

CATAWISSA MILITARY BAND

May 2004

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1 No. 4

An Animated Take on a Dixieland Favorite

by Anne Cosper, Editor

Though *Saint James Infirmary Blues* is at the top of my list of "Coolest Songs Ever", it's hard to imagine anyone featuring it in a cartoon. The Fleischers, animation pioneers and innovators, thought differently and included the number in their 1933 version of *Snow White*.

Brothers Max and Dave Fleischer stretched both the creative and technical limits of the medium in their early animated works. They introduced us to Koko the Clown, Betty Boop, and the "Bouncing Ball", used in the studio's *Screen Songs* series. And they were gutsy, or deranged, enough to include *Saint James Infirmary* in *Snow White*.

If the *Snow White* title brings to mind Disney and his studio's brand of wholesome animation, think again. The Fleischers, several years ahead of Disney, definitely put their own spin on the familiar fairy tale, creating something uniquely their own, and at times darkly disturbing.

Starring Betty Boop as Snow White, the piece starts with the evil Queen and her magic mirror, but quickly leaves the familiar behind. Soon we see Snow White, frozen in a block of ice, carried into a cave by the seven dwarves.

A distraught Koko sings the Cab
Continued on page three

Saxhorns and American Brass Bands

by Stevan Galbreath

For the first year of its organization, the Catawissa Military Band was a saxhorn band. Known primarily from photographic images of Civil War bands, these unusual instruments were already going out of fashion and would disappear within two decades. The term "Saxhorn" was coined by cornetist John Distin in 1849 and would soon become a generic designation for any valved brass instrument with the bell pointing up or, more commonly in the U.S., backwards over the shoulder. The central figure in their popularization was Adolph Sax.

Adolph (Antoine-Joseph) Sax (1814-94) was raised in Brussels where he

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Small World: Caperton Capers

Note: This piece was originally published in the December 2002 issue of the USS Caperton newsletter. Reprinted with permission.

By Neil Kepner

I have a rather remarkable tale to tell, proving that this world of ours is, indeed -- a small world.

I rode the Caperton for 41 months, 1954 through 1957, as a member of the IC Gang. In 1954 we took a little cruise to St. Lawrence, Newfoundland, via Halifax, Nova Scotia, for the dedication of a new hospital.

Those on board may remember the excessive speed as we traveled through the dense fog. If the fog has been forgotten, it should be remembered that the ship ran aground as it turned around in the small Saint Lawrence Harbor. I will never forget that moment, as several of

us were in the aft living compartment when the screws hit bottom. We very quickly made an appearance topside to see what had happened. We just as quickly were hustled back below decks, out of sight, because we didn't have our dress blues on.

Now, let's travel through the years to 2002. I was, and still am, a musician and have spent most of my life palying in bands, making friends and having a

Continued on page two

126 Anniversary Spring Concert

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

7:30 p.m.

Caldwell Consistory Auditorium
Market Square Bloomsburg

No Admission Charge

Caperton Cont.

lot of good times.

Several weeks ago, after a "gig", a bunch of us who have played together for the past 18 years were having a few beers together. A few of us who had been in the Navy started telling sea stories about our good times in the service. I happened to mention that the Caperton was having a reunion coming up soon this year. I mentioned the fact that Lee Curry had done a wonderful job making a tape, and that I was on the tape along with another friend named Bob McCreary, who lives a few miles from my hometown of Berwick, PA.

One of my friends, Don Berninger, a former Navy musician, stopped me and asked, "Did you say Bob McCreary? I am familiar with that name."

He said that he had met a man named Bob McCreary while on a ship bound for Newfoundland. It happened to be his only day of "sea duty" during his time in the Navy. He said he remembers meeting the man because they learned that both of them had come from the same town -- Bloomsburg, PA. He said it was a ship that stopped in Argentina,

Nova Scotia, to pick up musicians and several high ranking officers (five admirals) and that the ship was bound for Saint Lawrence, Newfoundland, to dedicate a hospital.

He started to tell us how foggy it was and I stopped him.

I said, "Where were you when the ship ran aground???" You never saw such an expression on a man's face as he had at that moment.

Here, after knowing this guy for the past 18 years, we finally learn, by accident, that we were on the same ship, even if it was for only one day -- the USS Caperton -- all those years ago.

As we talked the details of that trip came back to us -- the fog, the speed we traveled to get there on time, the small harbor, the sound of the screws hitting the bottom. He remembered standing on the bridge with his trumpet in his hand and being ordered to play a certain "fanfare to port."

