is A and in the trio part D. The transfer of characteristic passages of the piccolo flute part, at least as cue notes, into the second standard woodwind instrument in such arrangements, the clarinet, was common, if not the flute and clarinet parts were identical. "*High Society*" is characteristic of a concert march of the Sousa tradition, both in its structure and in its harmony and melody. The structure of the original is also consistent with this genre: introduction, two different 16-bar parts, modulation to the subdominant as interlude, main section as 32-bar, possibly an inserted minor 16-bar as a buffer before the repetition of the main section. The keys of A and D suited the strings. For cornets and clarinets, the challenge was limited; the notes were designed for "cross-destroying" cornets and clarinets in A. Since the valve trombone was far more common than the drawn trombone at that time, the keys could also be considered reasonable for trombonists.

The melody

The melody in the Recker arrangement is on the 1st violin and in unison on the 1st cornet (see Figure 1 – The melody (1st Cornet in A voice) in the original). The common keys in jazz Bb and Eb for the trio part result simply from the fact that the part is played by a cornet/trumpet in Bb "as printed". Violins

no longer needed to be taken into account with this leap up by a semitone. Therefore, instead of the "official" leading part, the violin part, the cornet part from the Recker arrangement is reproduced here as a facsimile. There are no decisive deviations in melody compared to the interpretations of a King Oliver over 20 years later. The introduction alone with two leaps of thirds is astonishing, which will later be simplified into an excerpt of the diatonic scale in jazz (see Figure 4 - The melody in the tradition of New Orleans jazz).

Harmonies

The piano accompaniment of the Recker arrangement proves that the harmony was in many places even richer in transitions (given in **bold**) compared to the simplified versions of the jazz era. In particular, the first 6 bars (indicated in *italics*) of the second 16-bar part have a different structure: the part does not begin on the dominant seventh chord, but on the tonic, and on the way to the double dominant, the detour via the minor parallel is chosen. For the sake of comparability, the harmonies of the original are transposed into Bb and Eb.

Bb	Bb G	Cm C7	F				
F7	-	Bb	F Eo	F7	-	Bb	Bb D7
Gm	-	D7	Gm	Gm	-	C7	F7
<i>Bb</i>	<i>F7</i>	-	<i>Bb D7</i>	<i>Gm Gm7</i>	<i>C7</i>	<i>F7</i>	-
<i>Bb</i>	<i>D7</i>	<i>Gm Gm7-5</i>	<i>C7</i>	<i>Bb G7</i>	<i>C7 F7</i>	<i>Bb</i>	-
Bb7..	Fm/C Db7	Bb7 Db7 Fm/C Db7	Bb7				
Eb	-	-	-	-	Eb Ab	Eb	Eb Eo
Bb7	Bb7 Eo	Eb	Eb Bm7-5	Bb	F7	Bb7 Ab Cm	Bb7Db Ab Bb7
Eb	-	-	-	-	Eb Ab	Eb	Eb Eb7
Ab	Ab Cb7	Eb	Eb Cb	F7	Bb7	Eb	
Cm	-	G7	-	Cm	-	G7	-
Fm	-	Cm	-	Cm	Cm G7 Cm Fm	G7	Fm Bb7

Rhythm

Despite a similar history to the comparatively equally prominent piece in the tradition of the New Orleans brass and later also jazz bands, "Panama" (William Tyers 1904), presented as an original in a Caribbean rhythm, "High Society" already has in the original exclusively the classic rhythm of the two-beat, which was notated in 2/4 time at the time, as announced in the subtitle 'March & Two Step'. In the drum part over the trio – not the aforementioned bell melody – reproduces the standard basic beat of classic New Orleans jazz: bass drum on the downbeats, the quarters, rolls on the upbeats held up to the downbeats.

Figure 1 – The melody (1st Cornet in A voice) in the original

HIGH SOCIETY
MARCH & TWO STEP

1st. CORNET in A $\frac{2}{4}$ Porter Steele
Arr. by Robert Recker

The musical score is written for a 1st Cornet in A voice. It begins with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into two main sections: a March and a Two Step. The March section starts with a dynamic of *ff* and features a melody with many accents. The Two Step section begins with a dynamic of *pp* and has a more melodic, flowing character. The score includes various dynamics such as *ff*, *fz*, *mf*, *p*, and *pp*. There are also first and second endings marked with '1' and '2'. The piece concludes with a *fz* dynamic and a 'D.C.' (Da Capo) instruction.

TRIO *ff* *pp* *mf* *ff* *ff* *fz* D.C.

Brooks & Denton, N.Y.

Figure 2 – The piccolo voice in the original

HIGH SOCIETY **LEON ROSEBROOK**
MARCH & TWO STEP

PICCOLO Porter Steele
Arr. by Robert Recker

The musical score is written for Piccolo and Trio. The Piccolo part is in the upper staves, and the Trio part is in the lower staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The Piccolo part begins with a *ff* dynamic and features a melodic line with many accents. The Trio part starts with a *ff* dynamic and consists of a dense, rhythmic accompaniment. A 'Solo' section is marked for the Trio, featuring triplets and a *p-ff* dynamic. The score concludes with a first and last ending for the Trio section.

TRIO

Brooks & Denton, N.Y. D.S. al

Figure 3 - The piccolo-original transposed in Eb for Clarinet in Bb

Das Original
Porter Steele 1901, Brooks & Denton, New York

Clar. in Bb

The musical score is written for Clarinet in Bb and consists of nine staves of music. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 2/4. The piece is titled "Das Original" by Porter Steele, published in 1901 by Brooks & Denton, New York. The score begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The first staff starts with a measure number of 1 and contains several triplet markings over eighth notes. The second staff begins at measure 5. The third staff begins at measure 9. The fourth staff begins at measure 13 and includes a trill (tr) marking. The fifth staff begins at measure 17 and contains more triplet markings. The sixth staff begins at measure 21. The seventh staff begins at measure 25. The eighth staff begins at measure 29. The ninth staff concludes the piece with a final measure.

The piece as a New Orleans Jazz standard

How and when the adoption into the brass bands in New Orleans took place is only imprecise to determine. According to Picou, it is quite believable that Manuel Perez, as a brass band leader, bought the sheet music of *“High Society”*, although perhaps not exclusively for him. Whether Picou ever heard it from a piccolo flute in a concert brass band à la Sousa is not necessarily to be assumed. A first-time incorporation of at least a few bars from the notes of the piccolo part, supplemented by ornamental broken arpeggios through the harmonies of the trio, seems to have been Picou's achievement. And the local prominence was enough for King Oliver to keep the piece in his repertoire even after leaving his hometown.

Structure

A four-bar introduction, which does not reappear in any other part of the piece, is followed by two 16-bar sections A and B, both in Bb major. A four-bar transition (interlude) prepares the 32-bar trio section in Eb major, often called *“Trio”* in brass band tradition. After the more moving melodies of parts A and B, the trio presents a calmly led main melody. It is that melody who provoked Porter Steele or the arranger Robert Recker to juxtapose it with a lively high countermelody. There is then a 16-bar interlude in a minor key, which turns out to be a dramatic preparation for the repetition of the 32-bar chorus (trio). The trio is the only part in which soloists offer their ad lib creations. Presumably, at least in the case of the clarinetists, it is in no case a matter of ad hoc improvisations from the 5th bar onwards, once the obligatory bars à la Picou have been overcome, but rather well-worked solos. Remember how much Bigard prepared for the presentation.

Harmonies

The harmonies of the 16-bar A and B sections are typical representatives of such parts in marching compositions of the ragtime era around 1900. However, both follow the less common type, in which the second eight bars do not begin with the repetition of the first. The A section is characterized by the shift in the second eight-bar group to the minor parallel Gm on the one hand and the open conclusion on the dominant seventh chord F7 on the other. In this respect, there is a weighting between the A and B parts, the A part requires the subsequent B part. The resolution into the home key of Bb in the B flat section is delayed until bar 3. In more archaic variants, the subdominant Eb is used instead of the double dominant C7 in bars 7 and 8 of the B section. The modulation task of the 4-bar transition is solved in the simplest way. The home key is reinterpreted in all four bars as the dominant seventh Bb7 for the following key Eb.

-	-	-	- - F7 -						
F7	-	Bb	-		F7	-	Bb	-	
Gm	Cm Gm	D7	Gm		Gm	Cm Gm	C7	F7	
F7	-	Bb	-		C7	-	F7	-	
Bb	D7	Eb	Bbo		Bb	F7	Bb F7	Bb	
Bb7	-	-	-						
Eb	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	
Bb7	-	Eb	-		F7	-	Bb7	-	
Eb	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	
Ab	Ebo	Eb	C7		F7	Bb7	Eb		
Cm	-	G7	-		Cm	-	G7	-	
Fm	-	Cm	-		Ab	-	G7	Bb7	

In addition to the basic harmonies, the first half of the chorus uses only the double dominant F7 in preparation for bars 15 and 16, often designed as a 'break' for the soloist. The first eight bars are repeated. The last eight bars provide a standard sequence for a final line, which has been the most common since the *“Tiger Rag”* or *“Bill Bailey”* and is used for thousands of 32-bar music.

Figure 4 – The melody in the New Orleans Jazz tradition

High Society
Porter Steele 1901

1 Einleitung

5 A-Teil 9

13 17

21 B-Teil 25

29 33

37 Überleitung

41 Trio 45

49 53

57 61

65 69

73 Zwischenspiel Tbn. Echo 77

81 85 3

Figure 5 – The song version by Clarence Williams – Armand J. Piron

12

High Society

Tune Ukulele
G C E A

Words by
CLARENCE WILLIAMS

Music by
A. J. PIRON

Not too slow

Verse

So - cia - liz - in' is my pet occ-u - pa - tion

Un - less I'm "Step - in' out," Life has no an - i - ma - tion Lis - ten, Hon - ey,

Just hear that syn-co - pa - tion They're play - ing "High So - ci - e - ty" We're

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CHORUS

13

hap - - py Gee in High So - ci - e -

ty Col - le - gians say, let's shout

Hip Hoo - ray Let's drink to health to

ed - u - ca - tion's wealth We're hap - py to be

out in High So - ci - e - ty. We're ty.

High Society - 2

The chorus section (highlighted in **bold** in the presentation of the harmonies) can be understood as a challenge insofar as it is harmonically extremely sparing. Musicians with a particularly 'sporty' drive find eight bars of the same harmony to be unanimating. For example, the harmony progression is not very helpful for the design of solo phrases, so other sources of creativity have to be used.

Arrangements

There are hardly any deviations in the arrangements until the transition before the trio. Louis Armstrong's All Stars use "*High Society*" to pay tribute to the New Orleans Brass Band tradition with an additional drum introduction. The A and B parts are usually repeated in a wind ensemble. If a repetition is dispensed with, it often hits the A part, now and then also the B part. Introduced by a tight 4-bar modulation, still performed in an ensemble, the trio section not only changes the key to the sub-dominant Eb of the original key of Bb, but also the timbre for the first time.

The trumpet hands over the melody to other winds in the frontline. In many cases it is already taken over by the clarinet in a low register, in the version of Alphonse Picou and Louis "Big Eye" Nelson even in two voices. In the Ory bands, which recorded the piece more often than average, the melody goes to the boss, i.e. to the trombone. In such cases, there are two variants. Either the clarinet takes over a second voice parallel to the main melody or it seizes the opportunity to play around the main melody soloistically, usually with clarinet-typical "licks" in the lower registers.

