

**THE BOSWELL SISTERS CENTENNIAL**  
**NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 3, 2007**  
**NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA**

**OFFICIAL PROGRAM**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Quotes	2
Introduction and Schedule	3
Events	4 – 8
Featured Speakers and Performers	9 – 16
About the Boswell Sisters	17 – 18
Sponsors, Partners and Supporters	19

"Who influenced me? There was only one singer who influenced me. I tried to sing like her all the time, because everything she did made sense musically, and that singer was Connee Boswell. When I was a girl, I listened to all the singers, white and black, and I know that Connee was doing things that no one else was doing at that time. You don't have to take my word for it, just check the recordings made at the time and hear for yourself."



*- Ella Fitzgerald*



"If it hadn't been for the Boswell Sisters, there would be no Andrews Sisters."

*Maxene Andrews*

"Connee Boswell is, without a doubt, the most widely imitated singer of all time."



*Frank Sinatra*



"She (Connee Boswell) was my favorite gal - I called her Sister Constance and she called me Brother Bingstance. A great lady with boundless courage and divine talent. I loved her."

*Bing Crosby*

"Since they were kids they've been singing licks instead of lyrics, and riffs in place of rhymes."

*John Lucas, October 15, 1944 Down Beat*

## INTRODUCTION

December 3, 2007 would have been Connee Boswell's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. In honor of this milestone, the Boswell Sisters Centennial Committee is partnering with New Orleans Jazz National Park, the Louisiana State History Museum, The Midlo Center at the University of New Orleans, Snug Harbor and Bozzies.com for a weekend of live music, seminars, labs and more to honor the innovation, influence and achievements of the Boswell Sisters.

### Boswell Sisters Centennial Schedule at a Glance

Friday Nov. 30th	Saturday Dec. 1	Sunday Dec. 2	Monday, Dec. 3
6:00 PM- Centennial Launch Party, Steamboat Natchez, Toulouse St at the River, \$33.50 - \$56.50	9-Noon – Big Boz Bus Tour, Boarding by French Market, N. Peters, \$25	9-Noon – Seminars and Presentations, Arsenal Room, Cabildo, FREE	11:30 AM – Connee's 100 <sup>th</sup> Birthday Bash, Marigny Brasserie, 640 Frenchmen at Royal
	2 – 4 PM – "All's Well That's Boswell" Jazz Natl. Park, 916 N. Peters, FREE	Noon – 4 PM – BOZFEST with , Shout Sister, YazooZazz, Jan Shapiro, The Stolen Sweets and the Pfister Sisters, at the Cabildo, FREE	
	8 & 10 PM –Stolen Sweets & Shout Sister, Snug Harbor. 626 Frenchmen, \$20	8 & 10 PM –Swing Cinema, featuring the Pfister Sisters, Randall Riley's film "Connie Boswell: Life Is a Song" and more, Snug Harbor, 626 Frenchmen, \$15	

## EVENTS

**Friday, November 30, 2007**

***Centennial Launch Party***

**Steamboat Natchez**

**Toulouse at the River**

**Boarding begins at 6:00 p.m.**

Shortly before she passed away, Vet Boswell told David McCain the next time she came to New Orleans she wanted to come by riverboat. That wish will be symbolically honored at we launch our weekend with a trip up the Mississippi River on the Steamboat Natchez.

The Natchez serves a dinner of authentic river cuisine and tops it off with entertainment by the internationally renowned Dukes of Dixieland. The Pfister Sisters and the Stolen Sweets round out the trio of performers and add a special Boswellian touch to one of the top attractions in the Crescent City.

**Saturday, December 1, 2007**

***Big Boz Bus Tour***

**N. Peters across from the French Market**

**Boarding begins at 8:45 a.m.**

Grab a cup of coffee and hop aboard the bus that will take you back to the days when Martha, Connee and Vet were young. The tour includes visits and photo opportunities in front of many of the places where the Sisters lived, studied and performed. Narrated by biographer David McCain and Project Director Cynthia Lucas, the tour will focus on a variety of Uptown and Downtown locations that tell the story of the Boswell Sisters and the city that helped form their music.