He said he played the correct fanfare, but the officer yelled "To port!!" So he played it again. After the third time, and another loud order from the officer, he realized

that he was supposed to point the horn to the "port side" and play the fanfare.

Now in support of this landlubber, I must add that he had a very good record in the Navy and, among other things, held the honor of being the bugler at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA.

My friend also remembered that on the way up to Newfoundland, while we were traveling very rapidly through the dense fog, the bass horn player decided to mimic the fog horn by sneaking out in front of the bridge and blowing the same note as the horn. After feeling the ship suddenly start to slow down he realized what he had done and rapidly disappeared before anyone caught on.

I also must mention that because of Lee Curry's dedication and generosity I managed to get in touch once again with my good friend and fellow shipmate, Paul Munkel. Many thanks to Lee for bringing back those wonderful days aboard the USS Caperton (DD-650).

Catawissa Military Band Public Performance Schedule

May 11	Columbia Mall Concert (Central Gazebo)	7:00 p.m.
May 31	Memorial Day: Mifflinville	9:00 a.m.
	Bloomsburg (Town Hall)	10:30 a.m.
	Catawissa (lv. Band Hall at 1:15)	1:30 p.m.
June 2	Bloomsburg Kiwanis Pet Parade	6:00 p.m.
June 13	Bloomsburg Flag Day (Fairgrounds Grandstand Stage)	7:30 p.m.
June 15	Millville Park Concert (High School Auditorium, if rain)	5:00 p.m.
June 22	Catawissa Concert (Mill St. Band Shell)	7:00 p.m.
June 27	Ringtown Concert (Rt. 339, in town)	4:00 p.m.
July 4	Bloomsburg Fireworks Concert (Town Park)	8:00 p.m.
July 5	Millville Independence Day Parade	10:30 a.m.
July 13	Lightstreet Parade	6:30 p.m.
July 17	Communities That Care Concert (Bloomsburg Town Park -- before fireworks)	8:45 p.m.
July 27	Orangeville Pet Parade (Rain date: July 28)	7:00 p.m.
Aug. 5	Bloomsburg Ice Cream Festival Concert (Town Park, rain date: Aug.6)	6:00 p.m.
Aug. 13	Orangeville Masonic Festival Concert (Rt. 487, North of town)	6:00 p.m.
Sept. 12	Mid-Penn Band Concert (Knoebel's, Elysburg)	2:15 and 6:00

Saint James Cont.

Calloway number and things get very surreal.

The Fleischers were looking to include Cab Calloway's performance in their work and *Snow White* became the vehicle for *Saint James Infirmary*. Cab's vocals are used, as are his distinctive strutting movements, captured with the help of a rotoscope (an invention patented by Max Fleischer that allowed animators to trace over filmed live-action movement frame by frame).

Koko, singing *Saint James Infirmary*, descends into the Mystery Cave and is transformed by the Queen. Koko then morphs into a surprising array of things that highlight the song's lyrics. When he wails "Hey boy! Hand me another shot of that booze," Koko's head becomes a bottle and he pours himself a drink.

As if Koko's transformations weren't enough to give viewers the creeps, there are numerous strange goings on in the background, all bizarrely emphasizing the song's lyrics.

Saint James Infirmary Blues has no business in a cartoon and *Snow White* is the stuff of nightmares, to be viewed in the right circumstances, when leaving the light on at bedtime isn't an issue. Writing this has given me a case of the heebie-jeebies, I'm going to check the nightlights in the house and maybe, just maybe, search for the Cab Calloway CD with *Saint James Infirmary Blues*.

Submissions or comments may be sent to the Editor at delta2@ptdprolog.net or Stevan Galbreath at sagalbreath@hotmail.com.

Written material may be given

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Saxhorns Cont.

apprenticed in his father's instrument making shop. A conservatory trained flutist, he gave up a promising career to set up his own instrument making business in Paris during 1841. There he was in direct competition with well-established makers and soon resorted to bribery in order to get supply contracts with the French military. Personally contentious, Sax readily fell into the pattern of graft and perpetual lawsuits that would dog him for the remainder of his life.

For all his business problems, Sax was exceptionally innovative. Although better known for developing the saxophone, his experiments with brass instruments led to the introduction of saxhorns in 1844. A significant improvement on existing brasses, saxhorns were intended to be used in matching sets -- an idea that pre-dated Sax. They were designed to be in tune with each other and also allow for the easy switching of players to fill gaps in instrumentation. The first saxhorns had Berliner (or German) type piston valves, but were soon changed (possibly because of patent problems) to rotary valves -- already the norm in America.