In bars 15 and 16, the clarinetist is usually granted a "break" here, not a "special" idea, because the break is already to be found in the notes of the original, bass drum and bass pause. There are hardly any deviations in the minor transition. The trumpet leads through the signal-like phrases, the trombone is responsible for the echo in bar 4. The clarinetists often hold back, because here it comes, 'their' solo.

While many solos work towards a virtuoso clarinet 'break' in bars 15 and 16, there are also versions in which the clarinetist hands it over to the brass, Johnny Dodds to trombonist Honoré Dutrey in King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, or at least should, as in the case of one of Jelly Roll Morton bands in 1939. Sidney Bechet, however, cares little about the two-bar movement by Sidney de Paris (tp) and Claude Jones (tb).

Hardly any clarinetist – with the exception of Willie Humphrey – develops the solo longer than 32 bars. As a rule, it flows back into the minor transition, performed in the same way as the first time. This is usually followed by the concluding ensemble via the chorus section. Only in King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band repeat the last two bars, as is often the case in his arrangements. Some arrangements leave it at a minor interlude before the clarinet solo and add further solos from other winds before the final ensemble.

The tempos are usually from 200 BPM and more. The Johnny Dodds version from 1923 is one of the slower with 208 BPM, the Armstrong All Stars variants with 252 BPM among the fastest.

The Actors

An analysis of interpretations of the clarinet solo in "*High Society*" is, as already mentioned, necessarily an appreciation of the African-American clarinetists from New Orleans. They are the most influential clarinetists of jazz, at least until the heyday of the great swing orchestras in the second half of the 30s. The "New Orleans Family Album" lists many other clarinetists from the "home town" of jazz who do not belong to the "first guard" because they did not get to record in their best days or stayed in their city all their lives and did not follow the bands with the big names to Chicago or New York. There are recordings of them late, if at all, as older gentlemen in the course of the New Orleans Revival. In any case, I am not aware of any "*High Society*" recordings of them. They include George Baquet, Emile Barnes and Polo Barnes, Raymond Burke, Louis Cottrell Jr., Earl Fouché, Herb Hall (Edmond's younger brother), John Handy, Andrew Morgan, "Wooden" Joe Nicholas, Alcide Nunez, Toni Parenti, Leon Ropollo, Harry Shields and Larry Shields, "Cornbread" Thomas and Lorenzo Tio Sr. In order to better classify the transcriptions of the "*High Society*" solos of the clarinetists selected for this collection, short portraits of the selected actors may help. Unfortunately, only very few of the clarinetists have detailed (auto)biographies. The principle of "age before beauty" has been chosen for the arrangement. It is no coincidence that the list begins with the "inventor" of the "*High Society*" solo, Alphonse Picou.

Alphonse Picou

18.10.1879 – 4.2.1961



Even as a teenager, Picou was one of the well-trained Creole clarinetists in New Orleans. He plays in the famous Excelsior Brass Band and in the no less prominent Tuxedo Brass Band, at the same time a renowned dance orchestra of the city between 1917 and the late twenties. He comes into contact with "non reading musicians" at an early age and obviously develops good qualities in improvisation as well. At some point in the 10s, he made "*High Society*" a standard of New Orleans jazz. Picou is also a temporary member of the John Robichaux Orchestra. After a period of less music between 1932 and 1940, he became known beyond the city in the course of the New Orleans Revival, where he could be heard in various groups until his death. The recordings from 1940 onwards with Kid Rena's band as a sixty-year-old testify that Picou must have had a solid and concise staccato technique and a good and controlled tone at his best. During the New Orleans Revival, he was considered the granddaddy of New Orleans music and could be heard in the "Paddock" on Bourbon Street until shortly before his death. His funeral in 1961 is one of the city's great events. His cheerful character is evidenced both by his stylistic approach on the clarinet and in words by his younger clarinet colleague Sidney Bechet.¹⁷

Johnny Dodds

12.4.1892 – 8.8.1940

Self-taught, from a musical family and equipped with only a few lessons with Lorenzo Tio, Johnny Dodds left New Orleans as early as 1918. He had his great moments in Chicago with the legendary recordings of "King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band" in 1923, including "*High Society*". Dodds is also part of the group "Louis Armstrong's Hot Five" assembled for recordings and benefits from the legendary reputation they gain mainly through Armstrong's role. Johnny Dodds is an important component in the role of the clarinet in New Orleans jazz, not so much through technical brilliance, as shown by his Creole colleagues, but by an expressive tone formation and strong blues reference both in ensemble parts and in his solos. Shortly before his death in 1940, on 5 June 1940, he recorded two of the most impressive blues interpretations, the "Gravier Street Blues" and the "Red Onion Blues"¹⁸.



Jimmy Noone

23.4.1895 – 19.4.1944

The career of the Creole Jimmie Noone is similar to that of Johnny Dodds. However, it is strongly influenced by the Tio school. Sidney Bechet is also said to have contributed to the fact that when he left New Orleans for Chicago in 1917, he already had a sovereign technique



and was able to pepper his elegant fluid phrasing with instrument-specific tricks ("licks"). Not only his later 'classical' training in Chicago with Benny Goodman's teacher Franz Schoepp, but his whole style of playing is the natural link between the older style of the New Orleans clarinetists and the Chicago-oriented style of the swing clarinetists. Goodman has always cited Noone as an important influence. Among the young musicians Jimmie Noone influenced during his tenure as leader of a small line-up without brass at the Apex Club are pianist Earl Hines and, less well-known, young singer Joe Williams. Jimmie Noone was able to participate in the New Orleans Revival for a few more years, most recently in 1944 in an all-star revival band put together by Orson Welles for his radio shows.

Sidney Bechet¹⁹

14.5.1897 – 14.5.1959

Although Sidney Bechet is the only one of the New Orleans clarinetists who, after a tour to England in 1919, achieved success in Europe as a soloist, mostly on the soprano saxophone, in musical revues with African-American artists – often under the direction of Louis Douglas – he had a remarkable influence on fellow musicians in his hometown both as a clarinetist and as a soprano saxophonist. The older Jimmie Noone is even said to have taken lessons with him. In 1924 Bechet was briefly a member of the Duke Ellington Orchestra and later engaged Johnny Hodges in his own orchestra in Harlem and had a lasting influence on him. Bechet combined personal temperament and expressiveness in rhythm and melody with an outstanding technique like many of the Creole school of the Tios in New Orleans. As a passionate soprano saxophonist, he was "especially" feared by trumpeters (Louis Armstrong, Bunk Johnson, Wild Bill Davison) because of his determined leading voices, although they did produce wonderful recordings with him. After 1947, Sidney Bechet finally settled in France, where he ensured an authenticity of European musicians in the revival of traditional jazz, which was not achieved so early in other European countries.



Albert Nicholas

27.5.1900 – 3.9.1973



His career parallels that of Sidney Bechet. He studied with Lorenzo Tio, like many of his Creole colleagues, already playing in famous orchestras with King Oliver and Manuel Perez as a teenager in New Orleans. In the mid-1920s, he traveled to China, Europe and Egypt. He proved to be an important orchestral musician with solo duties as both clarinetist and saxophonist in orchestras often led by musicians from New Orleans: King Oliver (1924-26), Louis Russell (1928-33), Chick Webb (1934), John Kirby, Louis Armstrong (1937-39). In between, he always leads his own small groups. From 1953 he settled in Basel and was a highlight in the European traditional jazz scene, albeit with less spotlight than Bechet. His virtuosity and confident mastery of licks, his elegant fluent phrasing with concise accents in the high registers of ensemble playing, as well as his fine solo interpretations in the lower registers of the instrument, make him an outstanding representative of the Creole clarinet schools from New Orleans for many decades.

George Lewis²⁰

13.7.1900 – 31.12.1968

George Lewis is considered the clarinetist of the New Orleans Revival par excellence. The first recordings were made in the course of the beginning of the New Orleans Revival with Bunk Johnson XE "Bunk Johnson" from 1942. But from his stories and the testimonies of fellow musicians it is clear that he never left his hometown always played with well-known bands (including Buddy Petit, Henry "Red" Allen, Chris Kelly, Bunk Johnson). After the initial impulse for the New Orleans revival of the Bunk Johnson Band in New York (1945-46), he successfully continued his own "ragtime band" and became the world's most acclaimed (and imitated) clarinetist of this musical genre (Newport Festival 1957, tours through Europe 1957-59, Japan in the early 60s). Lewis has an unmistakable personal style that bears little resemblance to well-known role models. It is characterized by fluid staccato runs through all registers of the instrument with simplest, rather archaic harmony in faster pieces. But it is precisely his folkloric simplicity, especially presented in spirituals and blues, that makes his clarinet style so appealing. Unfortunately, I



was only able to hear George Lewis once – in poor health – with the Papa Bue Vikings Jazz Band in Frankfurt am Main.

Willie Humphrey

29.12.1900 – 7.6.1994



At the ripe old age of over 90, Willie Humphrey was still a vital (last) representative of the New Orleans clarinetist family, both in his hometown in his brother Percy's band and in tours with European bands. I heard him for the first time in Frankfurt am Main, when he stood in for the ill George Lewis in Billie and DeDe Pierce's band in 1964. From the distinctive melody in the high registers of the clarinet, one thinks one can hear the long-time brass band musician, for whom it was necessary to assert himself above the powerful brass. From 1936, Humphrey remained a member of the New Orleans family of musicians. Before that, his music centers were Chicago in 1919 (with King Oliver) or St. Louis from 1925 (with Fate Marable) and New York in 1935-36 (with Lucky Millinder). Since the beginning of the New Orleans Revival, his clarinet part, which includes swing phrasing, can be heard in many recordings with Paul Barbarin, "Sweet" Emma Barrett and especially with his brother,

the trumpeter Percy Humphrey.

Edmond Hall²¹

15-5-1901 – 11.2.1967

Recordings of Edmond Hall in smaller New Orleans jazz-oriented line-ups have only existed since 1942, when Hall came into contact with Eddie Condon's environment. There he stands out because he combines the New Orleans heritage with the experience from the swing era in an extremely vital way. Far more than e.g. Barney Bigard, the strong triplet swing phrasing is formative. In his many years with the Claude Hopkins Orchestra (1929-35) and Lucky Millinder (1936), he played more saxophone (as and flat) than his clarinetist colleagues from New Orleans. He was also considered to be self-taught, which certainly supported his idiosyncratic development despite all the influences of the Tios, Picou and others.



He himself describes his time with Teddy Wilson's small swing group (1941-44) as the happiest, which even led him to turn down Barney Bigard's successor in Duke Ellington's orchestra in 1942. An important station for Hall's reputation was certainly the years with the Louis Armstrong All Stars between 1955 and 1958. He is the clarinetist who plays Armstrong Cole Porter's Calypso "*High Society*" – unlike the Williams-Piron team in 1933, only the name is the same, not the music – in the film of the same name. For me, starting with New Orleans jazz and not yet familiar with the swing era, Hall was the most impressive clarinetist that you admire, but better not try to imitate. Due to his affiliation with the Eddie Condon environment and the All-Stars recordings, Hall was often a role model for European clarinetists. Because of Hall's great individuality, this was bound to go wrong, and so many less expressive "flat" Dixielanders came out of it.