**Saturday, December 1, 2007 (cont.)**

***All's Well That's Boswell***

**New Orleans Jazz National Historic Park**

**Visitors Center, 916 N. Peters**

**2:00 p.m.**

The story of the Boswell Sisters and their influence on music is told in a multi-media presentation, complete with songs, by the Pfister Sisters. The program tells of the early New Orleans and operatic influences that shaped the sound of the trio, as well as the affect their music had on many of the great musicians that followed.

***The Stolen Sweets at the Louisiana Music Factory***

**210 Decatur Street**

**4:00 p.m.**

Take a sneak preview of Portland's Stolen Sweets among the stacks of this famous French Quarter record store. A great place to stock up on your personal Boswell and New Orleans recordings while you enjoy the sounds of live music.

***Listening Labs and Hospitality***

**624 Frenchmen St. 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**

**VIP and Special Invitation Only**

**5:00 p.m.**

The vaults will open and rarely heard music of the Boswell Sisters and Connee Boswell will be featured in this special VIP treat. The intimate atmosphere of our headquarters with its balcony overlooking Frenchmen Street makes this a great place to truly enjoy the occasion.

***The Stolen Sweets with Shout Sister***

**Snug Harbor**

**626 Frenchmen Street**

**Shows at 8 and 10:00 p.m.**

The diverse influences of the "Boswell Rhythm" are juxtaposed in the performances of these two outstanding ensembles. The show opens with Shout Sister, performing the music they perfected in their 2001 Old Globe Theater performance of the Stuart Ross and Mark Hampton musical *The Boswell Sisters*. We move from theatrical perfection to jazz confection with The Stolen Sweets whose string and vocal interpretations add a modern edge and gypsy jump to the music of the Sisters and more.

Sunday, December 2, 2007

***Boswell Sisters Centennial Symposium***

**The Arsenal Room of the Cabildo**

**Program begins at 9:00 a.m.**

**Jan Shapiro**, Voice Chair of the Berklee College of Music, presents an excerpt from her pioneering National Endowment for the Arts research project on Connee Boswell and the Boswell Sisters. The research includes interviews with Maxene Andrews, Garvin Bushell and others that has preserved an invaluable history of the trio. This presentation allows the audience to understand the Boswell Sisters through the comments and memories of their contemporaries. Shapiro has done extensive research on the Boswell Sisters and recreated their arrangements with assistance from fellow performing academics Lisa Thorson and Adriena Balic in the group Boswelmania. Her presentation brings the perspective of performer, researcher and educator to the music of the Boswells.

**Laurie Stras**, musicologist from the University of Southampton, UK, provides a theoretical analysis of the role of disability in the music of Connee Boswell. Her presentation examines how Connee's disembodied voice created a paradox for popular culture: "the most imitated singer of all time," who is nonetheless still a relatively obscure figure. Her remarkable singing quickly became the standard to which jazz singers aspired, but despite the fact that her legacy is still heard, Boswell's presence has been effectively erased in most histories of jazz.

**David McCain** brings a biographers' vision to his illustrated history of the Boswell Sisters in New Orleans. From his vast archives he traces the lives of three young women as they grow up in the great cultural melting pot of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century New Orleans.

McCain's friendship with Vet Boswell and his decades of research provide a warm and intimate look into the lives of the women who did so much to shape popular music.

**Sunday, December 2, 2007 (cont.)**

***BOZFEST***

**The Cabildo Steps**

**Chartres at St. Peters Street**

**Music begins shortly after Noon**

New Orleans will be treated to the Boswell Sound as the four featured ensembles of the Boswell Sisters Centennial perform a free concert in the very heart of the French Quarter. The Cabildo, where the Louisiana Purchase was signed and the history of New Orleans has played out over the centuries, serves as a backdrop to a concert celebration of the Boswell Sisters music. The event will also feature a special proclamation from the city of New Orleans in honor of the Boswell Sisters.

