

From the Shadows

The Re-Emergence of Carmelo Jarí

Michael Rader and K.-B. Rau

Clarance Williams' recordings of the mid to late 1920s are an impressive body of music, well-loved and appreciated by many collectors for years. Several attempts have been made to produce discographies on Williams, culminating in Tom Lord's definitive bio-discography published by Storyville in 1976. This drew heavily on a serialised discography by Lord and a Storyville team of listeners published in Storyville magazine from Nos. 13 to 30, starting in 1967 and finishing in 1970.

Both the serialisation and the Lord discography still list many uncertain or unknown musicians, particularly reed players. In some cases the identifications can be shown to be simply wrong. Therefore a group of enthusiasts recruited from the RedHotJazz Internet mailing list headed by K.B. Rau¹, a well-known press-roll drummer and discographer, decided to re-listen to Williams' band sides after the departure of Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet up to the early 1930s. Among the prominent reed players listed in the discographies are Williams' three Bens – Moten (or Morton), Waters and Whitted²– Buster Bailey, Prince Robinson, Arville Harris, Ernest Elliott, Alberto Socarras and Carmelo Jejo, or Jarí. The last two were from a number of reed players from the Caribbean in general active in New York in the period following the First World War. This influx of players was said to be due to a lack of skilled reed players in the city which was first highlighted by James Reese Europe's recruitment on Puerto Rico in 1917 of suitable players for the Band of the 15th Infantry Regiment (Colored) of the New York National Guard, later known as the "Hellfighters" when attached to the French army as the 369th Regiment. (Thompson, Moreno de Schwartz 2008, p. 8)

Puerto Rico Origins

Many collectors will first have encountered "Jejo" as a substitute for Buster Bailey on one of the Fletcher Henderson sides included in the CBS/Columbia "Study in Frustration" 4 LP set. Walt Allen's "Hendersonia" (Allen 1974, 565) includes a brief biographical note on Jejo, which tells us that his real name was Carmelo Jari, apparently known as Jejo, pronounced Yay-yo and came either from Cuba or Puerto Rico and was in New York as early as 1921.

He died in January 1929. "Hendersonia" lists three titles with Jarí, on only one of which clarinet is to be heard. This sounds more like Bailey than anything we know by Jarí.

Howard Rye, who has researched many official US files, such as censuses, immigration records and draft registers, came up with this additional information:

"Carmelo Jari has a draft registration on file, done at San Juan, Puerto Rico on 5 July 1917. It is in Spanish. He is 22, born at Manati, PR, 16 July 1894, living at 12 Boulevard San Juan. He says he is a U.S. Citizen. His profession is 'Músico' and he is employed by the Ayuntamiento de San Juan.

He is still in San Juan in 1920, living in Calle San Sebastian, San Juan: Carmelo Jari y Nango, jefe, aged 26, mulatto, born Puerto Rico of Puerto Rican parents, is a 'músico, banda municipal'. With him is his esposa, Justina Planes y Crespo, 24, and 7 year old Epifanio Nango y Figuerosa, primo (cousin).

He was certainly in the U.S by August 1922, when he is a member of AFM Local 802 reported (as Carmell Jari) in the International Musician as a travelling member by Local 16, Newark, NJ.

¹ The group consisted of a core of Dave Brown (Berlin), Michael Rader (Karlsruhe), K.-B. Rau (Erlangen), Yves-Francois Smierciek (Chicago), Bob Smith (Mo I Rana) and included at various times Stephen Hester, Jörg Kuhfuss, Roland Pilz, Chris Tyle and John Collinson. Reimer von Essen was consulted on the mystery of the "Red Hot Flo" clarinetist.

² Not identical to Charlie Johnson's three Bens who substitute Benny Carter for Moten/Morton.

He is almost certainly the Carmelo Jari aged 28 (sic!) who arrived at New York City on 4 July 1921 as 3rd cook on the S.S. San Juan. This man shipped in San Juan PR, on 29 June 1921.”

Basilio Serrano of the City University of New York has done extensive research on Puerto Rican musicians, with a special interest in Ellington trombonist Juan Tizol and his family (Serrano 2007). Tizol’s uncle and adopted father Manuel Tizol, led the San Juan Municipal Band, a cousin who also lived in Manuel’s household, bassist Francisco “Paco” Tizol emigrated to New York in about 1921 and played in the Shuffle Along revue of 1922 and was later a member of the LeonAbbey band. He is identified as (Manuel?) Tizol on the photo of the band for the Palace Theatre, New York City, “Jazz Lips Review” of 1925, reproduced in “Storyville 73” and correctly in Serrano’s paper on Puerto Rican musicians.

According to Serrano’s research, Jarí’s full name was Carmelo Jarí y Namgo and confirms the date and place of birth given by Howard Rye.