Albert Burbank

25.3.1902 – 15.8.1976



It was a memorable experience that made me curious about Albert Burbank: In the dressing room after a concert with musicians of "The World's Greatest Jazz Band" in the 70s shortly after a New Orleans guest performance I overheard a conversation about clarinetists in the city. Of course, I will not be so indiscreet as to name the parties involved. In any case, Bob Wilber was not there, he would certainly have intervened. The discrepancy

between the success on the one hand and obvious deficiencies in technique, the simplest harmonic design and poor intonation on the other, have led them to extremely derogatory assessments about clarinetists of the New Orleans Revival scene. However, they agreed on one exception: Albert Burbank. His creativity, although completely removed from a swing-derived Goodman idiom, in phrasing and tone were invariably admired. Albert Burbank must have developed these qualities in New Orleans, because he rarely left the city and always only for a short time. He broke off an engagement with Kid Ory in Los Angeles in 1954 in the same year. Fortunately, it is documented with recordings of many bands from New Orleans between 1945 and 1973 (De De Pierce, Paul Barbarin, Albert French, Kid Thomas and Percy Humphrey).

Barney Bigard²²

3.3.1906 – 27.6.1980

Unlike Edmond Hall (see above), Barney Bigard was able to title his autobiography "With Louis and the Duke". His membership of the Ellington Orchestra from 1927 to 1942 – 15 years is a small eternity in jazz history – and to the Louis Armstrong All Stars (with interruptions of several years) between 1947 and 1961 make him one of the most documented clarinetists in jazz history. In addition, he can also boast of collaborations with cornerstones such as King Oliver (1925 with interruptions until 1927) and Louis Russell. In his early days with Albert Nicholas' band, Bigard was rather frustrated with the demanding clarinet and switched to the tenor saxophone. It was only in the Oliver Orchestra that he found his way back to the clarinet with impressive success. His warm tone in all registers of the clarinet, his rapid chromatic runs as well as his glissandi in both directions make him an unmistakable voice in the Ellington Orchestra. He is featured as a soloist in many pieces and contributes important and successful compositions ("Mood Indigo", "Saturday Night Function"). He is particularly effective as a composer and soloist in the recordings for the Variety label in a small line-up of Ellington soloists. "Barney Bigard and his Jazzopators" is one of the "cover names" for the artists. Despite all his virtuosity – Bigard later achieved the 'speed records' for these pieces with "*High Society*" and "Tiger Rag" with the Louis Armstrong All Stars – his solos remained well organized. The fact that he retained these qualities into his old age was something I was able to experience 'live' at the Nice Jazz Festivals of 1975 and 1976.



Joe Darensbourg²³

9.7.1906 – 24.5.1985

Joe Darensbourg, like Barney Bigard and Edmond Hall, was also a member of the Louis Armstrong All Stars. He was not born in New Orleans, but not far away in Baton Rouge. However, he spent his apprenticeship with Picou in New Orleans. He was one of those musicians who left for the West Coast at an early age, first in the Los Angeles scene, then later in Seattle.



The New Orleans Revival from 1940 onwards had a special center in San Francisco and Los Angeles, so it is not surprising that Joe Darensbourg was included and received. Between 1947 and 1953 he was a member of Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band. He is the only clarinetist to land a national hit with a piece from the revival, W.C. Handy's "*Yellow Dog Blues*" performed in the old slap-tongue technique. His time as an All-Stars with many tours all over the world goes from 1961 to 1964. Darensbourg is a complete clarinetist: his well-timed phrasing, alternation between bound and staccato runs, rhythmic accentuation, his round tone in all registers, sensitive but at the same time concise ensemble playing distinguishes him. It's not 'little quirks' by which you can

recognize him, but his permanently intensive contribution to the ensemble of the band. I am still grateful to Barry Martyn for bringing Joe Darensbourg and his "Legends of Jazz" to Europe in the 70s, including Frankfurt am Main.

Selected recordings of “*High Society*”

The entries for “*High Society*” in the relevant discographies, such as the seven valuable volumes of Walter Bruyninckx, are much more extensive than this selection suggests. With a typology in mind, I concentrated on the CDs and records that I was able to reach from friends and fellow musicians in my jazz environment. I wasn't interested in completeness. It would be interesting to follow the development of individual clarinetists on the basis of their “*High Society*” solos from different eras. I'm not sure if there would be enough material available for that. For example, there is no recording of Barney Bigard from the time when he used it to make first impressions on Ellington, among others. It is unique that in one case there are sound documents of two performances by a clarinetist on the same day in an afternoon and evening concert. The analysis of these two recordings by Willie Humphrey proves once again emphatically how well worked out the solos were, i.e. personal touch, but without major fluctuations.

The recordings used are listed in chronological order²⁴.

1. **Johnny Dodds** (see Figure 17 – Transcription Johnny Dodds)
King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band
Chicago, 22nd of June 1923, named “High Society Rag”
King Oliver/Louis Armstrong (co) – Honoré Dutrey (tb) – Johnny Dodds (cl) – Bud Scott (bj)
– Lilian Hardin (p) – Warren „Baby“ Dodds (dr)
2. **Sidney Bechet – Albert Nicholas** (see Figure 18 – Transcription Sidney Bechet, Figure 19 – Transcription Albert Nicholas)
Jelly Roll Morton and his New Orleans Jazzmen
New York, 14th of September 1939
Sidney de Paris (tp) – Claude Jones (tb) – Albert Nicholas (cl) – Sidney Bechet (ss) – Happy Caldwell (ts) – Jelly Roll Morton (p) – Lawrence Lucie (g) – Wellman Braud (b) – Zutty Singleton (dr)
3. **Alphonse Picou – „Big Eye“ Louis Nelson**
Kid Rena's Delta Jazz Band
New Orleans, 1940
Henry „Kid“ Rena (tp) – Alphonse Picou/Louis Nelson (cl) – Willie Santiago (g) – Albert Gleny (b) – Joe Rena (dr)
4. **Jimmie Noone** (see Figure 21 – Transcription Jimmie Noone)
Kid Ory and his Jazz Band
Los Angeles, radio broadcast mit Orson Welles, 15th of March 1944
Mutt Carey (tp) – Jimmie Noone (cl) – Edward „Kid“ Ory (tb) – Buster Wilson (p) – Bud Scott (g) – Ed Garland (b) – Zutty Singleton (dr)
5. **Wade Whaley**
Bunk Johnson in rehearsals with musicians of Kid Ory's Jazz Band
San Francisco, Museum of Modern Art, 8th of May 1943
Bunk Johnson/Mutt Carey (tp) – Wade Whaley (cl) – Edward „Kid“ Ory (tb) – Buster Wilson (p) – Frank Pasley (g) – Ed Garland (b) – Everett Walsh (dr)
6. **Alphonse Picou – „Big Eye“ Louis Nelson**
The John Reid Collection
New Orleans, 24th of June 1944
Peter Bocage (tp) – Alphonse Picou/Louis Nelson (cl) – Walter Decou (p) – Louis Keppard (g)
– George Foster (b) – Paul Barbarin (dr)
7. **Joe Darensbourg** (see Figure 22 – Transcription Joe Darensbourg)
Kid Ory and his Jazz Band
Standard Oil Broadcast, 1st of April 1945

- Mutt Carey (tp) – Joe Darensbourg (cl) – Edward „Kid“ Ory (tb) – Fred Washington (p) – Bud Scott (g) – Edward Garland (b) – Charlie Blackwell (dr)
- 8. Albert Nicholas**
Kid Ory and his Jazz Band
May 1946
Mutt Carey (tp) – Albert Nicholas (cl) – Edward „Kid“ Ory (tb) – L. Z. Cooper (p) – Bud Scott (g) – Edward Garland (b) – Minor Hall (dr)
- 9. Barney Bigard** (see Figure 24 – Transcription Barney Bigard)
Louis Armstrong All Stars
Boston, Symphony Hall, 30th of November 1947
Louis Armstrong (tp) – Jack Teagarden (tb) – Barney Bigard (cl) – Arvell Shaw (b) – Dick Cary (p) – Sid Catlett (dr)
- 10. Edmond Hall** (see Figure 20 – Transcription Edmond Hall)
Edmond Hall’s Blue Note Jazzmen
New York, 29th of November 1943
Sidney de Paris (tp) – Vic Dickenson (tb) – Edmond Hall (cl) – James P. Johnson (p) – Jimmy A. Shirley (g) – Israel Crosby (b) – Sidney Catlett (dr)
- 11. Joe Darensbourg**
Kid Ory and his Jazz Band
Los Angeles, early 1945
Mutt Carey (tp) – Edward „Kid“ Ory (tb) – Joe Darensbourg (cl) – Buster Wilson (p) – Bud Scott (bj) – Ed Garland (b) – Minor Hall (dr)
- 12. Joe Darensbourg**
Kid Ory’s Creole Jazz Band
Los Angeles, 12th of February 1945
Mutt Carey (tp) – Edward „Kid“ Ory (tb) – Joe Darensbourg (cl) – Buster Wilson (p) – Bud Scott (bj) – Ed Garland (b) – Alton Redd (dr)
- 13. Joe Darensbourg**
Kid Ory and his Creole Jazz Band
1945
- 14. George Lewis** (see Figure 23 – Transcription George Lewis)
Bunk Johnson & his New Orleans Band
New York, 19th of December 1945
Bunk Johnson (tp) – Jim Robinson (tb) – George Lewis (cl) – Alton Purnell (p) – Lawrence Marrero (bj) – Alcide „Slow Drag“ Pavageau (b) – Warren „Baby“ Dodds (dr)
- 15. Albert Nicholas**
Wild Bill Davison and his Commodores
New York, 4th of January 1946
Wild Bill Davison (co) – George Brunis (tb) – Albert Nicholas (cl) – Gene Schroeder (p) – Eddie Condon (g) – Jack Lesberg (b) – Dave Tough (dr)
- 16. Sidney Bechet**
Paris, 16th of May 1949
Gerard Bayol (tp) – Sidney Bechet (ss) – Benny Vasseur (tb) – Eddie Barnard (p) – Jean-Pierre Sasson (g) – Guy De Fatto (b) – André Jourdan (dr)
- 17. Alphonse Picou** (see Figure 25 – Transcription Alphonse Picou)
Celestin’s Tuxedo Jazz Band
New Orleans, February 1950
Oscar „Papa“ Celestin (tp) – Alphonse Picou (cl) – William Matthews (tb) – Octave Crosby (p) – Richard Alexis (b) – Happy Goldston (dr)
- 18. Barney Bigard**
Louis Armstrong All Stars
Ithaca, Cornell University, 25th of February 1954
Louis Armstrong (tp) – Trummy Young (tb) – Barney Bigard (cl) – Milt Hinton (b) – Marty Napoleon (p) – Cozy Cole (dr)

19. Albert Burbank

Kid Ory and his Creole Jazz Band

San Francisco, Club Hangover, 3rd of July 1954

Alvin Alcorn (tp) – Edward „Kid“ Ory (tb) – Albert Burbank (cl) – Don Ewell (p) – Ed Garland (b) – Minor Hall (dr)

20. Albert Burbank (see Figure 26 – Transcription Albert Burbank)

Kid Ory and his Creole Jazz Band

San Francisco, Club Hangover, 17th of July 1954

Alvin Alcorn (tp) – Edward „Kid“ Ory (tb) – Albert Burbank (cl) – Don Ewell (p) – Ed Garland (b) – Minor Hall (dr)

21. Edmond Hall

Jack Teagarden and his Orchestra

New York, 1954

Jimmy McPartland (tp) – Jack Teagarden (tb) – Edmond Hall (cl) – Dick Cary (p) – Walter Page (b) – Jo Jones (dr)