Featuring:

*Shout Sister*

*YazooZazz*

*The Stolen Sweets*

*The Pfister Sisters*

***Listening Labs and Hospitality***

**624 Frenchmen St. 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**

**VIP and Special Invitation Only**

**5:00 p.m.**

Another two hours of rare music and footage, food, beverage and conversation at the Boswell Sisters Centennial headquarters.

***Swing Cinema***

**Snug Harbor**

**626 Frenchmen St.**

**Shows at 8 and 10:00 p.m.**

In the spirit of 1930s entertainment, enjoy a vaudeville-like mix of live performance, film clips and the documentary *Life is a Song: Connee Boswell* in the Centennial's crowning salute to the Boswells. David McCain and Randall Riley have mined the vaults and deliver a mother lode of the Boswell Sisters and Connee Boswell's movie and television appearances. The Pfister Sisters and friends supply the live acts to this swinging evening of celebration.

Monday, December 3, 2007

***Connee's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Bash***

**Marigny Brasserie**

**640 Frenchmen St. at Royal**

**Luncheon begins at 11:30 a.m.**

The celebration wraps up with a birthday party for Boswell. A week before she died, Connee wrote a poem that ended with the phrase:

*"...When I'm gone, remember me when  
The sun shone brightly, and now, amen."*

The 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Connee will be celebrated with friends and fans who have helped "Put the Sun Back in the Sky" through the Boswell Sisters Centennial.





## FEATURED SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS

### David W. McCain

David McCain read about the Boswell Sisters before actually hearing them. But the description he read was intriguing enough to foster an almost lifelong interest. Richard Lamparski, author of the *Whatever Became Of?* book series, had described the Andrews Sisters as the most famous of all harmony groups, but noted they never matched the “perfect harmony” of their idols, the Boswells.



Born in 1953 in Portsmouth, Virginia but raised in New Orleans and nearby St. Charles Parish, David McCain was “knocked out” by the Boswell Sister’s talent, soulful, quirky edge and their harmony. When McCain finished a stint in the US Navy and returned to Louisiana in late 1977, he wrote to Vet Boswell. Vet had seen an article he had written earlier that year about his discovery of the “Boswell Sound” in the New Orleans Jazz Club’s quarterly, *The Second Line*. By that time, she was the only Boswell left, and she graciously agreed to a meeting at her home in Peekskill, New York. So began a long and harmonious friendship. Vet described the Boswell history directly to McCain, which he meticulously documented and further substantiated with his own research into all media—print, film, radio and television.

Currently collaborating with Vet’s daughter, Chica Minnerly, on a Boswell Sisters biography, McCain is author of liner notes for several Boswell Sisters CDs, as well as notes and research for a CD on yet another jazzy Louisiana songbird, Miss Teddy Grace) and resides in northwestern New Jersey in the town of Washington, near the scenic Delaware Water Gap area.

## FEATURED SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS

### Jan Shapiro

One of the first academics to focus attention on the Boswell Sisters and Connee Boswell was Jan Shapiro. She received a National Endowment for the Arts grant that allowed her to begin research on the Sisters and their work. She gathered a series of oral histories from individuals who had known and worked with them.



Jan began her music studies at the Saint Louis Institute of Music and continued by earning her Bachelor's degree, graduating Cum Laude from Howard University, Washington D.C. and completing a Masters degree at Cambridge College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

A talented performer, versatile in style, Jan sings jazz, soft-rock, pop, blues, and ballads with equal elan. She has entertained audiences in stages as diverse as the Playboy Club to Broadway.

Jan is a former faculty member of the Voice Department at Fontbonne College, Saint Louis, Missouri and the Jazz Studies Department at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Illinois. She presently holds the position of Voice Department Chair at Berklee College of Music. She has presented vocal clinics around the country including the International Association of Jazz Educators Conferences, and adjudicated high school jazz choirs in the New England area.

