

FRANK D. WALDRON

Seattle's Syncopated Classic

Greg Ruby with Paul de Barros

FRANK D. WALDRON: SEATTLE'S SYNCOPATED CLASSIC



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FRANK D. WALDRON Seattle's Syncopated Classic

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INTRODUCTION

This project began with the curiosity of wanting to know what Seattle's jazz of the 1920s may have sounded like, and grew into a **___** multi-faceted endeavor to preserve and celebrate one of the city's forgotten musical giants. Frank D. Waldron: Seattle's Syncopated Classic is the complete collection of Frank D. Waldron's music and history. These recordings, archival photos, reproductions of Waldron's compositions, and biographic essay are intended to both paint a picture of one of Seattle's eminent early jazz figures and inspire musicians to perform his work. While we will never know the aspirations that led to his self-publishing of "The Kaiser's Got the Blues" in 1918 and Syncopated Classic in 1924, we can be grateful that he took such immense care to do so. The details of melody, counter-melody, harmony, dynamics, articulation and form left us a complete body of work, not only worthy of preservation and examination but also of performance and enjoyment. It is my hope that this project will help ensure that Waldron's music and legacy remain an integral part of Seattle's rich musical history.

Greg Ruby



Frank D. Waldron on alto saxophone with the Odean Jazz Orchestra at the Nanking Café, Seattle, c. 1925

Frank Waldron THE INDISPENSABLE PIONEER OF SEATTLE JAZZ

he lush forests and majestic mountains of the Pacific Northwest rarely pop up in the public imagination when the early days of jazz are discussed, yet a handful of pioneers of this uniquely American music flourished in Seattle, Washington, in the century's early decades. Among them was a remarkable saxophonist and trumpeter who not only played in a Northwest scene that included the peripatetic New Orleans pianist and composer Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton, but also served as Seattle's go-to African-American music teacher for three generations, which took in the booming World War II Jackson Street era that gave us Quincy Jones. Perhaps most surprising of all, he left behind a 1924 book of compositions, catapulting his zany take on early jazz across the century to future generations. His name was Frank Dordon Waldron.

Ambitious and intrepid as a young man, Waldron set out on his own at the age of 17, registering each tune he wrote for copyright, hanging out a shingle for his studio in 1919 in Seattle's burgeoning after-hours music district and performing with a variety of prominent ragtime-influenced, proto-jazz groups, including the Whang Doodle Orchestra, which in 1912 delivered the earliest documented performance by a local band of the new music in Seattle. Today, the Emerald City is a modern urban metropolis known the world over for musicians such as Jones, Jimi Hendrix and Kurt Cobain, but 100 years ago, back when Waldron was young, the Pacific Northwest was a dramatically isolated place, particularly from the hub of the music business in New York (and, later, Los Angeles). That isolation, combined with the catastrophe of the Great Depression and stylistic changes in the music, no doubt affected Waldron's career, though from all reports he had an impressive surplus of talent. Seattle drummer Chet Ramage, recollecting Waldron performing in the 1920s, described him as "a hell of a player," and Waldron's student Buddy Catlett (later a sideman with Count Basie and Louis Armstrong) said Waldron's fastidious technique suggested he had been "conservatory trained."

Musicians who knew Waldron in later years, when his teaching career had largely supplanted performing, remembered him as a colorful character cast from an old-school mold – a stern taskmaster with an imposing, almost military bearing, yet also a hard-drinking carouser. Pianist Palmer Johnson, who came to Seattle from Los Angeles in 1928 and roomed with Waldron, described him as a man who was "bald-headed, big, and loved to drink whisky."

"When you went up to his house," recalled reed man Ron Pierce, who studied with Waldron after World War II, "you felt like you were invading his private domain. He wore a white shirt and bright suspenders and had a big belly. He'd sit there, across from you, not next to you, like other teachers. You got the feeling he knew what he was about." Catlett noted that Waldron was always dressed to the nines: "Watch fob, shoes, everything was immaculate," remembers Catlett.

Who was this man, who seemed to his students of the 1940s to have stepped out of another world? Despite the fact that Waldron was arguably the most important figure in the first five decades of Seattle jazz, details of his life are difficult to come by. Newspapers of the era rarely covered the activities of African-Americans, though tidbits appeared from time to time in African-American newspapers. Beyond that veil of racism, however, Waldron also spent his childhood in San Francisco, which means that almost all records of his early life – musical training, schools, teachers – vanished after the 1906 earthquake and fire. And though he was briefly married, Waldron left no heirs, so the potential scrapbook of memorabilia so prized by biographers has yet to materialize. Add to these research obstacles the fact that Waldron was by all reports a private, even cantankerous man who shared little about his personal life with anyone, and you have the makings of a very feint impression, indeed.

But some facts survive. Waldron was born January 14, 1890, in San Francisco, the only son of Marguerite "Maggie" Elizabeth Waldron, a white woman of Irish and possibly French descent who at the age of 14 was married to an African-American man whose last name was Waldron, and by 1905 had died. Frank lived with his mother in an area known as the Duboce Triangle, at 1D Colton St., south of Market Street and west of Van Ness Avenue. Maggie taught piano lessons for a living and presumably taught her only child to play and read music. On April 18, 1906, San Francisco was struck by a massive earthquake that, along with the ensuing fire that lasted three days, destroyed the area where Frank and Marguerite lived. Thousands of people fled across the bay to Oakland or south to the San Francisco Peninsula, many living in tents until their homes could be restored. Frank's mother, Marguerite, apparently returned to San Francisco and spent the rest of her life there, single, a socialist and successfully teaching music lessons and participating in the activities of the San Francisco Musical Club.

Frank, for his part, left town to seek his fortune. In 1907, he was living in downtown Seattle, at 1514 Seventh Ave., on what is now the site of the Sheraton Seattle hotel, working as a "porter" – running errands and delivering packages – for the W.R. Tonkin Company, a realty business on Weller Street, in the Chinatown-International District. Over the next 15 years, in Seattle and in Tacoma, 35 miles south, Waldron would earn a reputation as one of the top musicians in the Northwest, establishing himself in 1911 at Bessie Young's boarding house, at 1242 S. Jackson St., in the heart of a budding black entertainment district near the corner of South Jackson Street and Twelfth Avenue South. A beautiful, three-story Victorian house, Young's establishment was well-known to the black community as a place where African-American touring artists were welcome to bed down for the night, as they were not permitted to stay in the segregated hotels downtown.

"Any acts that came to Seattle, they came to Bessie Young's Theatrical

Boarding House," recalled Bruce Rowell, a saxophonist and entrepreneur active in Seattle's jazz scene of the '20s and '30s. "Bessie Smith, Mamie Smith, Williams and Walker. That's where Frank Waldron had the big room upstairs. He'd teach up there." Up the hill from Pioneer Square's Union Station, at Fourth Avenue, the Jackson Street hub catered initially to African-American railroad porters, but soon developed into a full-blown "sporting district" of pool halls, gambling dens, speakeasies and chili houses that hosted the spiraling strains of the new music called jazz, a modest counter-



1242 S. Jackson St., Seattle

part to Chicago's "Stroll" or Los Angeles' Central Avenue. The district also took in the Chinatown-International District, along Jackson between Fifth Avenue South and Eighth Avenue South. By 1920, Jelly Roll Morton himself was tickling the keys at the Entertainers Club, at South Main Street and Twelfth Avenue South, and two years later, in a basement at the corner of Twelfth and Jackson, Seattle nightlife entrepreneur Russell "Noodles" Smith opened the legendary Black and Tan, which would endure until 1966.