22. Willie Humphrey (see Figure 27 – Transcription Willie Humphrey I, Figure 28 – Transcription Willie Humphrey II)

Paul Barbarin's Jazz Band of New Orleans

Oxford (Ohio), Willmington College, 3rd of May 1956 Afternoon Concert & Evening Concert

John Brunious Snr. (tp) – Willie Humphrey (cl) – Bob Thomas (tb) – Lester Santiago (p) – Danny Barker (bj) – Richard Alexis (b) – Paul Barbarin (dr)

23. Joe Darensbourg

Teddy Buckner and his Orchestra

1958

Teddy Buckner (tp) – John Ewing (tb) – Joe Darensbourg (cl) – Chester Lane (p) – Arthur Edwards (b) – Jesse Sailes (dr)

24. George Lewis

George Lewis New Orleans Jazz Band

31st of January 1959

Avery „Kid“ Howard (tp) – Jim Robinson (tb) – George Lewis (cl) – Joseph Robichaux (p) – Alcide „Slow Drag“ Pavageau (b) – Joseph Watkins (dr)

25. Barney Bigard – Joe Darensbourg

The Legends Of Jazz

1974

Andrew Blakeney (tp) – Louis Nelson (tb) – Barney Bigard/Joe Darensbourg (cl) – Alton Purnell (p) – Edward Garland (b) – Barry Martyn (dr)

The Phrasing

With the means of analyzing the digitized recordings by so-called "wave editors"²⁵, impressions of the various phrasings of the clarinetists in the standard form of quaver (= eighth) runs can be secured by measurements. For me, it was about

<i>Clarinetist</i>	<i>Percentage 2nd eighth</i>
1. Edmond Hall	38,6%
2. Barney Bigard	42,4%
3. Albert Burbank	42,5%
4. Johnny Dodds	42,8%
5. George Lewis	44,8%
6. Jimmy Noone	46,4%
7. Sidney Bechet	47,5%
8. Albert Nicholas	48,2%
9. Alphonse Picou	48,9%
10. Willie Humphrey	53,0%
11. Joe Darensbourg	55,5%

- (1) the extent of the **triorization** of two-eighth groups (swing phrasing),
- (2) the **fluidness**, expressed by the length of the eighths in quaver runs (articulation),
- (3) Ratio of **accentuation** of quavers on the beat and off the beat ("ands").

On the one hand, it shows that the well-known impressions, which are traded among the clarinet fans, can certainly be substantiated. But there are also new aspects, at least for me. To improve comparability, I have chosen the second bar of the solo for all clarinetists – i.e. in the middle of the "obligatory bars" – in which all clarinetists play an eighth run consisting of two descending diatonic se-

quences³ A – G – F – E and G – F – E – D (see Figure 6 - Wave George Lewis and following).

Triolization

The trend is clear: from the archaic clarinetist Alphonse Picou, who is also well trained in note-reading, to Edmond Hall, who presents himself in the swing idiom, an increase in triolization is expected. For the purposes of measuring, I define the proportion of the time span for the second eighths off the beat as a percentage. With mathematically exact triolization, this means a time share of 33% for the second eighth. 50% corresponds to mathematically equal eighths. Even Edmond Hall, with 39%, remains well above the third for the second eighth, which confirms that the idea of triplet phrasing can at best be a thought aid for practicing jazz musicians. But the tendency from Picou to Hall is very evident in the measurements. With 49%, Picou is almost exactly at "straight" even eighths, close to Albert Nicholas. At the other end of the scale are Barney Bigard and Albert Burbank, who play more in "triplets", but also Johnny Dodds, so that the trend along jazz history towards more triolization does not seem to be very pronounced. It is interesting to note that few of the New Orleans clarinetists – Joe Darensbourg and Willie Humphrey – actually slightly reverse the periods for the first and second quavers and bring forward the second eighth note slightly, at least in the relevant bar.

Fluidness

The longer the eighth notes are held before the next note is played, the smoother the eighth notes appear. To measure this, I have given the percentage of the tone within the time span until

<i>Clarinetist</i>	<i>1st eighth</i>	<i>2nd eighth</i>
1. George Lewis	60,8%	63,3%
2. Jimmie Noone	62,4%	71,3%
3. Willie Humphrey	70,3%	62,4%
4. JohnnyDodds	72,8%	75,2%
5. Alphonse Picou	78,8%	61,8%
6. Albert Burbank	79,9%	72,8%
7. Sidney Bechet	81,7%	85,5%
8. Barney Bigard	81,9%	82,1%
9. Edmond Hall	86,3%	84,4%
10. Albert Nicholas	87,1%	86,1%
11. Joe Darensbourg	97,3%	80,9%

the next note. It is taken into account that, depending on the extent of the "triplet phrasing", the two eighth notes may have different durations of time. 100% would correspond to a complete legato with no separation between the notes. 50% would be a pretty strong staccato. The adjacent list is arranged according to the relative duration of the first eighths. It can be clearly seen that the clarinetists, who give the first quaver an above-average amount of space in its time span, usually do the same with the second quaver. Within the limits of the accuracy of the meas-

urements, the relative duration for the second eighth is almost always shorter than for the first (c. section "Triolization"). A conspicuous exception is Jimmie Noone, who doesn't play too much in triplets (see above) and takes the first eighth note very short (62%) – almost like George Lewis' staccato peaks – but gives the second eighth note relatively more space (71%). In the case of the clarinetists Barney Bigard, who play more "triplets", and Edmond Hall, who play the strongest, they are close together with over 80% for both quavers. Joe Darensbourg compensates for the particularly short time span for the first eighth note (with 45% less than half, see above) by holding the note for almost the entire period of time, relatively longer than all the others. The early second eighth (see above) is finished much more quickly.

³ All note names in the transcriptions are based on the transposed notation for clarinet in Bb.

Accentuation

The impression of quaver runs is decisively shaped by how balanced or differently weighted the two

Clarinetist	<i>relative accentuation des 2nd eighth</i>
1. Johnny Dodds	34%
2. Barney Bigard	47%
3. Edmond Hall	75%
4. Albert Burbank	80%
5. George Lewis	81%
6. Alphonse Picou	88%
7. Willie Humphrey	97%
8. Joe Darensbourg	105%
9. Sidney Bechet	106%
10. Jimmie Noone	110%
11. Albert Nicholas	124%

quavers on or off the beat are designed by the clarinetists. To do this, I measured the ratio between the maximum amplitudes (in decibels) in the time periods for the first and second eighth notes, respectively. Accordingly, 100% means an equally distributed accentuation, 50% a reduction of the amplitude for the second eighth note to half, and 200% a comparatively strong accentuation of the second eighth note. This analysis yields astonishing results for me. Peak values in the special accentuation of the "even" eighth note off the beat - similar to Charly Parker - are achieved by Albert Nicholas - otherwise weakly triolizing and playing quite fluently (see above). Jimmie Noone, who plays more staccato, also uses the effect, known only in jazz, of emphasizing the even quavers with an accent in standard

phrasing. At the other end of the scale is Johnny Dodds. I didn't particularly notice how much he takes back the second eighth note compared to the first, even during the time when I was very much concerned with the music of King Oliver's Creole Jazzband.

The Waves

The following illustrations of the "waves" are arranged according to the extent of the fluidness in phrasing, i.e. from the staccato player George Lewis to the extremely fluent playing Joe Darensbourg. This feature catches the eye in the images of the waves, even without quantitative measurements. The depictions of the time are adjusted to the same length regardless of the absolute time, i.e. regardless of the tempo of the versions, so that it can also be observed, for example, that George Lewis plays in a staccato manner similar to Jimmie Noone, but much more "laid back" than Noone.