## FEATURED SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS

### Dr. Laurie Stras

Laurie Stras studied harpsichord, piano and singing at the Royal College of Music, and gained her



doctorate from the University of London in 1995. Before returning to postgraduate studies, she pursued a freelance career as both singer and keyboard player, including four years in the Royal National Theatre Company as Musical Director for both touring and repertory productions. She has two main areas of research: sixteenth-century Italian vocal music and twentieth-century

popular music. Her particular interests in both fields include female performers and vocality, performance practice and source studies. Current projects include a study of Connie Boswell and the Boswell Sisters, an edited book on 1960s girl singers, and a series of articles on the Ferrarese priest-composer Lodovico Agostini.

Laurie acts as consultant to a number of performing groups in both early music and heritage jazz, and is co-director of the early music ensemble [Musica Secreta](#). Her most recent publication, "White Face, Black Voice: Race, Gender, and Region in the Music of the Boswell Sisters," is featured in the spring 2007 quarter's *Journal of the Society for American Music*.

This is the second time that Laurie has worked with McCain and filmmaker Randall Riley. In April 2007 they collaborated to present a symposium at the University of Texas School of Music entitled "The Boswell Sisters: rediscovering Perfect Harmony," where Stras presented her paper *Black and White and Red All Over*.

## FEATURED SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS

### The Pfister Sisters

The Pfister Sisters have delighted audiences with their sweet hot jazz harmonies since 1979. They were singled out in 1981 by Variety as one of the best new acts of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and 20



years later, their 2001 Jazz Fest appearance was dubbed "sublime" and "sparkling."

Holley Bendtsen, Debbie Davis, Yvette Voelker and Amasa Miller comprise one of the few groups that represent the New Orleans swing era, with their recreation of The Boswell Sisters arrangements, and the only act featuring vocal jazz harmony.

Their career and performances show the depth of their talent. Over 20 years ago they appeared in the David McCain, Andrué Scott musical "Sing, Sister, Sing," have been featured in an HBO special filmed at Mahogany Hall, performed special shows including "All's Well That's Boswell" and "Rockin' the Cradle of Jazz." They joined with the Dukes of Dixieland aboard the Steamboat Natchez in the Bush-Clinton Katrina fundraising tour. Most recently they have been the featured performers in the jazz series at Abbaye aux Dames in Saintes, France.

The Pfisters have sung with the Neville Brothers at Angola State Prison, with Linda Rondstadt and Jimmy Buffet at the New Orleans Artists Against Homelessness and Hunger concerts, and with Maxene Andrews (yes, of the Andrews Sisters) on the wing of an airplane.



## FEATURED SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS

### Shout Sister

They played Martha, Connee and Vet in the 2001 Old Globe production of "The Boswell Sisters."



But even after the show closed, these three busy performers "Just Couldn't Say Goodbye." They began performing as "Shout Sister" and are headed back to the studio to record more of the of the tunes made famous by those syncopating sisters from New Orleans.

There was unanimous acclaim for the three performers who played the roles of the Boswell Sisters in the San Diego show. Veteran actresses and singers Amy Pietz (Martha), Elizabeth Land Ward (Connee) and Michelle Duffy (Vet) immersed themselves in the sound of the Boswell Sisters music and produced a "rich signature style, the period manners and the sisterly dynamic of the influential 1930s trio."

Michelle Duffy has played stages across continents and has sung in everything from the San Francisco Opera to Top 40s Dance and Funk bands. Land has appeared on and off Broadway, been a featured soloist with Michael Crawford in "The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber," has recently finished a run of the musical "[Sister Act](#)," and has just released her new CD, *Firstharvest*. Amy Pietz is probably best known for her work in "Caroline in the City" for which she received a SAG nomination for Best Actress, but she has made appearances in a score of other television shows and is taking a break from her current CW series "Aliens in America" to be part of the Centennial.