Over-the-shoulder brass instruments were introduced in the U.S. by Allen Dodworth, of the New York family of musicians, in 1838. Based on the backward playing trombones used in European woodwind bands of the Napoleonic Era, his *ebor corno* (a shortened form of *novo eboracii corno* -- synthetic Latin for New York horn) was pitched in Eb and intended to serve as a French horn substitute. Later made in tenor and bass ranges, the *ebor cornos* were virtually indistinguishable from rotary valve saxhorns -- in fact, the terms were often used interchangeably. Ironically, Allen Dodworth would eventually become Sax's American agent.

By the mid-1850's, most American bands were using either European or domestic made saxhorns as their primary instruments, although in civilian bands standard cornets were frequently matched with over-the-shoulder low brasses. For much of the Civil War, John Stratton of New York (mainly a producer of saxhorns) was the only supplier large enough to meet the demands of Union army contracts. After the war, his surplus instruments would equip many newly organized civilian bands.

Essentially marching instruments, over-the-shoulder saxhorns proved to be ill-suited for the mixed brass and woodwind concert bands that flourished after the war. The changeover came quickly. Allowing for a small number of throwback players, saxhorns had largely disappeared by 1890. However, thanks to Sax's ground breaking research, the alto horns, baritones and tubas that replaced them were not all that different in design -- it remains one of his enduring legacies to band music.

Your tax deductible contributions are gratefully accepted by the
Catawissa Military Band. Donations may be sent to:

Catawissa Military Band

115 S. Berger Ave.

Catawissa, PA 17820

Thank you for your continued support.

THE REVIEWING STAND

My Heart Will Go On and On and On and On.....

By Anne Cosper

Since some readers have expressed an interest in hearing more about annoying music, this issue finds me thinking about one of my least favorite songs, *My Heart Will Go On*.

My Heart Will Go On, for anyone who has spent the last few years searching for spirituality in Nepal, is the love theme from the 1998 film *Titanic*. *Titanic*, James Cameron's epic about the ill-fated ocean liner, went on to reap record gross receipts and eleven Oscars, including Best Original Song.

I can only wonder what was going on in the minds of Academy voters. Although I've never been an admirer of love songs (making an exception for Cole Porter, of course), *My Heart Will Go On* is an especially unfortunate example of the genre.

James Horner, who composed an otherwise fine score for the film, along with Celine Dion and Will Jennings share credit, or blame, for *My Heart Will Go On*. At the peak of *Titanic* mania there seemed to be no escape from Celine Dion's screeching of the song. It was played relentlessly in supermarkets, stores, offices, and on the radio. Just when it seemed that matters couldn't get any worse, the sheet music became available, creating a stampede of amateur performers all wanting to include *My Heart Will Go On* in their repertoire. The horror! The horror!

Fortunately, *My Heart Will Go On* has dropped from the charts, and I can safely shop or turn on the radio without getting that sinking feeling -- at least until the next treachery movie love song takes over.

Review of CD's *Circus Days*, Washington Winds directed by Edward Peterson (Walking Frog Records No. 197) and *A Tribute to Merle Evans* by New England Conservatory Wind Ensemble directed by Frank Battisi and Merle Evans (Windjammers Unlimited No. 101).

By Stevan Galbreath

Circus Days by the Washington Winds, a concert band consisting of retired military players in the Washington DC area, contains 25 pieces (mostly marches) associated with the circus. Recorded by a 50 plus piece band, the numbers often tend to be a bit slow in tempo and woodwind heavy, having the sound of concert marches rather than traditional circus fare. However, the greatest revelation was the galop *The Storming of El Caney* by Russell Alexander. Played at a semi-reasonable tempo, it becomes an integrated musical composition rather than the series of flourishes frequently heard at the circus. Flawlessly performed, this is the CD you want for a staid concert performance of well-written march material.

In contrast, *A Tribute to Merle Evans* by the New England Conservatory Wind Ensemble was recorded in 1970 by a smaller brass-heavy group (no flutes, saxes or double reeds) which reflects the instrumentation of early 20th century circus bands. Merle Evans, a 50 year director of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Band, and Frank Battisi's considerably faster tempos and emphasis on a solid cornet sound is definitely more authentic to the period. Also, the programming of the 33 numbers (two discs) has greater variety with several waltzes included along with the marches, rags, galops and trombone smears (they didn't attempt *El Caney*). The highlight (at least for euphonium players) has to be *The Battle of Shiloh* by C.L. Barnhouse, considered by many to be one of the most difficult marches ever written. Perhaps not as polished, *A Tribute to Merle Evans* is a much more interesting recording.

The chief objection of playing wind instruments
is that it prolongs the life of the players --

George Bernard Shaw