Figure 6 - Wave George Lewis

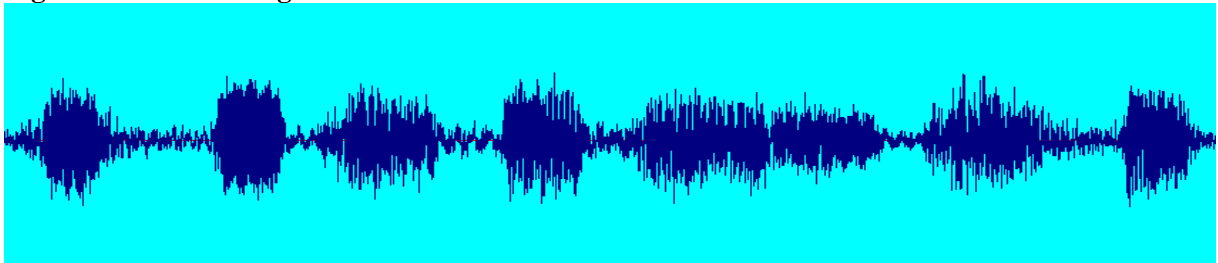


Figure 7 - Wave Jimmie Noone

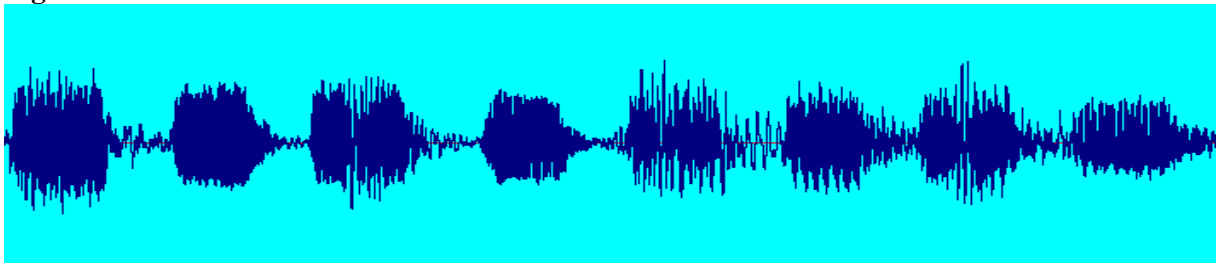


Figure 8 - Wave Willie Humphrey

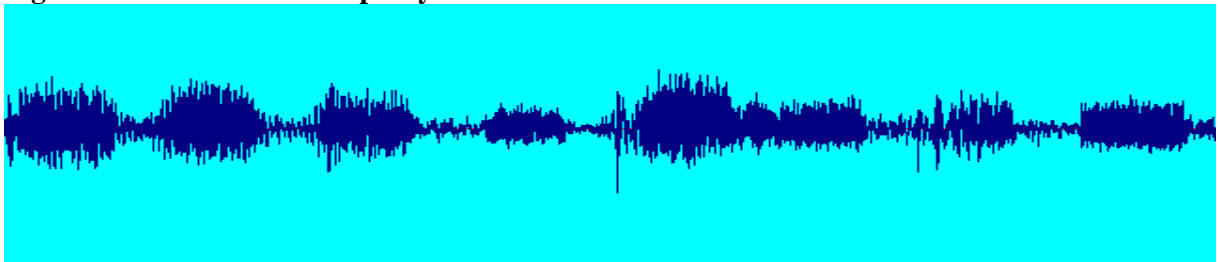
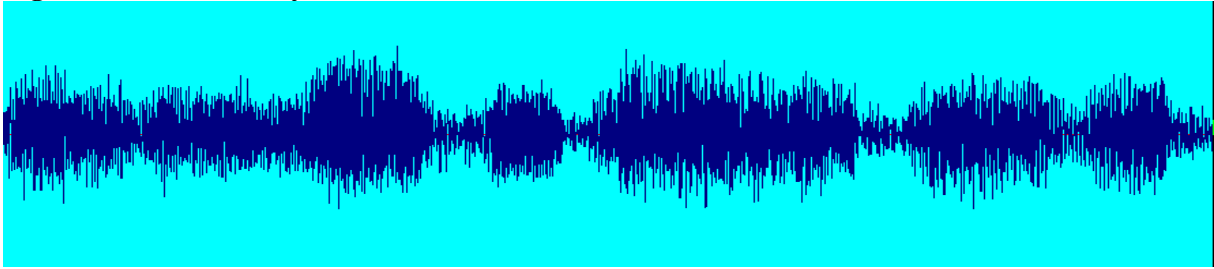
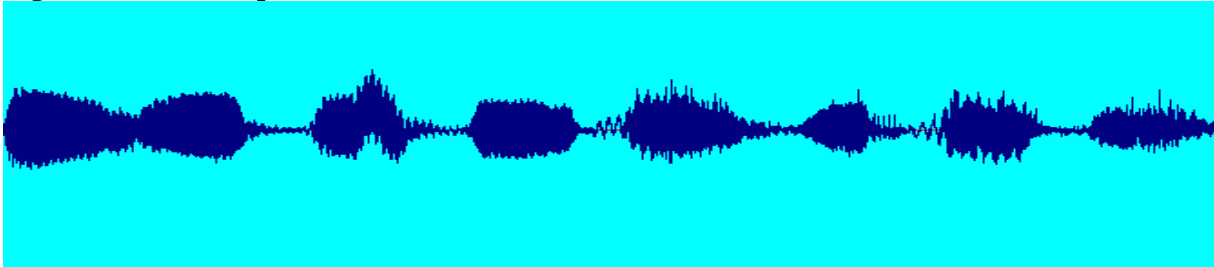
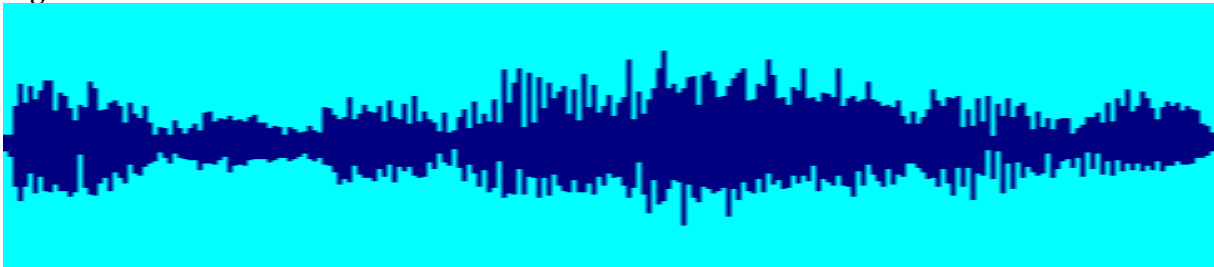
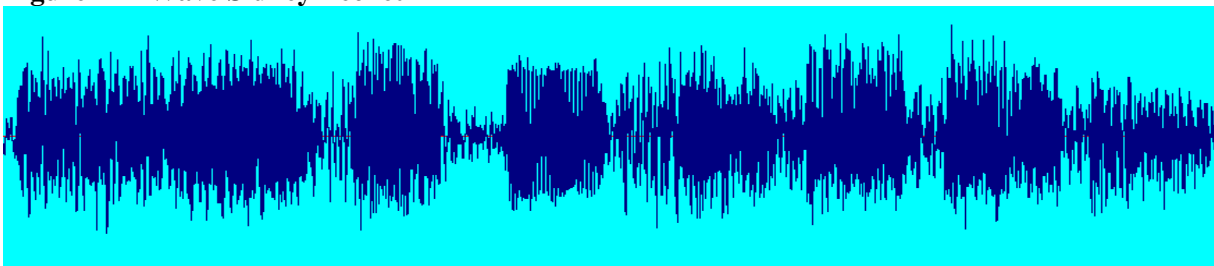
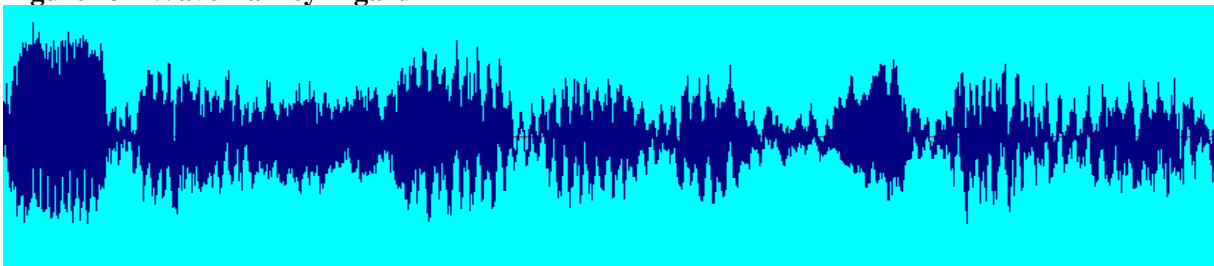
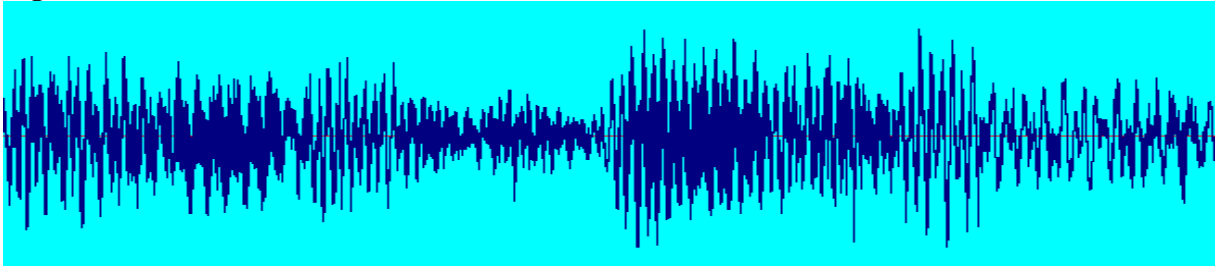
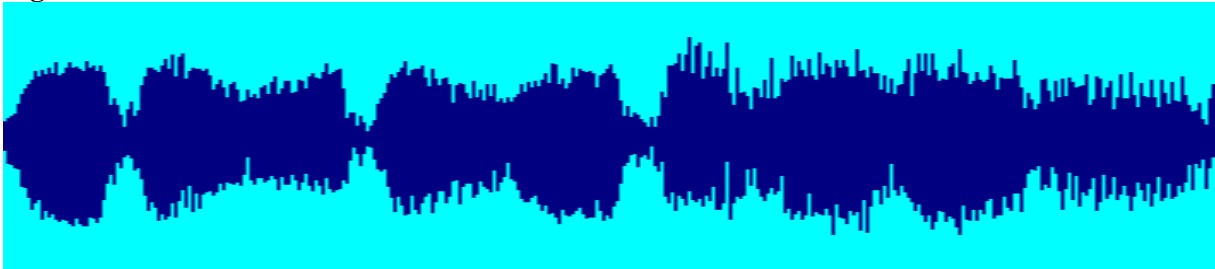
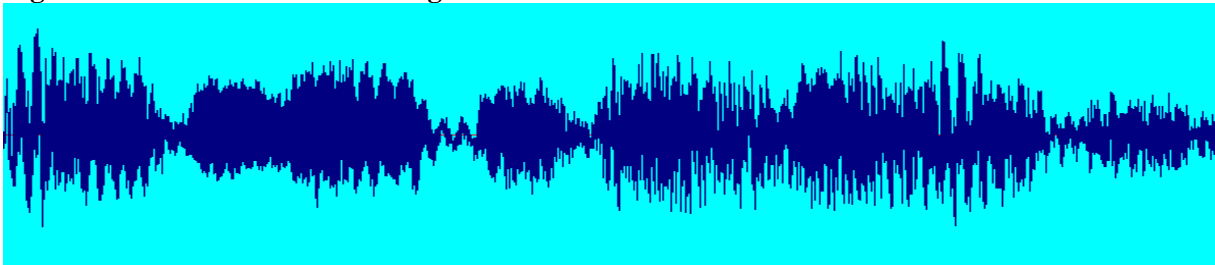


Figure 9 - Wave Johnny Dodds**Figure 10 - Wave Alphonse Picou****Figure 11 - Wave Albert Burbank⁴****Figure 12 - Wave Sidney Bechet****Figure 13 - Wave Barney Bigard**

⁴ The clarinet does not fit the shape of the wave as clearly as it does with the other clarinetists, especially in the second half of the bar. This is due to the fact that in the Kid Ory band, both brass players play the melody harmoniously, almost covering the clarinetist. Ory sets a new tone in the middle of the bar, his trumpeter Alvin Alcorn a little more restrained on the 4th quarter.

Figure 14 - Wave Edmond Hall**Figure 15 - Wave Albert Nicholas****Figure 16 - Wave Joe Darensbourg**

The Transcriptions

Notations

Regardless of the individual phrasing of the performers' quaver runs - whether more or less triplet - the melodic arcs are notated in eighths. Slurs used are 'phrasing bows' and not slurs in the classical sense, i.e. connection from note to note without a new articulating tongue thrust. Articulation signs have been used sparingly. Longer notes, equipped with a 'terminal vibrato' according to New Orleans, as is typical of Edmond Hall and Sidney Bechet in particular, are marked by a horizontal 'serpentine line' (not to be confused with a long trill).

Minimal corrections have been made at the points where the aging clarinetists are obviously "running out of breath" and notes are missing or small mistakes creep in.

The version of the "inventor" Alphonse Picou (see Figure 25 – Transcription Alphonse Picou)

Conclusions from his best recording in 1950 with Oscar 'Papa' Celestin's Tuxedo Jazz Band (see Figure 25 – Transcription Alphonse Picou) are, of course, based on the assumption that Picou has not significantly reshaped his version since his first success 30 years earlier. If Barney Bigard was already practicing his variation, Picou must have held on to the version once he had worked it out, which was much more oriented towards fixed notated music. This is also evidenced by the comparison of the 1950 recording with an earlier 1944 recording, which differs only slightly.

Edmond Hall's statement that Picou may have taken over only the first four bars, repeated in bars 17 to 20, from the original (see Figure 3 - The piccolo-original transposed in Eb for Clarinet in Bb) is confirmed by the recording. And even here there are two characteristic deviations. Obviously, almost all clarinetists – with the exception of Sidney Bechet (see Figure 18 – Transcription Sidney Bechet) – have followed both of them. The first consists of the intermediate note C, which makes the progression more fluid, in preparation for the second triplet phrase and softening the large interval from A to F. These harmonic transition tones can be found in all clarinetists with one exception. The great

Jimmie Noone (see Figure 21 – Transcription Jimmie Noone) is actually the only one who, at least in the second half, plays the triplet bars in bars 17 and 19 in the original piccolo without any "helpful" passing notes.

Second, Picou begins the repetition of the diatonic sequence in the first half of bar 2 on the "3" just one tone lower. In this way, he ends up in a scale coming from D on the C at the beginning of the repetition of the phrase from bar 1 to bar 3, which is much easier than the repetition of the C for the piccolo flute. The fact that Picou's concept of decoration consisted almost exclusively in the use of arpeggios in eighth notes corresponding to the harmony of the piece is shown by almost all the other bars of his version. There are three variants:

1. harmonically complete chains ascending over about one bar (bars 5 and 6, 11 and 12 as well as 21 and 22, 29 and 30), less often descending and then only over half a bar (bars 6, 12, 22, 28),
2. broken arpeggios in staggered leaps of thirds or fourths (bars 7 and 23) leading exclusively upwards to the heavy bar sections, and
3. in typical ragtime style in groups of three repeated in succession (bars 9, 13).