The first jazz recording was made in 1917 and none came from Seattle until the Vic Meyers Orchestra recorded in 1923, but it's probably safe to conclude that some mix of ragtime and proto-jazz dance music was being played in Seattle by the early nineteen teens. Not only Morton, but California's Reb Spikes and New Orleans' Freddie Keppard passed through town in the teens, and New Orleans trombonist Albert Paddio (sometimes called Harold Paddio), moved to Seattle in 1910. The first hard local evidence of the new music appears on February 22, 1912, when "Noodles" Smith and his partner Burr Williams opened the Dumas Club, near the corner of Fifth



Dumas Club invitation featuring the Whang Doodle Orchestra, 1912

Avenue South and South Jackson Street, with an announcement promising "entertainment by the Creole and Whang Doodle Orchestras." It's possible Waldron played at the Dumas Club that night, as a few years later he would be listed as a regular member of the Whang Doodle Orchestra. But with or without Waldron, 1912 appears to mark the date when some form of jazz began to have a presence in Seattle.

Around 1917, Waldron moved to Tacoma, perhaps because of America's entry into World War I, which resulted in troop build-ups at Camp Lewis, south of Tacoma. More troops meant more dances, and hence more opportunities for entertainers. Waldron is listed in the 1914 Tacoma city directory as living in Lake City, near the military base, and one of Waldron's early saxophone students, Lawrence Smith, recalled seeing his teacher perform around this time at a pavilion near the camp. This was very possibly an appearance by Dumas' Band, led by Leon Dumas, whose group played for dances at Camp Lewis throughout December, 1917. Waldron also played at a Tacoma concert emceed by Dumas on September 27 of that year. A memorial for Afro-British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor at Tacoma's First Congregational Church, the program was sponsored by Tacoma's NAACP and featured speeches defending civil rights as well as a music program that included Waldron performing Paolo Tosti's popular and beautiful 1880 lament, "Good-bye." Pianist and local NAACP chapter founder Nettie J. Asberry gave a talk in which she compared European and African folk music, supplementing her speech with a performance on the piano of "The Pilgrim's Song" arranged by Coleridge-Taylor. The A.M.E. choir closed the concert with the spirituals "Steal Away" and "Swing Low."

Waldron clearly was keeping company with what might be called Tacoma's "talented tenth" – cultured, educated, well-off African Americans – which indicates that he was an accomplished and respected musician in "legit" – i.e., classical – circles and also that he was not a stranger to the promotion of black cultural pride. That the *Tacoma Ledger* reported the concert at all was anomalous, as throughout the nineteen teens its pages did not feature a single photograph of a black person.

When the U.S. officially entered the war in Europe, all men between 21 and 31 years old were required to register for the draft. The first registration day was June 5, 1917, and Waldron complied. His registration card listed his address as 554 Cliff Ave. (now South Stadium Way), in downtown Tacoma, and described him as "tall and stout," slightly bald and single. The following month, the *Tacoma Times* included Waldron on its "Uncle Sam's Honor Roll" of men who had answered the call. Tacoma's black newspaper, *The Forum*, reported that 737,628 blacks registered for the draft over the course of the war but fewer than 100,000 were called up. Waldron spent part of the war leading a band at the Olympus Hotel, one of many grand establishments near the old Tacoma City Hall, a district where, *The Forum* noted, "as many as 5,000 people can be entertained near the corner of 9th and Pacific." Waldron was part of a circle of "colored musicians" – listed as such by that

newspaper – that included Leon Dumas, Harry Murray, Joe Faulkner and a man named Fitch, who were billed in 1917 as "a bunch that will give the public their money's worth" at a grand ball at the Knights of Pythias hall. Camp Lewis got on the band wagon, too, its troop newspaper *Trench and Camp* reporting breathlessly in November of the same year that the "originator of jazz" (sic), a drummer and slide-whistle player from San Francisco named Bobby Hayes, now serving in the 347th regiment, was playing at Fort Lewis dances. The Jazz Age was taking root in the Pacific Northwest.

For Waldron, the new jazz craze meant not only the opportunity to play for dancers, but to pursue his ambitions as a composer. In 1918, he self-published his first piece of sheet music, a solo piano composition titled, "The Kaiser's Got the Blues (Since Uncle Sam Stepped In) Original Jazz, Fox-Trot." Adding to the canon of patriotic songs of World War I, this bouncy four-section piano solo is both evocative and stylistically standard for the era. It was ambitious for a musician whose primary instruments were saxophone and trumpet to write a solo, yet Waldron's writing possesses an assured understanding of both piano and the popular music of the time. With leaping arpeggios, chromatic passing tones



Frank D. Waldron's World War I draft registration card, 1918



The Olympus Hotel, 815 Pacific Ave., Tacoma



"The Kaiser's Got the Blues" sheet music cover, 1918

and lower neighbor grace notes, the piece evokes ragtime. During the third section, Waldron employs a 12-bar blues form – the only time he would ever use it in his compositions – and concludes the fourth section with a march-like anthemic resolution of victory. He registered his composition with the U.S. Copyright Office on February 25, 1918. Eight months later, on November 4, 1918, "The Kaiser's Got the Blues (Yes Those Weary Blues)" was registered by "the father of the blues" W.C. Handy. Handy was world famous for his popular blues compositions including "St. Louis Blues." While Waldron's copyright, song and title preceded Handy's by eight months, it is impossible to know for certain if Handy directly borrowed Waldron's title. Handy's "Kaiser" was co-written with Domer C. Brown and was his only work published that year. Copyrighted just 12 days before Armistice Day, Handy's "The Kaiser's Got the Blues," unlike Waldron's, was an immense success, selling thousands of copies as it celebrated the end of World War I.

A month after the war ended in November, 1918, Waldron was back in Seattle, playing with the Whang Doodle Orchestra for a dance at the Woodmen of the World lodge, downtown at Fourth Avenue and Marion Street. This five-piece mandolin group was led by Ace Brooks, an important African-American musician in the early 1900s Seattle music scene. Brooks' talents and ability to negotiate with white promoters made him a noted performer at the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exhibition where he was featured in a cake walk program. Brooks was one of three mandolin players in the Whang Doodle Orchestra. (Another was named Hughes, first name unknown, and the third remains unidentified.) Waldron played cornet with the band and Coty Jones, who played organ at the Presbyterian Colored Mission, was featured on piano. The ensemble's refined presentation, instrumentation and formal attire echoes the James Reese Europe Clef Club Orchestra. Europe led one of the most important African-American ensembles in the first decade of the 1900s, and his music and activism contributed to the advancement of Africa-Americans. While the Clef Club never performed in the Pacific Northwest, its eminence in the African-American music community would not have been lost on the Whang Doodle Orchestra, which, like the Clef Club, featured harp guitars and mandolins.

While early jazz is often associated with outdoor music played by brass bands, it was performed indoors, too, even in New Orleans, and often on stringed instruments. Freddie Keppard, like many New Orleans musicians, doubled on the mandolin, an instrument that had a fad-like popularity in the early decades of the 20th century, much like the saxophone in the '20s and the guitar in the '60s. As early as 1907, the year Waldron moved to Seattle, the Osborn Conservatory, which had branches up and down the West Coast, including a school at Second Avenue and Pike Street, boasted that it had 1,800 students in Seattle. Osborn offered its students a mass-produced mandolin for \$15 – and even gave it away in some promotions – but the



Brooks unit played high-end mandolins crafted locally, in Port Townsend, by the well-known luthier Chris Knutsen. Knutsen made three models at the time: the Port Townsend, Tacoma and Seattle. Two of his Seattle models, a harp guitar and harp mandolin, appear in a 1915 photo of the Whang Doodle Orchestra.

The 1918 Whang Doodle engagement at the W.O.W. Hall attracted the unwanted attention of the musicians union, Local 76, which accused the band of paying "under scale," meaning that the players' wages were below what was permitted. Seattle's musicians unions were segregated at the time, as they were in almost every American city, and in 1918 a black union, Local 458, was just being formed. It's likely that the Local 76 action forced the Whang Doodle players to join the black local, as the band beat the charge. Waldron continued to play with the Whang Doodle Orchestra for at least five years in the Seattle area, including what appears to have been a regular engagement for waterborne excursions on Hood Canal. The state of

Whang Doodle Orchestra, 1915 Hughes (first name unknown), Ace Brooks, unidentified, Frank D. Waldron, Coty Jones

Washington instituted prohibition in 1916, three years earlier than the country at large, so these cruises served as opportunities for the consumption of alcohol, beyond the reach of the "feds." How delightful it must have been to hear those three trilling mandolins and Waldron's trumpet wafting through the air as dancers glided over the wooden deck of a Hood Canal cruise ship!