## FEATURED SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS

### The Stolen Sweets



The Stolen Sweets perform vocal jazz arrangements inspired by The Boswell Sisters. Comprised of vocalists Jen Bernard, Lara Michell and Erin Sutherland and string syncopators Keith Brush, Pete Krebs, and David Langenes, The Sweets deliver a unique brand of vintage swing jazz, dishing up abundant doses of coy stage antics and sideways glances as they play.

The Sweets' ability to transport audiences to the early days of jazz has already earned them a sizable and colorful fan base in their native Portland and beyond. Their CD "Shuffle Off to Buffalo" was released last year and captures the unique and fun-loving spirit of this delightful west-coast ensemble.

This is the Stolen Sweets first appearance in New Orleans and their third concert in Louisiana. They have figured out there's a difference in the pace of "southern time" but it doesn't slow down the driving rhythm and enthusiasm of their music.

## FEATURED SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS

### YazooZazz

YazooZazz has been harmonizing since 1979 when two young singers



"discovered" the music of the Boswell Sisters. One of the singers, Robin, married a band leader and the group is now part of the Tom Cunningham Orchestra (TCO).

The TCO has performed at the Smithsonian, The Barns of Wolf Trap, Blues

Alley (all to standing ovations), presidential and gubernatorial inaugurals, the Cherry Blossom and other major Balls; they've been a "radio orchestra" and made several TV appearances, including BET's Jazz Central and Maryland Public Television's "Big Band Battle," where the viewers voted them a 2-to-1 winner. The Orchestra's second release, "All the Cats Join In," received glowing reviews and is currently in its second printing. The band recently issued its third release, "One O'clock Boogie, Two O'clock Jump."

The hep-hep trio from the Washington DC area that make up YazooZazz are Robin Cunningham, Esther Haynes and Betsy Kipperman. They are backed up by TCO's Halley Shoenberg on the clarinet, Jeff Reynolds on fiddle and guitar, Craig Gildner on piano, Jonathan Steele on bass and Tom Cunningham on trumpet. Bozfest is their New Orleans premier and one that is sure to add a great swing feeling to the Boswell legacy.

## Dukes of Dixieland

This Grammy-award winning group almost needs no introduction. The



DUKES of Dixieland blow traditional jazz and Dixieland into the 21st Century, weaving strands of pop, gospel, and country with authentic New Orleans sounds. More than 32 years of tradition stand behind today's Dukes as they step forward with a sound that is durable and flexible, as jazz is meant to be.

The DUKES have worn their New Orleans jazz heritage proudly as globe-trotting jazz

ambassadors from the heart of the Big Easy. They are the oldest continuing Dixieland jazz band and have sold out such venues as The Hollywood Bowl, the Kennedy Center and the Smithsonian, to name but a few. Bright and brassy or smooth and dark as cane syrup, the DUKES bring a time-honored authenticity to all of the hits of Dixie's yesteryear.

Band leader and drummer Richard Taylor remembers when Connee Boswell used to sit in with the bands when she would visit New Orleans. He is ably assisted by Mike Fulton on trumpet, Earl Bonie on clarinet, Ben Smith on trombone, Scott Obenschain on piano and John Lutz on bass.

## Randall Riley

Randall Riley has collected Connee Boswell's entire discography and had the good luck to procure her private collection including home recordings and safety acetates. It is a natural obsession for a man who has created a business, The Swing Shift, that specializes in the remastering of shellac and vinyl records. The multi-talented Mr. Riley has completed a short documentary about the life of Connee Boswell that was most recently shown at a Boswell Sisters symposium at the University of Texas. "Connee Boswell: Life is a Song" will be reprised for the Centennial.