This design is typical of Picou. The Recker original provides for few interval jumps. Alternating notes and diatonic passages predominate. Arpeggios occur only in bars 8 and 10 to 12, and not at all in the second part from bar 17 onwards. Perhaps it is these few bars that appealed to Picou. A chromatic passage occurs only twice (bars 10 and 16). The second time, it is a particularly prominent passage in the "Break" in bars 15 and 16, in which, interestingly, the original Recker arrangement also provides chromaticism in the counterparts to the melody.

Apart from bars 1 to 4 and 17 to 20 taken from the original, Picou strings together two-bar phrases throughout, always leaving open the main points of the melody leading to the respective "1" of the two-bar groups. He usually starts his phrases on the "2" (bars 5, 9, 11, 13, 21, 25), in the broken arpeggios (2nd variant in bars 7 and 23) on the "1 and". This leads to the conclusion that Alphonse Picou originally shaped his version in brass band practice, which was more concerned with accompanying embellishments of the melody than with soloism.

In any case, Picou cannot have inferred this procedure from the Recker arrangement. Here, the solo piccolo voice leads to the melodic focal points and also plays them himself. The extent to which Picou's particular rhythms are influenced by the ragtime era is evident in bars 25 and 26, which introduce the harmonically more moving conclusion in the last eight bars. The rhythm coincides with rhythmic accents in the first two bars of the 2nd part of the "trendsetter" 'Maple Leaf Rag' (Scott Joplin, 1899).

The "basic version" of Johnny Dodds (see Figure 17 – Transcription Johnny Dodds)

As with almost all clarinetists, bars 1 to 4 and 17 to 20 are identical to the Picou version. There are only deviations in the notes that prepare the triplets. Dodds mixes the original piccolo version without a passing note on the "2 and" in bar 1 and a repeating F in bar 3. The alternating note effect from the original in bar 5 and identical in bar 6 (repeated in bars 21 and 22) was better studied by Dodds than Picou. This leads to the conclusion that Dodds also had the piccolo notes at his disposal and was not always dependent on a replica of the Picou afterimage. But he, too, uses the effect of starting phrases only after the "1" of the melody emphases. Arpeggio sections are rare (bar 8 and corresponding bar 24), more often diatonic ladder sections.

One of Dodd's favorite phrases⁵ – a kind of arpeggio variant – in which the spaces between descending harmonic tones are filled in chromatically and appropriately, is already used in the first half (bars 11 and 12). He uses it particularly succinctly as the final phrase in bars 31 and 32, which is then repeated in the King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band arrangement at the end of the entire piece.

Two aspects make the Dodds version unmistakable: first, he "leaves" the break in bars 15 and 16 to the trombonist. There is a bit of this in the Recker original, where the piccolo flute "only" places a long trill over two bars, while the other melody instruments counter it with a short chromatic coun-

⁵ As a beginner, after many listening efforts, I also enjoyed a clarinet lesson with Reimer von Essen, and remember that the focus of that lesson was on three standard Dodds phrases. This one was one of them.

ter-phrase. From the clarinetist's point of view, this modest variant did not catch on. It probably depended on the relationship with the bandleader and the ego of the clarinetist. Almost all New Orleans clarinetists use the two bars to shine. In his 1939 recording (see Figure 18 – Transcription Sidney Bechet), Sidney Bechet even obviously disregards the concept of a brass break, which is based on the original, and unmistakably places his phrase in bars 16 and 17.

Second, Dodds does not repeat the ascending triplet phrases from bars 1 and 3 in the second half, but offers a new variant descending from the higher C. This is where the camp splits in the later recordings of the New Orleans clarinetists. While Edmond Hall (see Figure 20 – Transcription Edmond Hall) and Joe Darensbourg (see Figure 22 – Transcription Joe Darensbourg) quote the Dodds variation almost completely in bars 17 and 19 and Albert Nicholas at least once in bar 19, the other clarinetists studied prefer a repetition of bars 1 and 3 at this point. Willie Humphrey (see Figure 27 – Transcription Willie Humphrey I) uses the Dodds variation in bars 17 and 19 as the basis for the beginning of his second chorus, conceived as an intensification. He mixes the descent from the high C with triplet phrases in bars 2 and 4 as well.

Figure 17 – Transcription Johnny Dodds

Johnny Dodds
King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, Chicago 22nd Jun. 1923

Clar. in Bb ♩ = 104

The musical score is written for Clarinet in Bb and is in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 104. The score consists of eight staves of music, with measure numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29 indicated at the beginning of each staff. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including triplets and slurs. The key signature is one flat (Bb). The score is a transcription of a performance by Johnny Dodds with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in Chicago on June 22, 1923.

The variants of the other clarinetists

Sidney Bechet

The idea that Bechet's version from 1939 (see Figure 18 – Transcription Sidney Bechet) – one of the last recordings of "Jelly Roll" Morton – might come closest to the version that the young Louis Armstrong had rehearsed comes not only because Bechet specifically mentions Louis in an interview in connection with "*High Society*", but also because the phrasing on Bechet's soprano saxophone in the narrow range of notes between the high C and the below the 1. line, a bandwidth in which a trumpet also moves. In addition, Bechet is the only one⁶ of the analyzed versions to place notes with at least half a bar length within the 32 bars, four times (bars 8, 12, 13 and bar 31 in the final phrase). He uses it twice with a strong vibrato at the end of the note, a design feature particularly well-known by Armstrong. More often than others, Bechet also incorporates fourths and three-eighth notes into his phrases. Unlike his clarinet colleagues, Bechet does not limit the rhythmic variations to accents within quaver runs, to differently placed starting points of the phrases, but to a varied mixture between notes of different lengths, less dominated by pure quaver runs.

Bechet is one of those performers who retains a characteristic passage from the Piccolo original, which Picou has dispensed with and which is also only paraphrased by Dodds: bar 5 and its duplicate bar 6 or the repetition in bars 21 and 22. Bechet quotes the original in bars 5 and 21 and paraphrases in bars 6 and 22.

Albert Nicholas (see Figure 19 – Transcription Albert Nicholas)

At the latest in bar 9, after a fairly faithful use of the Picou version in bars 1 to 4 and the further use of the piccolo original in bars 5 to 8, deviating from Picou, comes the first Nicholas distinguishing mark. He also repeats it at the appropriate point in the second half from bar 25. After he does not play the pre-bar in an eighth-beat, but ends it on the beat on the "3" with a briefly accentuated quarter, he places a strikingly short and strongly accentuated high note on the 2nd quarter of the bar at the beginning of a long arpeggio-like eighth-run over three bars. In bar 9 it is the ninth over the harmony Bb7, in bar 25 with F the highest note of all.

Incidentally, Nicholas cares little about the harmony Ab in the following run in bar 25, but anticipates the harmony of the following bar Eb dim, also a Nicholas specialty. But the most characteristic Nicholas passage is the break in bars 15 and 16. The phrase comes more from the advanced etude book for clarinets, chapters ranging from intermingled arpeggios to diminished seventh chords, a source of many clarinetist's licks, until Benny Goodman. Characteristic of Albert Nicholas is how virtuosic and rhythmically interesting he is with accents, often using them alternately between and on the beat in "ragtime style" at prominent points.

Edmond Hall (see Figure 20 – Transcription Edmond Hall)

Edmond Hall plays the most triolet eighths of all his colleagues. Another element that shows him to be more at home in the swing idiom than others are his accentuated phrase beginnings on the early "1" – as "4 and", already in bars 6 to 7, but used several times in the progression: bars 14 to 15 and 22 to 23 and in one variant not at the beginning of a two-bar group, but in its middle from bar 25 to 26 and shortly afterwards from bar 27 to 28.

From the first eight bars, repeated from bar 17, it is evident that Hall must have studied well the 1923 Dodds version, which adheres to the Piccolo original for eight bars, not just four as in Picou. He adopts his paraphrasing of the original piccolo bars 5 and 6 as well as 21 and 22 and also quotes the variation of the opening bars in the higher register from bar 17 onwards. Even the standard Dodds phrase, placed by Dodds in bars 11 and 12, is completely adopted by Hall. The first eight bars of each half do not deviate from Dodds in any note, except in the aforementioned passages where Hall draws the opening note of a phrase before the "1", while Dodds does not begin it until "1 and".

Hall is the only performer to use pauses lasting longer than two-quarters of the time, and in prominent places. As with a good dramaturg, one of the climaxes, his break, is preceded by an almost full-

⁶ The long notes in the Jimmie Noone version (see Figure 21 – Transcription Jimmie Noone) in bars 25 and 26 have a different context. Noone interrupts the variation and picks up the solemn melody for two bars.

bar pause. Hall also makes the use of his concluding line exciting with a long pause on bar 25, where one would expect it to begin.

Figure 18 – Transcription Sidney Bechet

Sidney Bechet

Jelly Roll Morton & His Jazzmen, New York 14th of Sept. 1939

Soprano ♩ = 115

The musical score is written for Soprano saxophone in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 115 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score consists of eight staves of music, with bar numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29 marked at the beginning of each line. The melody is highly rhythmic and melodic, featuring several triplet figures. A notable feature is a long, sustained note on bar 25, which is marked with a fermata and a 'p' dynamic marking, indicating a pause in the music. The score concludes with a final cadence on bar 29.

Figure 19 – Transcription Albert Nicholas

Albert Nicholas
Jelly Roll Morton and His Jazzmen, New York 14th of Sept. 1939

Clar. in Bb $\text{♩} = 115$

The musical score is written for Clarinet in Bb and consists of 32 measures. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 115. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The score is divided into eight systems, each containing four measures. The first system starts with a measure rest followed by a quarter note G4. The second system contains measures 2-5. The third system contains measures 6-9, with an accent (^) over the first note of measure 9. The fourth system contains measures 10-13, with accents (^) over the first notes of measures 11, 12, and 13. The fifth system contains measures 14-17, with triplets (3) over measures 14, 15, and 16. The sixth system contains measures 18-21, with accents (^) over the first notes of measures 19, 20, and 21. The seventh system contains measures 22-25, with an accent (^) over the first note of measure 25. The eighth system contains measures 26-32, with triplets (3) over measures 29 and 30, and an accent (^) over the first note of measure 32.

Figure 20 – Transcription Edmond Hall

Edmond Hall

Edmond Hall's Blue Note Jazzmen, New York 29th of Nov. 1943

Clar. in Bb ♩ = 104

1

5

9

13

17

21

25

29

Jimmie Noone (see: Figure 21 – Transcription Jimmie Noone)

The version, recorded just over a month before his death on April 19, 1944, shows that Noone is particularly well versed in "*High Society*". In contrast to Picou, he is one of those who, like Dodds, Hall and Nicholas, maintain the faithfulness to the original from bar 1 to bar 8 or from bars 17 to 24, but in bars 11 and 12 and somewhat varied in bars 27 and 28 he brings the Picous-like broken arpeggios, locally in leaps of thirds or fourths upwards globally as a descending phrase.