Prohibition speakeasies were a boon for jazz musicians like Waldron, and musicians from around the country flocked to the Northwest because of its reputation as a "wide open town." "Word spread around among musicians that you could make money in Seattle. It was a money town," recalled Louisiana-born clarinetist Joe Darensbourg, who moved to Seattle in the late '20s. Yet many of the musicians were already residing in nearby Vancouver, B.C., years before America's dry decade even began. When British Columbia banned the sale of alcohol in 1917, a lesser-known Prohibition era flourished north of the 49th parallel. Not only did this attract Seattle musicians such as Waldron, drummer Bill Hoy and entertainer Leo Bailey, but also a group of A-list jazzers from Chicago. The scene got rolling at the Patricia Hotel in 1917, thanks to a drummer named George Paris, who was also an athletic trainer for the Seattle Giants baseball team and a friend of the black boxer Jack Johnson. The Patricia was managed by ex-Chicago club owner Will Bowman, who according to Palmer Johnson later owned a club near Seattle's Twelfth and Jackson hub. Pianist and clarinetist Oscar Holden, who would become one of Seattle's most important jazz figures, led a band at the Patricia from 1919–21, and employed Jelly Roll Morton, whom Bowman had invited to Canada along with the famous entertainer Ada "Bricktop" Smith and trombonist Albert Paddio. The Vancouver jazz district extended along four blocks of East Hastings Street and included the Princess, Royal, Crystal and Empress theaters as well as pool halls and cabarets. Things could get raucous in Vancouver. During a Christmas Eve brawl in 1919, Bricktop suffered a broken leg.

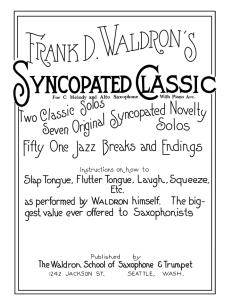
In 1920, Waldron joined the party, working at the Lodge Café, on Seymour Street, downtown, with a band that included Hoy, trombonist Baron Morehead (who later played with Fats Waller) and two singers who would also wind up in Seattle – Esmeralda Edwards, originally from Chicago, and Lillian Goode, whose voice Palmer Johnson adored. The festivities soon ended, however, in 1921, when Prohibition was lifted in B.C., and the jazz action shifted back to Seattle.

With the Jazz Age racing ahead at full speed, and the public discovering (and dancing to) new recordings by such musicians as Morton, Duke Ellington and stride pianist James P. Johnson (who wrote "Charleston"), Waldron made two ambitious moves. In 1924, he published a book of his own tunes, Frank D. Waldron's Syncopated Classic. The book's cover, with flourishing typefaces that recall a vintage broadside, promised instruction in "how to slap tongue, flutter tongue, laugh, squeeze, etc., as played by

Waldron himself," all references to the expressive new techniques employed by jazz saxophonists. Waldron's timing was good. The saxophone, designed in the 19th century by Adolphe Sax to be easier to play than the clarinet while marching, had become a fad, partly because of its featured role in jazz, but also as a novelty instrument that could make unusual sounds. In his book, Waldron presented the saxophone melody in the top staff, with piano accompaniment, giving each work complete melodic, harmonic, contrapuntal and stylistic information. With ornamentations, dynamics and articulations, the collection's attention to detail displays the precise musical considerations of Waldron. Like classical etude repertoire, each song in Syncopated Classic is numbered, but like popular music each also has a name: No. 1 "Valse Hawthorne"; No. 2 "Go Get It"; No. 3 "Climb Them Walls"; No. 4 "Pretty Doll"; No. 5 "Low Down"; No. 6 "With Pep"; No. 7 "Valse Marguerite"; No. 8 "That's It"; and No. 9 "It's Easy." Two titles, "Climb Them Walls" and "It's Easy," include the words "Fox Trot" in their subtitle. The collection also contains two waltzes, "Valse Marguerite" and "Valse Hawthorne," with Waldron referring to these as "Two Classic Solos" on the cover. The evocative titles give an accurate description of what they sound like when played – the fast ones crisp, staccato, good-natured and bouncy, in the style of, say, sax masters Rudy Wiedoft and Benny Carter, or, on the slow ones, legato and sentimental, particularly the waltzes. Each tune was designed to help students master certain techniques, so in that sense the book is not only proof of Waldron's gift for melody but also serves as a collection of etudes. The alternation, for example, between staccato and legato tonguing and the opening arpeggios of the encouragingly titled "It's Easy" are clearly meant as practice tools that, once mastered, could enable students to tackle other pieces with the same figures. Ditto for the leaping intervals, sostenuto passages and playful opening modulations of the jaunty "Go Get It" and the fast, bugle-like arpeggios of "With Pep." The title "Climb Them Walls" no doubt refers to the steep upward motion of its melodies. Along the way, Waldron also marked passages meant to be "slap tongued," "fluttered" or even "laughed."

Waldron compositions remain fairly consistent in their structure. Utilizing the three-part rondo form, the compositions show the influence of ragtime in that they include a dulcet "C" section, or "trio." Of his seven even-metered compositions in *Syncopated Classic*, all have three 16-measure sections, except for "Pretty Doll," which has only two. For the longer form pieces, Waldron used the A-B-A-TRIO form, introducing the trio section with a short transition to establish its key. Waldron appeared to prefer the A-B-A-TRIO form, a remnant of the ragtime era that eventually faded as jazz embraced the shorter, 32-measure AABA form in subsequent years.

While many of Waldron's compositions use a common V-I harmonic progression that may seem dated to listeners of modern jazz, he also



Front cover of Frank D. Waldron's Syncopated Classic, 1924

employed several harmonic devices that would have sounded very modern in 1924. "That's It" features the flat six dominant chord (B7 in the key of E flat) which was a popular chord of the era.

The twelve-bar introduction to "Go Get It" is perhaps his most sophisticated harmonic excursion. In a departure from predictability, its first phrase resolves in an unorthodox way on an augmented chord. Beginning with a unison statement ascending from the third of the C major triad, the two-measure phrase is answered with a strong C augmented chord on beat one of measure three. The tonal ambiguity of the augmented chord leaves the listener unsettled as to what key the ear is being directed toward. Lowering the sharp five of the C augmented chord, the next phrase begins on a G natural unison ascending line that then resolves to an E minor that is quickly followed by a quick transition to a G major 7 chord. Finally, by beat three in the last measure of the intro, we are directed to a G7 which leads us to the key of C for the first section of the composition.

Promising "52 jazz breaks," Waldron delivers several that would have made Louis Armstrong raise an eye. On "That's It" Waldron wrote in five different breaks, each using techniques that were attention-grabbing devices of the day – lower neighbors, chromatic passing tones, blue notes and triplets. "Go Get It" delivers an exciting, two-octave descent and ascent with diminished arpeggios.

Waldron also had a sweet, sentimental side, as evidenced by the exquisite sigh of "Valse Hawthorne," and the sincere and enchanting "Valse Marguerite," written by Waldron for his mother. With its fanfare introduction, saxophone cadenza, sweet melodic development and dramatic accelerando conclusion, the echoes of Waldron's classic training are most evident in "Valse Marguerite."