## ABOUT THE BOSWELL SISTERS

The Boswell Sisters (Martha, Connee and Helvetia) were three talented New Orleans musicians who parlayed a childhood of classical music education into a ground-breaking career as jazz harmony singers. Raised at 3937 Camp Street in Uptown, New Orleans, the sisters honed their craft by performing at schools, club events, Christmas parties and fundraisers, and the city's first radio stations. By 1925 they recorded their first songs for Victor Records in New Orleans and got their big break when a national act cancelled at the local Orpheum Theater and they were hired to come on as a replacement.

The Boswell Sisters left New Orleans in 1928 and their jazz harmony singing catapulted them to international fame. Backed by musicians like the Dorsey Brothers, Bunny Berrigan, Benny Goodman, Venuti and Lang, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw and the orchestras of Victor Young and Jimmy Grier, the Sisters dominated the airwaves between 1931 and 1936.

Beginning with their own national radio show in 1930 and later alternating with the Mills Brothers as guests on Bing Crosby's syndicated show, they became the sound to lighten the heart of the Depression. They made movies, played Broadway and toured Europe. They cut hit songs on the Brunswick label and were among the small stable of stars that Jack Kapp used to launch Decca Records.

Their influence was acknowledged by artists as diverse as Crosby himself, the Andrews Sisters, Frank Sinatra, the King Sisters, Mel Torme, Harry Belafonte and Wynonna Judd.

Although influential and universally appealing, the Sisters were anything but middle of the road. Their vocal style, repertoire, even their personal circumstances were potential stumbling blocks to success in a society that feared transgressions of gender roles, race, class and (for



celebrities) physical perfection. The Boswell Sisters challenged norms with their musical knowledge, their arrangements, their choice of songs, and their performance of race and class. Connee's physical disability (polio-induced paralysis) made her an unlikely candidate for a career that included Broadway, Hollywood and more. They were the top trio in the world when Martha and Helvetia married and retired in 1936.

Connee Boswell continued to perform as a soloist and had scored hits in the top 20 through the 1950s. She sang the Oscar nominated "Whispers in the Dark" in the film *Artists and Models*, and appeared in several movies. She made a great vocal partner with Bing on the Kraft Music Show and recorded a number of hits with him. She also launched the trend of "swinging the classics" with her hit recording of "Martha."



Denied the opportunity to entertain troops overseas due to her disability, Connee served her country during World War II by singing to soldiers in stateside hospitals. After the war she became a Las Vegas pioneer performer and kept a grueling road schedule that took her across the United States, Europe and Latin America. Connee's career got its second wind in the early 50s with a series of hits including the lauded "Connee Boswell and the Original Memphis Five" album with RCA Victor. Connee was also seen in a starring role in the 1959 NBC TV series, *Pete Kelly's Blues*.

By the time Connee retired in 1963, she and her sisters had recorded over 300 songs, sold 70 million records and changed American popular music forever. The credit for those contributions and the revolution it inspired belongs to the Boswell Sisters.

## **PARTNERS, SPONSORS and SUPPORTERS**

The Boswell Sisters Centennial wishes to thank the following institutions and individuals for their support:

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and Foundation  
The New Orleans Jazz National Historic Park  
The Midlo School for New Orleans Studies, the University of New Orleans  
The Louisiana State Museum  
John Shoup and the Dukes of Dixieland  
The New Orleans Steamboat Company  
The Marigny Brasserie  
Jason Patterson and Snug Harbor  
The Boswell Museum of Music  
Gabriela Hernandez  
Joy Foy  
Dr. Jack Stewart  
Jackie Harris and the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation  
Bryan Ortiz  
BAH Design  
Auralee Ermsweller  
Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing  
Mike Walters and the New Orleans Athletic Club  
Wesley Noble and the Palace Café  
Jack Lawrence  
Dr. Bruce Boyd Raeburn  
Richard L'Amie  
Randall Riley  
Stiletto Brands  
April Showers and Michelle Hedderman

And The Wizard of Boz, David McCain



The Boswell Sisters Centennial was made possible in part by a grant from the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and Foundation