The fact that Noone, like Nicholas, has mastered all the clarinet licks from the "advanced etudes" is also evident in his break, a quieter variation than the one with the "ragtime effect" that Nicholas likes to use. At the point where other clarinet colleagues "finally explode", Noone interrupts his fluid variation for two bars and plays a bow from the trio's solemn melody.

Joe Darensbourg (see. Figure 22 – Transcription Joe Darensbourg)

Apart from the fact that Darensbourg also proves to be a "classical" representative, who borrows bars 1 to 8 and 17 – 24 strongly from the Piccolo original, like Dodds and others, a special feature stands out. In addition to arpeggios (with sixths), changes and passing notes, Darensbourg also uses chromatic runs almost over a bar length. These longer chromatic runs seem to be primarily a stylistic device of the clarinetists, who played in New Orleans for a particularly long time. They appear mainly in the revival recordings with George Lewis, Albert Burbank and Willie Humphrey. Similar to Edmond Hall, Joe Darensbourg sometimes creates a longer pause of up to three quarters between his phrases, which makes listening more exciting. In any case, it can't have been shortness of breath.

George Lewis (see. Figure 23 – Transcription George Lewis)

The early version by the most outstanding clarinetist of the New Orleans Revival is a typical Lewis slight variation on Dodds's basic version. Apart from the faithful bars 1 to 8 and 17 to 24, he uses simple arpeggios, excerpts from the Dodds standard phrase mentioned several times, a ragtime phrase in several places (bar 10, bar 13 and bar 30) with repeated groups of three eighths, alternately placing accents on and between the beat. In contrast to the structure of the phrases in the rest of the chorus, the descending chromatic run is in the break, a simple but very effective method for clarinetists to capture attention.⁷

Barney Bigard (see Figure 24 – Transcription Barney Bigard)

For me, Barney Bigard's version with the Louis Armstrong All Stars remains the most ingenious of all. It also remains "true to the original" in bars 1 to 8 and 17 to 24. In the opening bar, especially in bar 17, it is even more faithful to the original than its colleagues and, like the piccolo part, dispenses with the passage note on the "2 and". Apart from the sovereignty despite the high tempo (quarter = 252 BPM), it is particularly impressive how Bigard makes a construction principle for his last six bars⁸ out of a sequence that is twice casually interspersed in the first and second half, but interspersed in the same places in the first and second halves (bar 8 and bar 24), which he introduces rather with a short chromaticism. Separated by large leaps, Bigard places the phrase, consisting of an arpeggio group of four with a sixth and completed by a diatonic descending sequence, descending in stages, alternating between high and low, strictly observing the harmonies, aiming at the characteristic thirds, and in three different rhythmic variations.

No other clarinetist shapes his phrases over eight bars as presciently as Barney Bigard. No other clarinetist goes so far as to use the minor None Eb in the phrase over D7. Louis Russell's advice to practice "*High Society*" well was not only worthwhile for the employment with Duke Ellington.

⁷ I remember well that Kenny Davern once explained to me his view that the special attraction of the clarinet in jazz is its "chromatic character".

⁸ Again, Kenny Davern pointed out that special emphasis should be placed on the closing phrase and that it should be distinctive, not necessarily above average, virtuosic, i.e. that the audience should attach importance to what remains in the listener's memory after the chorus.

Figure 21 – Transcription Jimmie Noone

Jimmie Noone
Kid Ory and his Creole Jazz Band, Los Angeles 15th of March 1944

Clar. in Bb ♩ = 114

The image shows a musical score for a Clarinet in Bb. The score is written on a single staff in 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of ♩ = 114. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The score consists of eight lines of music, with measure numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29 indicated at the beginning of each line. The music features a series of eighth-note patterns, often grouped in threes (trios) and marked with a '3' above a bracket. There are also some sixteenth-note runs and rests throughout the piece.

Figure 22 – Transcription Joe Darensbourg

Joe Darensbourg
Kid Ory and His Jazz Band, Los Angeles early 1945

Clar. in Bb ♩ = 108

The musical score is written for Clarinet in Bb and consists of eight staves of music. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 108. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The music features various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs, with phrasing slurs and accents. The staves are numbered 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29.

Figure 24 – Transcription Barney Bigard

Barney Bigard

Louis Armstrong All Stars, Boston 30th of Nov. 1947

Clar. in Bb ♩ = 126

The musical score is written for Clarinet in Bb and consists of eight staves of music. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 126. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents (>), and triplets (indicated by a '3' over a group of notes). The first staff starts at measure 1. The second staff starts at measure 5. The third staff starts at measure 9. The fourth staff starts at measure 13 and includes a key signature change to two flats (Bb and Eb) at measure 14. The fifth staff starts at measure 17. The sixth staff starts at measure 21. The seventh staff starts at measure 25 and includes a key signature change to one flat (Bb) at measure 26. The eighth staff starts at measure 29 and ends with a double bar line.

Figure 25 – Transcription Alphonse Picou

Alphonse Picou
Oscar 'Papa' Celestin's Tuxedo Jazz Band, New Orleans 1950

Clar. in Bb ♩ = 104

1. 3. 3. 3. 3.

5.

9.

13.

17. 3. 3. 3. 3.

21.

25. 29.

1. 33. 2.

Albert Burbank (see Figure 26 – Transcription Albert Burbank)

Albert Burbank's version differs from George Lewis's, for example, in that Burbank uses chromatic passing notes in several places, but like Lewis, only plays a longer chromatic run over a full two bars in the break. Like Lewis, Burbank remains in the upper register almost continuously in the "free" bars 9 to 16 and 25 to 32. He is almost the only one in the recordings examined to go up to the high F in a run with broken arpeggios. Overall, the Burbank version is a variant of the basic Dodds version typical of the New Orleans Revival.

Willie Humphrey (see Figure 27 – Transcription Willie Humphrey I, Figure 28 – Transcription Willie Humphrey II)

The "most recent" recording examined was taken in 1956 by Willie Humphrey. It's the only recording where a clarinetist doesn't just play two choruses. Willie Humphrey has worked out the second as if it were a new standard. The characteristic triplet phrase of the first half of the first bar of the original becomes the design principle for the whole group of bars 1 to 5 and 17 to 20. The broken arpeggio, which begins with the high F and is already used in the first chorus, appears twice. Humphrey effectively varies articulation in constantly descending runs. Bound two-eighth groups with accentuated beginnings alternate with thrust two-eighth groups, but in the first bar on the quarters "2" and "4" and in the next bar on "1" and "3". In bars 7 and 8 he uses this articulation in a diatonically descending run over two bars. In the break, Humphrey does not work with the rhythmic offset of the accents, but instead he relies on a chromatically descending run.

Final Remarks

Johnny Dodds from 1923, the original piccolo music, or the "Picou invention" of the first four bars – is the starting point with more or less orientation to the pattern, but the remaining bars in the 32-bar chorus of "*High Society*" show how well the New Orleans clarinetists master the impromptu variation in good Mozart tradition and perform it with swinging phrasing, rhythmic accentuation in the off-beat, varied articulation from the language stock of New Orleans jazz. Phrasing and articulation are each very personal. In the structure of the variation, there are clear relations between the variants, which extend from 1923 to 1956 over a period of 33 years (see Figure 29 - Family tree of variants (**Remarks: the German word "Takt" means "bar" in English; "Stimme" is "voice" in English, "ca." stands for "approx.." in English**)). It is a pity that there is no recording of *Lorenzo Tio*, which as a "missing link" might have shown that the strong similarities in their design concept of clarinetists such as Sidney Bechet, Jimmie Noone, Barney Bigard, Alphonse Picou and, to a lesser extent, Johnny Dodds, more strongly based on the piccolo original than in the case of Alphonse Picou, who was declared the inventor, can be traced back above all to their common teacher *Lorenzo Tio*.

Figure 26 – Transcription Albert Burbank

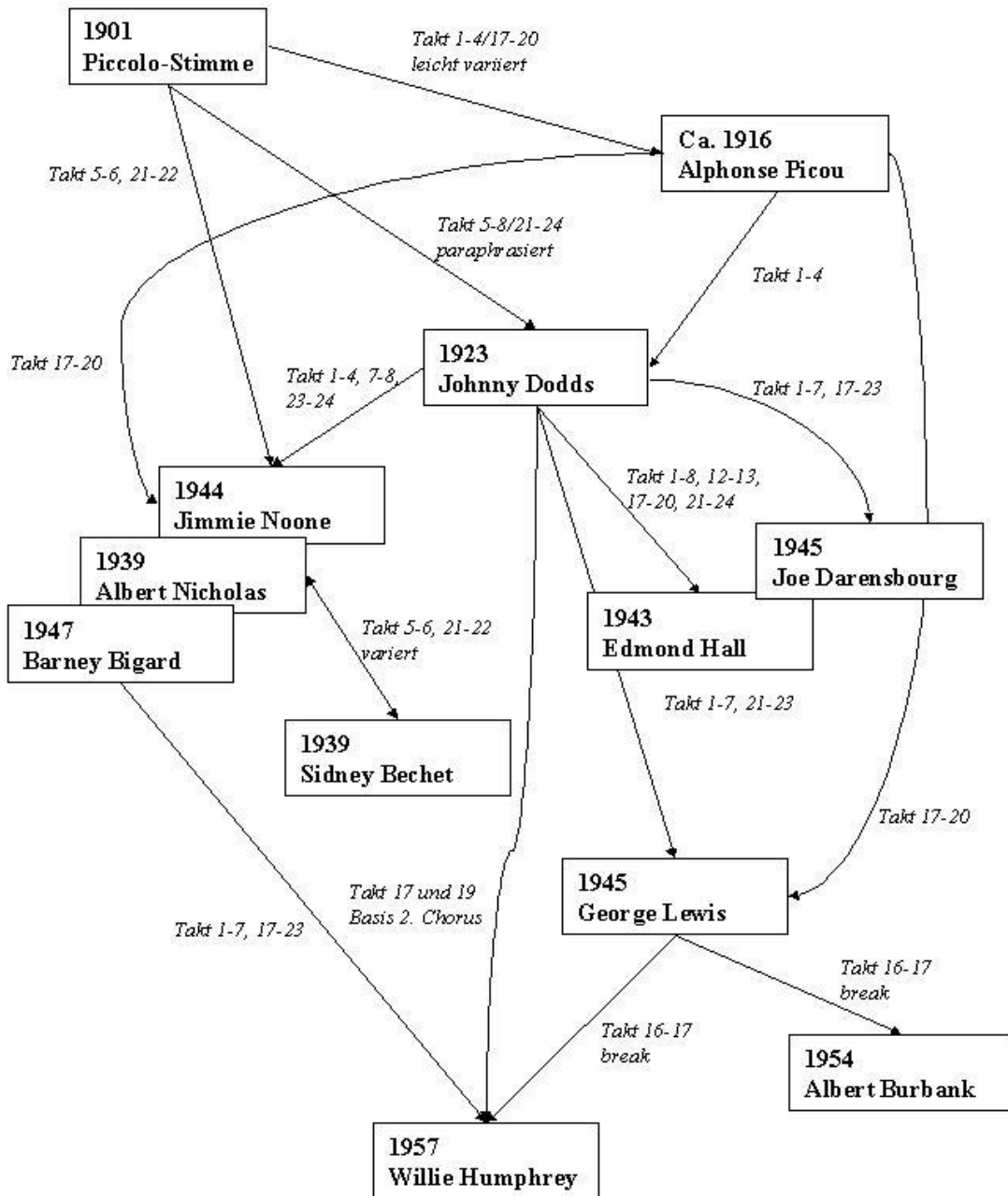
Albert Burbank
Kid Ory and his Creole Jazz Band, San Francisco 17th of July 1954

Clar. in Bb $\text{♩} = 115$

The musical score is written for Clarinet in Bb and consists of 32 measures. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 115. The key signature has two flats (Bb major). The score is divided into eight systems of four measures each. Measure numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The notation includes eighth notes, triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a bracket), and various accidentals (flats and sharps). The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the 32nd measure.