In addition to self-publishing the only known jazz tutorial in the Pacific Northwest during the 1920s, Waldron also appears to have joined forces with three other musicians who had worthy, early-jazz pedigrees: pianist Glover Compton, clarinetist Adam Slocum Mitchell and drummer Leon Hutchinson. An intriguing photo of unknown provenance surfaces around this time showing Waldron – now completely bald – standing sideways in a line with the other three, all facing the camera, smiling broadly and wearing suits with pinned collars and neck ties, suggesting that this is a promotional photo for a band seeking work. Compton, born in Kentucky in 1884, was a Willie "The Lion" Smith-style ragtime and stride player who had a peripatetic career that included stints at Chicago's Dreamland Café and Elite Club and at Chez Bricktop in Paris. Compton recorded with Alberta Hunter but is perhaps best known in jazz lore for being shot in the leg by Sidney Bechet in Paris in 1928 after intervening in an argument Bechet was having with guitarist Mike McKendrick over a disputed chord change. Mitchell, originally from Martinique, was witnessed by Compton in New Orleans in 1914 playing with Crescent City greats Freddie Keppard and Kid Ory and also worked the following year with Sid LeProtti's So Different Band, in San Francisco. LeProtti recalled Mitchell as "one of the finest clarinet players I ever heard. The only one that compares to him is Benny Goodman." Compton and Mitchell played together in Chicago at the Dreamland Café in 1923. Less is known about Hutchinson, except that he was originally from Baltimore. The photo was probably taken in Seattle between 1920 and 1922. Compton played around that time at the Entertainer's Club, where Morton had held forth in 1920. Hutchinson had been recruited by Jelly Roll in 1920 to play at the Regent Café in Vancouver after his brief stint with Oscar Holden at the Patricia. Mitchell was sighted in Spokane in 1922, playing with bandleader

Edythe Turnham, who would later become an important figure in Seattle. But whenever and wherever the photo was taken, it suggests that these four musicians had some intention of touring. Unfortunately, no evidence has surfaced to prove that the photograph was more than aspirational.

Whether the quartet gambit bore fruit or not, Waldron continued to play highly visible gigs in Seattle throughout the 1920s, many of them with the Odean Jazz Orchestra, the first black band to play a major downtown Seattle venue. The group was led by St. Louis musician Archie Jackson, described by Palmer Johnson as a "power piano player," and worked



Leon Hutchinson (drummer), Adam Slocum Mitchell (clarinetist), Glover Compton (pianist), and Frank D. Waldron

at the Nanking Café, a Chinese restaurant at 1616½ Fourth Ave. (where Westlake Mall stands today). Joe Darensbourg, who took lessons from Waldron, recalled that Jackson initially took a trio into the Nanking, featuring Frank on saxophone and Ralph Gibbs on drums. An undated photograph of Jackson's group at the club shows Jackson on piano; Waldron on saxophone; a trumpet player who is probably Charles Adams; an unknown trombone player; and a drummer who is either Ralph Gibbs or Ralph Stephens. In 1925, the group was cited by Local 76 for violating the "six day rule" – i.e., working seven days a week – and its players were described as members of the black Local 493 (which had succeeded Local 458). The group successfully defended itself against the charge, but what is most striking is that the white union even allowed these Local 493 men to play downtown, as it was



Odean Jazz Orchestra playing at the Nanking Café, Seattle, c. 1925 Frank D. Waldron (saxophone), Charles Adams (trumpet), unknown (trombone), Ralph Gibbs or Ralph Stephens (drums)

Nanking Café, 1616½ Fourth Ave., Seattle



understood by all musicians that blacks would only be tolerated in Chinatown venues or in the city's predominantly black Central District, specifically around the Jackson Street hub and along Madison Street, near 21st Street. That the Odean Jazz Orchestra played downtown is a measure of the deep respect Waldron and his colleagues commanded, since white musicians at this time generally looked down on black players as unsuitable union material because of a perceived lack of formal training.

But perhaps even more important than his busy performance schedule in

the '20s, Waldron was also tutoring Seattle's first generation of jazz musicians. Formally hanging his shingle for the Frank Waldron School of Saxophone and Trumpet in 1919, at 1242 S. Jackson St., Waldron attracted the black community's most talented young players. Creon Thomas, of the Odean Jazz Orchestra, was his student, and so was Evelyn Bundy, who played piano, banjo, drums and saxophone and also sometimes sang. Bundy played with Waldron and also with the Garfield Ramblers, named after Seattle's Garfield High School and formed in 1926. The group was famous for driving to gigs in a hearse, as one of its members worked for a funeral parlor. In a nice bit of continuity that brings the Waldron story full circle, Bundy's son, Charles Taylor Jr., also a Waldron student, would later recruit Quincy Jones into his 1940s swing band at Garfield High School, a move that

kick-started Jones' career.

The Garfield Ramblers was sometimes known as trumpeter Jimmy Adams' Collegiate 4, Collegiate 5, or Collegiate 6, depending on how many sidemen the young trumpeter could assemble. Jimmy and his brother (Robert) Wayne Adams, who played saxophone, were both Waldron students. The Adams brothers were among the best Seattle jazzers of the 1920s, and their names turn up often over the years. Jimmy, sadly, committed suicide in 1937, reportedly over a "thwarted love affair." Wayne journeyed with Palmer Johnson in 1934 to Shanghai, China, for a long engagement with the Earl Whaley Band. When the Japanese

invaded in 1937, Johnson escaped in the nick of time, but Adams and Whaley were both imprisoned during the war in Weihsien, China.

Waldron must have been as financially astute as he was musically, because even after the stock market crashed in 1929, he had saved enough money from his teaching and performing to buy a one-story house in 1931, around the corner from his studio, on 15th Avenue. Perched on an incline, the house had a fireplace and five rooms with 8'6" ceilings and a bay window. Waldron lived there for the rest of his life, for a while with Palmer Johnson. He continued to teach lessons and compose there, registering copyrights for "Valse (Queen Ann)" in 1932, which bore the inscription "respectfully dedicated to Mrs. Eli Ann Kupple," and "Valse Celeste" in 1935.

Waldron continued to play around town, though less frequently, including a stint with a 1930 iteration of the Odean Jazz Orchestra called Archie

Jackson's Creole Syncopators, which included Creon Thomas, Melvin Cooper (cornet) and Ren Smith (drummer, entertainer), and another version that had Francis King on violin. Waldron performed with Jackson until at least 1932, when the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported that the pianist had been arrested at "a new and elaborate club at 926 Yesler Way" for possession of alcohol. Waldron's name also pops up in 1930s listings at a Chinatown joint called the Golden Gardens; the Apex Club, where he led a band with drummer Bill Hoy and entertainer Lillian Goode, pals from his Vancouver days; and at Washington Hall, in 1937, for an event honoring a local reverend.



Frank D. Waldron's one-story house at 315 15th Ave. S., Seattle

Washington Hall, near the Jackson Street hub at Fourteenth Avenue and Fir Street, was no stranger to Seattle jazz. Lillian Smith's band had played a dance there in 1918.

During the Depression, Waldron crossed paths with two musicians who would go on to illustrious national careers. In 1930, he hired a high school student living in the Chinatown-International District with his impoverished family, Phil Moore, to play at a venerable Chinatown speakeasy called the Chinese Gardens. Moore would go on to compose for film ("Cabin in the Sky," "Kismet," and others), serve as vocal coach for Marilyn Monroe and lead a snappy, popular quartet called the Phil Moore Four. Waldron also taught lessons in the early '30s to saxophonist Dick Wilson, who had migrated from Los Angeles to Seattle, where he played with Joe Darensbourg in a band with Jimmy Adams at the Jungle Temple before going on the road with Gene Coy, in 1933. Wilson was a gifted stylist whose sound eventually drew the attention of Kansas City band leader Andy Kirk, who featured Wilson on

"Lotta Sax Appeal." Waldron must have been proud when Wilson came back to Seattle in 1941 with Kirk's band and was hailed as "Seattle's own Dick Wilson."

