

So, Why Do I Recognize Scott's Music?

When Scott gave up his 1930s Quintette, Warner Brothers secured the rights to the melodies. Then, through the amazing arrangements of Carl Stalling, they became staples in the "Looney Tunes" and "Merry Melody" cartoons. Little snippets of Scott's music show up to accompany Bugs Bunny, Donald Duck, and a host of other memorable characters. This cartoon legacy continued as more recent animators discovered Scott's music. His tunes can also be heard in "The Ren and Stimpy Show", "The Simpsons", "Animaniacs", and many others. The title music from Disney's "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" was so close to the Scott tune "Powerhouse" that Scott's estate won a judgment to receive credit and royalties!

Les Deutsch's Role in Preserving Scott's Music

Les became interested in Scott's music and decided to put together a Quintette to play some at his son Elliot's bar mitzvah in 1998. Now he only had to purchase the sheet music ...

But Scott never wrote down any of the music he composed for his 1930s Quintette. He taught the tunes to the Quintette by having them repeat what he played on the piano! Scott said "You give a better performance if you skip the eyes."

With no sheet music to be found, Les set off to transcribe the tunes from a recently-released CD of Scott's recordings. He completed four for the Bar Mitzvah and, as a bonus, transcribed one of Scott's big band tunes, "At an Arabian House Party" for the Caltech jazz band to play at a concert.

A few months later, Les was doing a routine search of the Internet for his music (you can never tell where its being used) and found a reference on the Raymond Scott web site. The people responsible for the site also did routine web searches looking for Scott's music and found out about the Caltech performance. The site also contained a link to the "Raymond Scott Archive."

Les contacted the archive and donated his transcriptions. In the intervening years, Les has transcribed more than 30 of the Quintette recordings (including tunes from both the 30s and 40s Quintettes) and placed them in the archives. This academic year being the 100th anniversary of Scott's birth, bands all over the world have been performing these tunes, mostly using Les' transcriptions.

A Special "Thank You"

This is not easy music! The performance you hear today is the result of some very hard work on the part of Caltech's musical community.

The Screwy Jazz of Raymond Scott

The Caltech Jazz Quintette
with Kjerstin Williams, Vocal



Artwork by Jim Flora

May 18, 2009

8:00 PM

Dabney Lounge

Who? Raymond Scott has been called an audio version of Andy Warhol. He was a musician, a bandleader, a composer, a recording studio maverick, and an inventor who created sounds that seemed to define "future". He has also been called "the most well-known and influential unknown composer since the 16th-Century." He has written some of the most recognizable melodies of the 20th century yet most people cannot remember where they have heard them before.

Program

All pieces composed by Raymond Scott unless noted.

All pieces transcribed and edited by Les Deutsch.

Powerhouse

The Toy Trumpet

John Brugman, Trumpet

Minuet in Jazz

Dinner Music for a Pack of Hungry Cannibals

Egyptian Barn Dance

Quintette Plays Carmen

A Boy Scout in Switzerland

A Little Bit of Rigoletto

Snake Woman

Curley Cue

Swing, Swing Mother-in-Law

Kjerstin Williams, Vocal Les Deutsch, Piano

Mountain High, Valley Low (from "Lute Song")

Kjerstin Williams, Vocal Les Deutsch, Piano

Moonlight on the Ganges

S. Meyers and C. Wallace

Kjerstin Williams, Vocal Arranged by Raymond Scott

Tiger Rag

D. James LaRocca

*Kjerstin Williams, Vocal Arranged by Raymond Scott
Lyrics by Walter Maurant*

The Caltech Jazz Quintette

Lynne Snyder, Clarinet

John Brugman, Trumpet

Jim VanDeventer, Tenor Sax and Clarinet

Les Deutsch, Piano

Kevin Chen, Bass

Mike Ferrara, Drums

Who was Raymond Scott?

Raymond Scott was born "Harry Warnow" in Brooklyn in 1908. He changed his name (by choosing names from the New York City phone book that sounded nice to him) after his older brother, Mark, hired him to play piano for the CBS Radio band. In 1936, Scott formed his famous "Quintette." The group had six musicians, but Scott did not like the sound of the word "Sextet." The Quintette was very successful during its short life. Scott created many tunes that reached the top ten in popularity. He even took the Quintette to Hollywood where it appeared in many major motion pictures with big stars like Eddie Cantor and Shirley Temple.

Scott gave up his Quintette (at least for a while) after 1939 and led his own big band. He became musical director for CBS radio in 1942, breaking the color barrier by hiring one of the first racially-integrated radio orchestras. The band included great black artists like Ben Webster, Charlie Shavers, and Cozy Cole.

In 1946, Scott wrote the music for a new Broadway show called "Lute Song." Despite starring both Yul Brenner and Mary Martin, it was only a partial success.

He became the bandleader for Lucky Strike's "Your Hit Parade" (the show mentioned in the opening theme from "All in the Family") and moved to Television with the show in the 50s. His first wife, Dorothy Collins, was a solo vocalist with the show and he wrote extensively for her.

Scott revisited the Quintette concept briefly in 1948, composing some interesting new tunes and recording on his own label. This group never achieved the popularity of the 30s version.

Scott actually started life as an electrical engineer and he concentrated on this in his later career. In 1946 he formed "Manhattan Research" and began inventing and recording electronic musical instruments. He was a friend of Bob Moog and did some design work for him in the 1950s. Scott developed electronic music for radio and television projects – mostly commercials – becoming probably the first to actually make a living in this field.

Scott did one last recording using "real" instruments in 1959. Called "The Secret Seven", he never released the names of the musicians on that record! We now know that the band was made up of some of the best musicians of the day, including Milt Hinton, Kenny Burrell, Harry "Sweets" Edison, and "Toots" Thielemans.

Scott never returned to live music. He retired in the Los Angeles area where he passed away in 1994. He lived just long enough to witness the digital electronic music revolution.