Figure 29 - Family tree of variants

(Remarks: the German word “Takt” means “bar” in English; “Stimme” is “voice” in English, “ca.” stands for “approx..” in English)



Index of Musicians

A

Armstrong, Louis 3, 6-8, 17-23, 32, 36, 50

B

Baquet, George 17
 Barbarin, Paul 20-22, 24
 Barnes, Emile 17
 Barnes, Polo 17
 Bechet, Sidney 6, 8, 17-19, 22-23, 27-28, 30, 32-33, 42
 Bigard, Barney 3, 7, 20-25, 27-28, 36, 42
 Braud, Wellman 8
 Burbank, Albert 20-21, 24-25, 27, 36, 42
 Burke, Raymond 17

C

Celestin, Oscar "Papa" 7, 23
 Cottrell, Louis Jr. 17

D

Darensbourg, Joe 21-24, 26, 28, 36
 Davern, Kenny 36
 de Paris, Sidney 17, 22-23
 Dodds, Johnny 3, 6, 17-18, 22-23, 25-27, 29, 31, 42
 Dutrey, Honoré 17, 22

E

Ellington, Duke 5, 7-8, 19-20, 36

F

Fouché, Earl 17
 French, Albert 21

H

Hall, Edmond 6-7, 20-25, 28, 30, 32, 35, 36
 Hall, Herb 17
 Handy, John 17
 Handy, W.C. 6, 21
 Hucko, Peanuts 8
 Humphrey, Percy 20-21
 Humphrey, Willie 17, 20, 22, 24-26, 30, 36, 42

J

Jackson, Tony 7
 Johnson, Bunk 5-6, 19, 22-23

Jones, Claude 17, 22
 Jordan, Joe 5

L

Lewis, George 19, 23-24, 26, 36

M

Martyn, Barry 22, 24
 Melrose, Walter 5
 Morgan, Andrew 17
 Morton, Jelly Roll 7, 17, 22

N

Nelson, "Big Eye" Louis 22, 24
 Nelson, Louis "Big Eye" 17
 Nicholas, "Wooden" Joe 17
 Nicholas, Albert 19, 22-23, 28
 Noone, Jimmie 18, 22, 26, 36
 Nunez, Alcide 17

O

Oliver, Joe 'King' 3, 5-6, 9, 13, 17-22, 26, 29
 Ory, Edward "Kid" 6, 21-24, 27

P

Parenti, Toni 17
 Perez, Manuel 7, 13, 19
 Picou, Alphonse 6-7, 17-18, 22-23, 25, 27-29, 42
 Pierce, De De 21
 Piron, Armand J. 5, 15
 Pryor, Arthur 6

R

Recker, Robert 4-5, 13, 50
 Ropollo, Leon 17
 Russel, Bill 6
 Russel, Louis 8

S

Shields, Harry 17
 Shields, Larry 17
 Sousa, J. Philip 6, 8
 Steele, Porter 4-6, 8, 13

T

Thomas, "Cornbread" 17

Thomas, Kid 21
Tio, Lorenzo 7, 18-19, 42
Tio, Lorenzo Sr. 17

W

Waller, Fats 2, 50
Whaley, Wade 22
Wilber, Bob 20
Williams, Clarence 5-6, 15

List of illustrations

Figure 1 – The melody (1 st Cornet in A voice) in the original	10
Figure 2 – The piccolo voice in the original	11
Figure 3 - The piccolo-original transposed in Eb for Clarinet in Bb	12
Figure 4 – The melody in the New Orleans Jazz tradition	14
Figure 5 – The song version by Clarence Williams – Armand J. Piron	15
Figure 6 - Wave George Lewis	26
Figure 7 - Wave Jimmie Noone	26
Figure 8 - Wave Willie Humphrey	26
Figure 9 - Wave Johnny Dodds	27
Figure 10 - Wave Alphonse Picou	27
Figure 11 - Wave Albert Burbank	27
Figure 12 - Wave Sidney Bechet	27
Figure 13 - Wave Barney Bigard	27
Figure 14 - Wave Edmond Hall	28
Figure 15 - Wave Albert Nicholas	28
Figure 16 - Wave Joe Darensbourg	28
Figure 17 – Transcription Johnny Dodds	31
Figure 18 – Transcription Sidney Bechet	33
Figure 19 – Transcription Albert Nicholas	34
Figure 20 – Transcription Edmond Hall	35
Figure 21 – Transcription Jimmie Noone	37
Figure 22 – Transcription Joe Darensbourg	38
Figure 23 – Transcription George Lewis	39
Figure 24 – Transcription Barney Bigard	40
Figure 25 – Transcription Alphonse Picou	41
Figure 26 – Transcription Albert Burbank	43
Figure 27 – Transcription Willie Humphrey I	44
Figure 28 – Transcription Willie Humphrey II	45
Figure 29 - Family tree of variants (Remarks: the German word “Takt” means “bar” in English; “Stimme” is “voice” in Englisch, “ca.” stands for “approx..” in English)	46

Remarks as endnotes

- ¹ For me it was Frankfurt am Main, Germany.
- ² The German verb „abkupfern“ is directly derived from „Kupfer“ (engl. copper), so it describes an old form of copying.
- ³ Louis Armstrong’s 50 Hot Choruses for Cornet, Chicago 1927 and 125 Jazz Breaks for Cornet, Chicago 1927
- ⁴ Fats Waller’s Original Piano Conceptions Conceptions, Mills Music. New York 1935. The price at that time was 0.50 \$ (!)
- ⁵ e.g. PC with Pentium II 266 MHz processor, enough RAM and a harddisk with sufficient speed. **AS OF 1999!**
- ⁶ I am using Emagic Logic Audio Gold 3.5.6. **AS OF 1999!**
- ⁷ Slow Speed CD Transcriber 1.07, Copyright Roni Music 1999, info@ronimusic.com, <http://www.ronimusic.com>; subscribing 15\$, Version 1.32 is available since 2000. **AS OF 2000!**
- ⁸ In various sheet music collections there are references to Robert Recker, but no biographical data. He mainly performs as an arranger and editor of popular and classical music for various publishers. A few of his own compositions can be found: a) Paddy Duffy. Song and Dance. Words by Jerry Cohen. Music by Robert Recker. New York: Mrs. Pauline Lieder, 60 Chatham Street, 1881, b) The dance of the goblins by Robert Recker & William Loraine. Descriptive fantasia. New York : Carl Fischer, 1890, c) Our Soldier Boys. March Two-Step. By Robert Recker. New York: 1903 (self-published). Source: The Lester S. Levi Sheet Music Collection, John Hopkins University <http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu>
Among the arrangements/editions are such renowned compositions as „Ciribiribin“, New York : Leo Feist, 1909, Music by A. Pestalozza and the „Largo“ by Georg Friedrich Händel. **AS OF 1999!**
- ⁹ At the library of Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, more than 3,000 pieces are scanned as images in the "Historic American Sheet Music" collection. The collection is part of a large-scale project "American

Memory" of the Library Of Congress. Neither under the title '*High Society*' nor under the composer Porter Steele or the arranger Robert Recker you will find what you are looking for there. But Duke University also provides an overview of sheet music collections on the Internet <http://www.lib.duke.edu/music/sheetmusic/collections.html> and other useful information about Sheet Music <http://www.lib.duke.edu/music/sheetmusic>.

Only a search in all the catalogues listed there brings up a few clues about Porter Steele. Only in "The University Of North Texas Catalog Of Music Special Collections" <http://library.unt.edu:81> are three other compositions by Porter Steele listed: a) In an old-fashioned garden. Song by Porter Steele. Cincinnati: John Church, 1903. From the year 1928 "From the musical production Falstaff" there are two songs for which Brian Hooker was the lyricist: b) Beside your window. New York : J. Fischer, 1928; c) A memory. New York : J. Fischer, 1928. Porter Steele doesn't seem to have left any other traces. None of the 146 entries for "Falstaff" in the Library of Congress refer to a music show from 1928. **AS OF 1999!**

¹⁰ In 1901, the publishing house was located at 670 Sixth Ave. The copyright was held by one of the publisher's owners, E. J. Denton, who also secured the copyright for England. A search of the sheet music collections involved in the Library of Congress's American Memory project reveals only one other Brooks & Denton publication: Hush-a-bye o'-baby. Georgia lullaby. New York 1899, 1903, words and music by Lester S. Pigott. It seems to be more of a small publishing house that was run on the side. **AS OF 1999!**

¹¹ With the curious consequence that more liberal archives in the USA in the 1970s made copies of arrangements whose copyright had not yet expired, but without the first two sides of the first violin and the piano, which can certainly be reconstructed from the context.

¹² Scott Joplin: „Cleopha“ – March and Two-Step, 1902 published by S. Simon, St. Louis

¹³ There are contemporary stock arrangements with one voice for "flute" as well as those with one voice for "piccolo". In rare cases, explicit reference is made to interchangeability by "flute or piccolo".

¹⁴ The designation is also often called "1st Clarinet in A" when no part has been issued for a second clarinet.

¹⁵ For example, Scott Joplin's "Original Rags", released in 1899 as a piano solo, has the additional voices.

¹⁶ The film "*High Society*" (1956, directed by Charles Walters) is a color remake of "The Philadelphia Story" (Cukor 1941) with Katherine Hepburn, which features Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong as well as Grace Kelly. Cole Porter was recruited as the composer for the songs. The evergreen "True Love" (Bing Crosby & Grace Kelly) is also from this film.

¹⁷ Sidney Bechet: Treat It Gentle. An Autobiography. Cassell. London 1960, p. 87.

¹⁸ Not everyone can clearly define their starting point on their way to New Orleans Jazz. For me, at the end of the 1950s, it was the "Red Onion Blues" from the record collection of my brother Hans, a Johnny Dodds fan. At the time, I also took 'benevolent note' of the back of the EP "Keystone Blues" and "New Orleans Hop Scop Blues" with Jimmie Noone, but I was 'turned on' by what I heard from Johnny Dodds.

¹⁹ Sidney Bechet: Treat It Gentle. An Autobiography. Cassell. London 1960

²⁰ Tom Bethell: George Lewis. A Jazzman from New Orleans. University of California Press. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1977

²¹ Manfred Selchow; Karsten Lohmann: Edmond Hall – a Discography. 1981

²² Barney Bigard; Barry Martyn (ed.): With Louis and the Duke. The Autobiography of a jazz clarinetist. MacMillan Press. London 1985

²³ Joe Darensbourg; Peter Vacher (ed.): Telling It Like It Is. Macmillan Press. London 1987

²⁴ The fact that I was able to dispose of sought-after CD versions - especially those of Kid Ory Band - shortly after I had envisaged the idea for the study is thanks to my long-time band colleague, the trombonist Harald Blöcher.

I have compiled excerpts of the 25 recordings used between 1923 and 1974 on a private CD, copies of which I am only allowed to give away for private use to clarinetists who are good friends, if only for legal reasons.

²⁵ They graphically represent the amplitude curve of the input signal, so that corresponding times can be measured on a scale of thousandths of a second.