The U.S. entry into yet another world war that year again meant boom times for musicians – as it had in 1917 – except this time around, a massive migration of 350,000 African-Americans to the Pacific Coast and an industrial war effort that began long before Pearl Harbor resulted in a flowering of Pacific Northwest jazz the likes of which had never been seen before. This was the era in which Ray Charles, Quincy Jones, Ernestine Anderson and Buddy Catlett, among others, honed their craft in dozens of nightclubs that stayed open night and day, and when dance halls employed hundreds of local and touring musicians to entertain soldiers and war workers. Tellingly, when Waldron dutifully registered for the draft again - though at age 52 there was even less likelihood that he would be called up than during the first war – he listed his profession as "music teacher," not "musician." This was fitting, as Waldron's role during this fertile period was not as a performer but as the key instructor for young students like Jones and Catlett, from whom he demanded a high level of dedication, even as he offered them a first-hand connection to the early days of jazz. Waldron made an attempt to settle into the staid life of a married man at this time, as well, wedding a woman named Eva Redmond in 1943. It was a short and stormy union. Redmond filed for divorced in 1944, alleging that Waldron caroused with his friends until all hours of the night, forced her to work days and often became violent, at one point knocking out one of her front teeth.

That Waldron was rough and abusive is disappointing, but it fits the picture many of his students left behind of him as an imposing, intimidating man. Billy Tolles, one of the most accomplished tenor saxophonists to ever come out of Seattle (and later a one-man institution in Denver), recalled that his parents objected to his studying with Waldron because he was "too rough" and "talked dirty." Other students confirm that Waldron didn't hold back on swearing when he was teaching. Buddy Catlett remembered painfully that if you hadn't practiced for your lesson, Waldron gave you no quarter.

Said Catlett: "He'd stand up over you and say, 'Now boy, that fucks me! That's the worst batch of shit I ever heard!'" Waldron also offered life advice to his young students that later struck Catlett as ironic.

"He'd sit back, light a cigarette and pour himself a glass of gin, and say, 'Listen here, I want to tell you something. I want you to leave them bitches alone. And leave that booze alone. And leave those cigarettes alone.' He smoked so much he had safety matches laid out on his Victrola so he could light up, one after another. So it was more 'Do as I say, not as I do.' He'd say, 'Leave them bitches alone,' and then you'd hear this voice from the back room (falsetto), 'Fra-a-a-nk? Are you through in there yet?' "

Quincy Jones, who remembers Waldron as a "great" teacher and admired Waldron for his elegance – "keychain and three-piece suits and stuff" – also recalled that Waldron was "always drinking" during his lesson. "He'd be sipping all the time. I don't know whether it was gin or cognac or what."

Yet for all this, to a man, Waldron's students emphasized how serious and useful his lessons were. He taught saxophone using a popular method book by Ben Vereecken, who had played with John Philip Sousa, as well as with his own book of etudes. And unlike most of his white counterparts across town, who emphasized sight-reading, articulation and tone production exclusively, he coached his students in ear training, memorization and improvisation, citing Duke Ellington as a role model. Saxophonist Ulysses "Jabo" Ward, who took lessons from Waldron for two years around the same time as Tolles, said Waldron used what he called the "counter-melodic method" to teach his students to improvise.

"You learn the melody," explained Ward, "then you play your own melody behind that note."

Like so many other Waldron students, Ward described his teacher as "very technical. He liked finger independence, he loved execution, he loved tone quality and, above all, he wanted you to practice. He didn't have any time for students that didn't practice. I heard him tell his students, 'Have your parents come over with you next time. That's right. Because you're wasting your parents' money.'"

Ron Pierce, who had his lesson an hour after Quincy Jones, recalled hearing Waldron tell Jones, "Come over here. Now, play me a seventh chord." Jones played the seventh chord, then Waldron said, "Okay, now make that a ninth." Then, "Now, play a thirteenth chord." Then Waldron would explain that Louis Armstrong sometimes used thirteenths in his solos and he would play a record of Armstrong on the Victrola, to show how Armstrong did it.

"This guy really hipped my wig," said Pierce. "With my [white] teachers, it was all 'Play time, play section, play in tune.' But with Waldron, it was 'Play me a seventh chord.' Now the thing was, I had never experienced this kind of thing before. All the teachers I studied from were in a book."

Catlett, too, recalled that at some of his lessons, Waldron taught a half-hour of theory "before you ever picked up your horn" and if you hadn't practiced, he would admonish you by saying, "You'll never play with Duke Ellington." Clearly, Waldron was preparing his young charges for a musical life in jazz. As things turned out, Catlett didn't play with Duke, but he didn't too badly, either, working with Count Basie, Louis Armstrong and Coleman Hawkins. As for Jones, who left Seattle in 1951, his story is well-known, from his arrangements for Basie and Frank Sinatra, movie scores (*The Pawnbroker*, *The Color Purple*), his production of Michael Jackson's album, *Thriller* – never mind his 27 Grammy Awards.



Frank D. Waldron's Holiday Greetings card, 1950

In 1950, Waldron sent out a Christmas card to his students and friends. It was adorned with musical notes and a photograph of himself, looking dapper, as always. Five years later, on June 20, 1955, he was gone. His obituary in *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* noted only that he had been a music teacher and that he would be cremated at the Bonney-Watson funeral home. The article's brevity was in keeping with the other scant traces of his life. Yet Waldron had left behind an incalculable legacy, not only in the music of students and proteges like Jones, Catlett, Moore and Wilson, but in *Syncopated Classic*, an artifact that shouts out Seattle's early affection for jazz. That legacy lives on, as the next generation of musicians and dancers discovers the music of this indispensable pioneer of Northwest jazz.

Paul de Barros and Greg Ruby October, 2017

Paul de Barros has written about jazz for the Seattle Times and Down Beat magazine since 1982 and has taught jazz history at the University of Washington, Seattle Pacific University and Cornish College of the Arts. Co-founder of the Seattle arts organization, Earshot Jazz, de Barros received the 1993 Governor's Writer's Award for Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle and his 2012 biography, Shall We Play One Together: The Life and Art of Jazz Pianist Marian McPartland, was selected by the Jazz Journalists Association as book of the year.

Greg Ruby is a guitarist, composer, author and music educator living in Seattle, WA. His album of original jazz compositions, Look Both Ways, reached #1 on the Roots Music Review jazz chart. Greg performs at festivals, concerts and dances throughout the country. He authored the Pearl Django Play-Along Book Vol.1, Frank D. Waldron: Seattle's Syncopated Classic and is currently completing the Oscar Alemán Play-Along Book. In 2015, Greg received funding from 4Culture's Heritage and Arts Projects to perform, record, preserve, publish and celebrate the compositions of Seattle jazz pioneer Frank D. Waldron. Greg holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle, WA.

NOTES

- References to "Paul de Barros archive" (AA) are to the personal collection of Paul de Barros.)
- p. 7 Chet Ramage quote: Chet Ramage, interview with Paul de Barros, May 9, 1990. AA.
- p.7 Buddy Catlett quotes: Buddy Catlett, interview with Paul de Barros, November 9, 1988. AA. In the 1993 book, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle*, Paul de Barros speculated that Waldron had received musical instruction in the U.S. Army, but he never served in the military. No record has been found of his having attended any conservatory in San Francisco, Seattle or Tacoma, either.
- p. 8 Palmer Johnson quote: Palmer Johnson, interview with Paul de Barros and Jim Wilke, November 20, 1988. AA.
- p. 8 Ron Pierce quote: Ron Pierce, interview by Ken Maffit, May 14, 1989. AA.
- p. 8 Birth date: U.S., World War I draft registration cards, 1917–1918. Ancestry.com.
- p. 8 Mother's name, background, profession and address: 1905 San Francisco City Directory (San Francisco Public Library) and 1910 U.S.
- p. 8 Destruction of Duboce Triangle area: Humphrey, R. L., The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of April 18, 1906. U.S. Geological Survey, 1907.
- p. 8 "socialist": California voter registration records, 1900–1968. Ancestry.com.
- p. 8 San Francisco Musical Club date: *Pacific Coast Musical Review*, San Francisco, April 1, 1922
- p. 9 Seattle addresses for Waldron: Seattle city directory (Seattle Public Library) 1907, 1911.
- p. 9 Bruce Rowell on Bessie Young's boarding house: Bruce Rowell, interview with Paul de Barros, August 28, 1990. AA.
- p. 9 Morton at Entertainer's Club: Gushee, Lawrence. "A Preliminary Chronology of the Early Career of Ferd 'Jelly Roll' Morton," American Music, Winter, 1985. 389–412.
- p.9 Black and Tan opening date: Seattle Polk Directory, 1922. Also Mumford, Esther. Seattle's Black Victorians 1852–1901. Seattle: Ananse Press, 1980.
- p. 9 Seattle address for Paddio: 1910 Seattle city directory.
- p. 9 Dumas Club opening: Printed announcement, Russell "Noodles" Smith folder. Black Heritage Society of Washington State Archive, Museum of History and Industry Resource Center, Seattle.
- p. 10 Lawrence Smith on Waldron: Letter to Paul de Barros from Merle I. Smith, April 15, 1990. AA.
- p. 10 Samuel Coleridge-Taylor memorial: The Daily Ledger (Tacoma), September 27, 1914, and The Forum, October 3, 1914. As Coleridge-Taylor had died two years earlier, this was a somewhat tardy salute, but both newspapers cited here confirm the date.
- p. 11 Olympus Hotel engagement: U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918. Ancestry.com

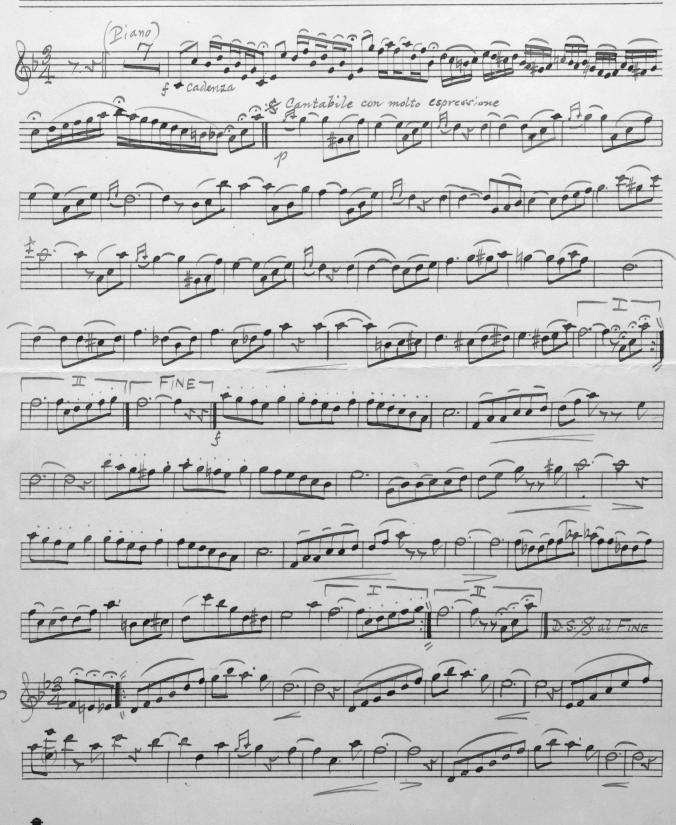
- p. 11 "Uncle Sam's Honor Roll": *Tacoma Times*, July 20, 1917.
- p. 11 African-American inductee statistics: *The Forum*, September 14, 1918.
- p. 11 Dumas' Band at Camp Lewis: Cayton's Weekly, December 29, 1917.
- p. 11 "colored musicians": The Forum, December 22, 1917.
- p. 11 Bobby Hayes: Newell, Bernice E. "Originator of 'Jazz' in 347th Orchestra." *Trench and Camp*, November 25, 1917.
- p. 11 Frank Waldron, composer of "The Kaiser's Got the Blues (Since Uncle Sam Stepped In) Original Jazz Fox-trot": Sheet music, Library of Congress. 1918.
- p. 12 Woodmen of the World engagement: Keller, David. *The Blue Note*. Los Angeles: self-published, 2013. 11.
- p. 12 Ace Brooks at the AYP Fair: "Cake Walk Feature for Tonight." *The Seattle Times*, October 14, 1909.
- p. 12 Whang Doodle Orchestra personnel: Photograph, Black Heritage Society of Washington State Archive. 1915.
- p. 12 Osborn Conservatory: Advertisement. *The Seattle Times*, September 22, 1907.
- p. 13 Chris Knutsen: Miner, Gregg. "Black Harp Guitar Players." minermusic.com. 2013.
- p. 13 Local 76 complaint: Keller, David. *The Blue Note*. Los Angeles: self-published, 2013. 11.
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- p. 14 Joe Darensbourg quote: Vacher, Peter. Jazz Odyssey: The Autobiography of Joe Darensbourg. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988. 72.
- p. 14 Vancouver prohibition scene, Jelly Roll Morton and Oscar Holden: Miller, Mark. Such Melodious Racket. Toronto: Mercury Press, 1991. 56, 68-69. In his recollections recorded by Alan Lomax, Morton claimed to have been the leader of this band, but Miller establishes that Holden was the boss.
- p. 14 The Lodge engagement: "A Note or Two," Chicago Defender, January 1, 1921, and "All Wedded," Chicago Defender, January 29, 1921.
- p. 16 Dispute between Bechet and McKendrick: Edwards, Bill. "Glover Compton." ragpiano.com/comps/gcompton. Other accounts say the dispute stemmed from a longstanding grudge between Bechet and McKendrick or that Bechet refused to buy a round of drinks for the band that night.
- p. 16 Compton and Bechet: *Chicago Defender*, November 24, 1927.
- p. 17 Mitchell in New Orleans: Glover Compton, oral history interview, June 30, 1959. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- p. 17 Sid LeProtti quote: Stoddard, Tom. *Jazz* on the Barbary Coast. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1998, 44.
- p. 17 Photograph of Waldron, Compton, Mitchell, Hutchinson. Black Heritage Society of Washington State Archive. Date unknown.

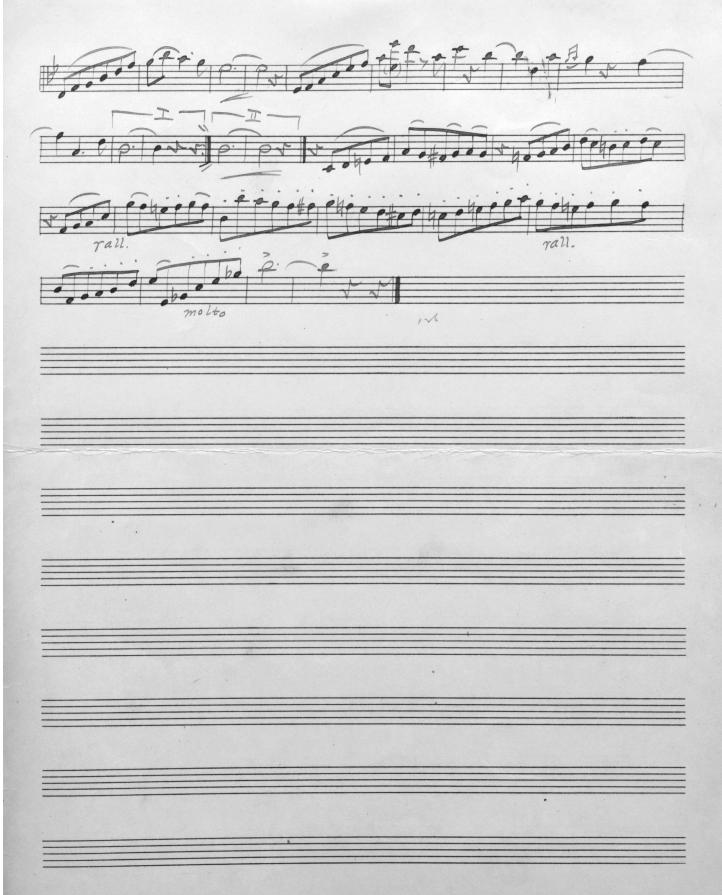
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- p. 18 Jimmy Adams: Unidentified newspaper clippings, 1926-1928; November 21, 1937; and June 10, 1944. Mary Elizabeth Adams scrapbook, University of Washington library, special collections.
- p. 19 Home purchase and description: tax inventory sheet, July 3, 1931. Washington State Archives.
- p. 19 1930 gig with Odean Jazz Orchestra: "Dine and Dance at the New Nan King Café." The Seattle Daily Times, July 18, 1930.
- p. 19 Archie Jackson arrest: Seattle Post-Intelligencer, January 25, 1932.
- p. 19 1930s gigs: Golden Gardens *Northwest Enterprise*, October 17, 1935; Apex Club Northwest Enterprise, February 18, 1936;
- Washington Hall *The Seattle Daily Times*, October 10, 1937.
- p. 19 Lillian Smith at Washington Hall: de Barros, Paul. *Jackson Street After Hours: The* Roots of *Jazz in Seattle*. Seattle: Sasquatch, 1993. 10.
- p. 19 Phil Moore: Black Film Center Archive, Indiana University. indiana.edu/~bfca/home/. p. 19–20 Dick Wilson and Andy Kirk: de Barros, Paul. Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle: Seattle: Sasquatch, 1993.
- p. 20 World War II draft registration: "U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards 1942." Ancestry.com.
- p. 20 Marriage to Eva Redmond: Marriage certificate, State of Washington archives.
- p. 20 Divorce complaint: Petition for divorce, Superior Court, State of Washington, King County Archives.
- p. 20 Billy Tolles on Waldron: Billy Tolles, interview with Paul de Barros, January 30–31, 1990. AA.
- p. 20 Catlett on Waldron: de Barros, Paul. Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle. Seattle: Sasquatch, 1993. 5–6.
- p. 21 Jones on Waldron: Quincy Jones, interview with Paul de Barros, December 5, 1989. AA.
- p. 21 Vereecken: Buddy Catlett, interviews with Paul de Barros, November 9 and November 23, 1988. AA.
- p. 21 Jabo Ward on Waldron. de Barros, Paul. Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle. Seattle: Sasquatch, 1993. 68.
- p. 21 Pierce on Waldron: Ron Pierce, interview with Ken Maffit, May 14, 1988. AA.
- p. 21 Christmas card: Black Heritage Society of Washington State Archive.
- p. 22 Obituary: Seattle Post-Intelligencer, June 22, 1955.

Respectfully Dedicated to Mrs. Eli ann Kupple APR 15 1932 V Valse (Queen ann) © CIE unpulb. 54785

Solo EbALTO Saxophone

by F. D. Waldron



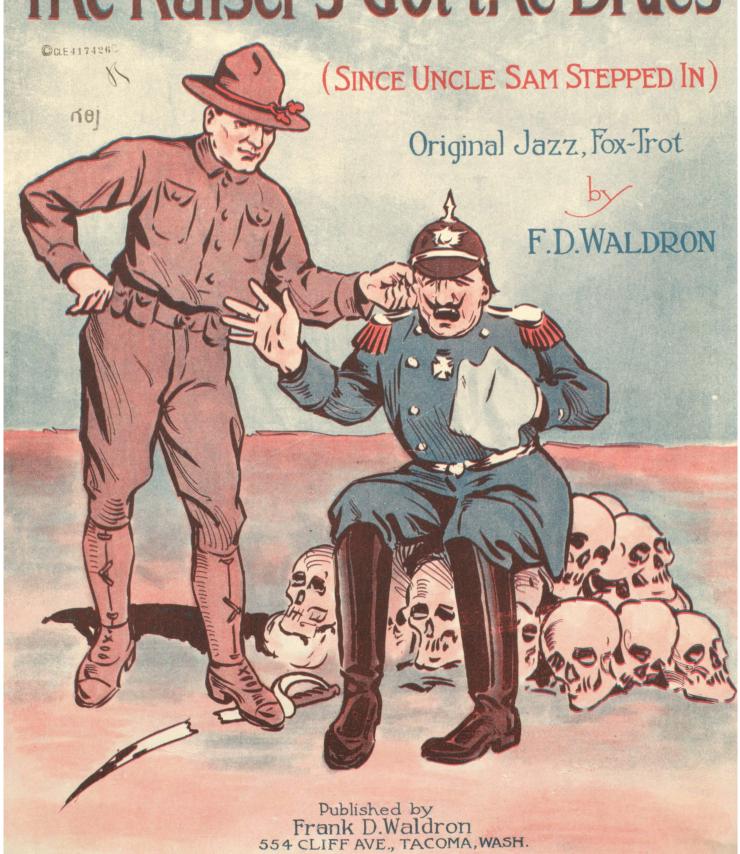






Serving tray, Waldrons Saxophone Quartett Orsa, 1936

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VALSE HAWTHORNE

F.D. WALDRON









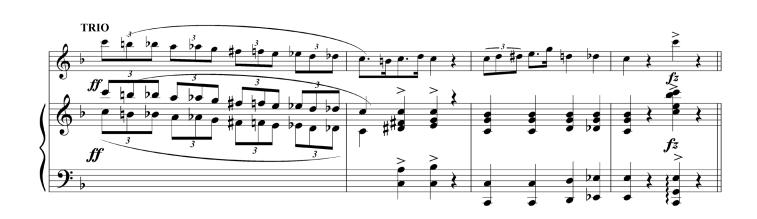




















No. 3 CLIMB THEM WALLS FOX TROT

F.D. WALDRON











No. 5

"LOW DOWN"

F.D. WALDRON

















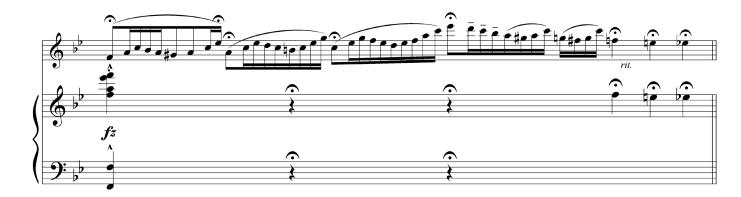


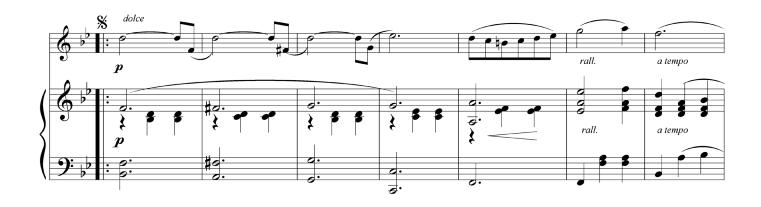
VALSE "MARGUERITE"

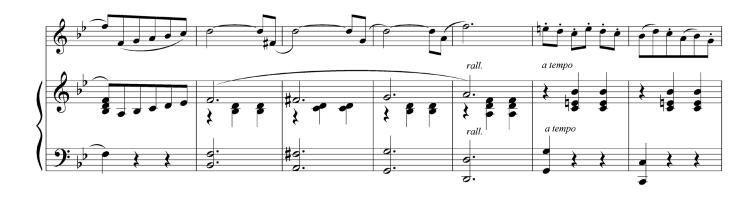
F.D. WALDRON

















No. 8 F.D. WALDRON















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In 2015 and 2016, I received funding from 4Culture to perform, record, preserve and publish the compositions and history of Frank D. Waldron. Without their generous support, this project would never have come to fruition. Heather Dwyer and Brandi Link were instrumental in helping me understand the intricacies of developing a complex project that recieved funding from both 4Culture Arts Projects and 4Culture Heritage Projects simultaneously. I am grateful for their assistance in this early and crucial stage of the project.

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Greg Ruby

4

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COLOPHON

Frank D. Waldron: Seattle's Syncopated Classic © 2017 Greg Ruby

"Frank D. Waldron: The Indispensable Pioneer of Seattle Jazz" © 2017 Paul de Barros and Greg Ruby

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TRANK D. WALDRON'S OYNCOPATED (LASSIC

LEAD SHEETS

TRANK D. WALDRON'S OYNCOPATED (LASSIC

No. 1 VALSE HAWTHORNE

FRANK D. WALDRON



VALSE HAWTHORNE



TRANK D. WALDRON'S SYNCOPATED (LASSIC

No. 2 GO GET IT

FRANK D. WALDRON





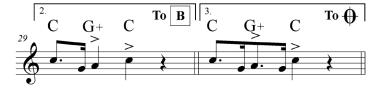














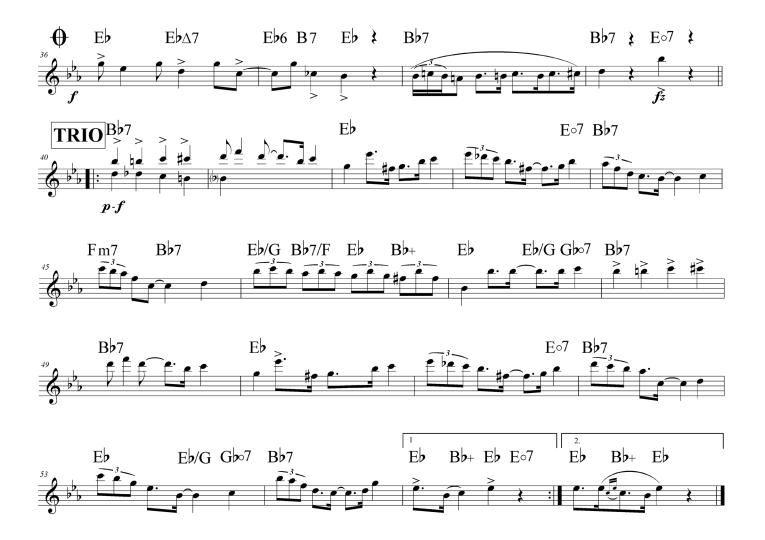
No. 3 CLIMB THEM WALLS

F.D. WALDRON

FOX TROT



CLIMB THEM WALLS



No. 4
PRETTY DOLL

PRETTY DOLL



No. 5 LOW DOWN

Lead Sheet





No. 6 WITH PEP





No. 7 VALSE MARGUERITE

VALSE MARGUERITE

F.D. WALDRON



VALSE MARGUERITE



No. 8 THAT'S IT

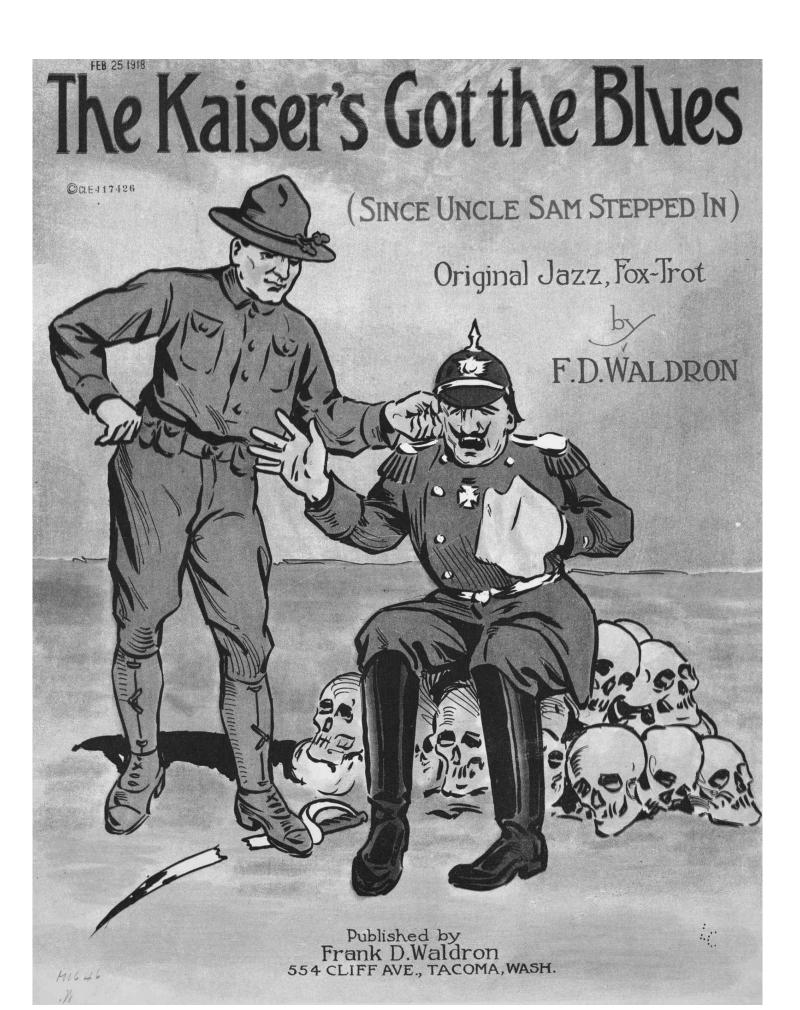




No. 9 IT'S EASY







Lead Sheet

THE KAISER'S GOT THE BLUES

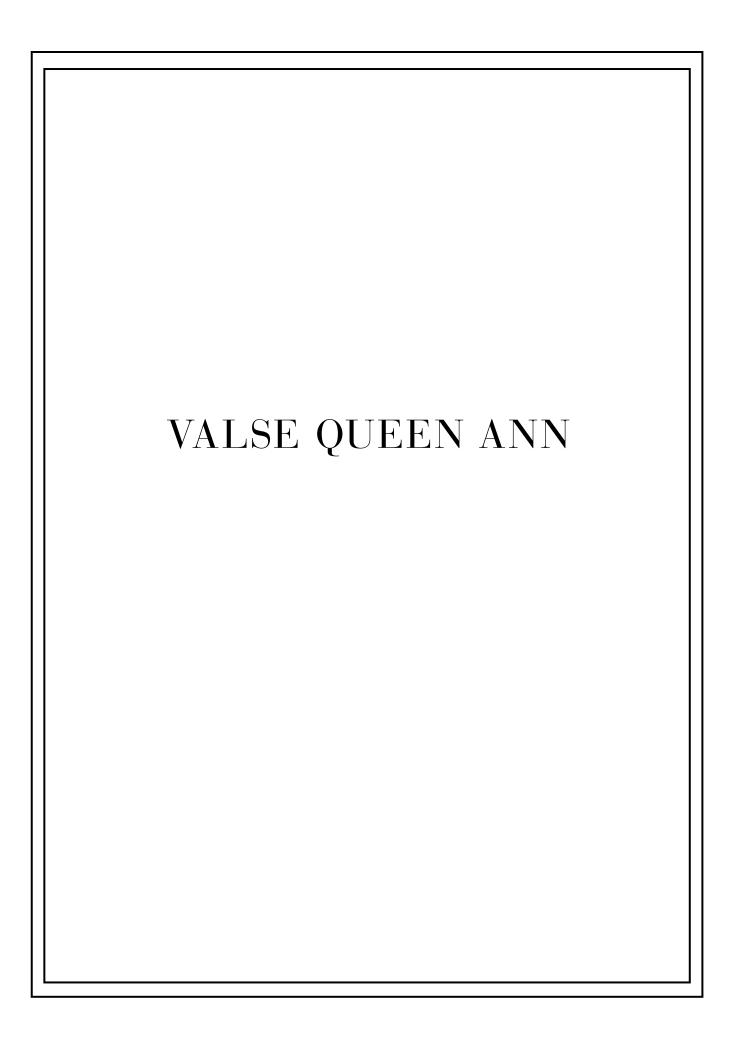
F.D. WALDRON

(SINCE UNCLE SAM STEPPED IN)



THE KAISER'S GOT THE BLUES





VALSE QUEEN ANN