Serrano has been unable to trace Jarí’s family in Manati, however (personal communication to M. Rader, July 2010).

He was apparently known as “Yeyo” by his compatriots, later corrupted in the US to Jejo. Serrano suggests that Jarí used the Jejo name to avoid contractual problems when he recorded and hints that Jarí might have entered the US as a stowaway.

Jarí was a well-regarded musician in Puerto Rico, probably well-schooled since he wrote several compositions, including one, “Cambio chinás por botellas”, recorded by the Banda Municipal de San Juan. Another was recorded by a band led by Paco Tizol (personal communication from Dick Spottswood to Serrano).

There are two recorded samples, “El Valor” and “Zaza”, of Manuel Tizol’s Band on Harlequin CD 67 devoted to music of the Northern Caribbean, but neither has any playing identifiable as Jarí.

Jarí was apparently not among the musicians auditioned by Noble Sissle and Jim Europe on Puerto Rico in May 1917. Since Europe only had four days for the audition, it would seem that he used a list of musicians prepared by Manuel Tizol who was known in New York City as an orchestra contractor. Jarí may have avoided the military to take care of his mother. His draft registration actually took place after Europe had visited the island (cf. dates in Serrano 109, and in note from Rye above).

Several of the musicians recruited by Europe for his military band went on to become quite well known in the US (Thompson & Moreno de Schwartz 2008), including jazz reed players Felix Gregory and Rafael Duchesne. Gregory, who might be the clarinet soloist heard on the recordings made in 1919 by Europe’s band, played with Fess Williams and then switched to playing calypsos, Duchesne visited Europe, initially with Will Marion Cook.

Gregory’s full name was apparently Gregorio Félix Delgado, born in San Juan on 26 September 1896 (Thompson & Moreno, 7, although Serrano, 106, gives 1886). He seems to have recorded under the names of both Felix Gregory and Gregory Felix and has the distinction of being mentioned by name in a collection of essays by “New Yorker” reporter Joseph Mitchell, currently still available as “Up in the old Hotel”.

Jarí in New York

According to Rex Stewart (Stewart & Gordon 1991, p. 50), Jarí was playing in Harlem around 1921 when Stewart arrived in the city as a member of the “Musical Spillers”. Jarí is praised as an outstanding musician, although it is not entirely clear whether Stewart had already noticed him at that time or was giving a retrospective judgement. In early 1922 Jarí, along with Paco Tizol, was a member of the company of the Sissle-Blake revue “Shuffle Along”. The book “Reminiscing with Sissle and Blake” by Robert Kimble and William Bolcom (1973, 127) reproduces a salary list from April of 1922 which shows that musicians like Jarí and Tizol earned \$70 a week, while the chorus girls earned a mere \$30. Jarí and Tizol were members of the revue’s second company which included Josephine Baker who had joined secretly after having been turned down as under age for the first company. The book also contains a photograph of the “Shuffle Along” company that visited Boston in August of the same year. While it is uncertain whether Jarí and Tizol travelled to mBoston, Jarí had been registered as a travelling member of local 16, Newark, NJ in August 1922 as “Carmell Jari” (e mail from Howard Rye to the RedHotJazz Internet mailing list, 7 August 2008), while the name given on the April “Shuffle Along” payroll was Carmela Jarí. The next easily found mention of Jarí is as a member of the Harlem Orchestra under the direction of E. Gilbert Anderson on 18 February 1923 (Rye 2003, 103). In 1923 he also played with the “Lucky Sambo” show (interview by Kurt Mohr with drummer Jerome Burke, mentioned on p. 59 of McCarthy1974). Without further research, we know little of his movements during 1924 and 1925. In 1926 at latest, he joined the Charleston Bearcats, initially led by Duncan Meyers and soon to change its name into Savoy Bearcats, to be led by Leon Abbey.

The 1925 photo of the Meyers-led Charleston Bearcats does not show Jarí, neither does a photo of the 1925 Leon Abbey band, which does have Paco Tizol shown holding a string bass. A photo of the Bearcats was reproduced on some printings of the sheet music of Walter Donaldson’s “In The Middle of the Night” and this does indeed show Jarí as a member of the reed section³. Jarí was a member of the Bearcats that

³With sincere thanks to Anthony Barnett who first published the information on his web-site: <http://www.abar.net>

played at the Grand Opening of the Savoy Ballroom in 1926. According to Rex Stewart, Jarí was perhaps the star of the Bearcats: "Our clarinet man, Carmelito Jejo, was the real star of our group..." (Stewart & Gordon 1991, 204). Stewart particularly notes Harry Carney's admiration for Jarí (ibid.).

The Savoy Bearcats opened the Savoy on 12 March 1926 and recorded 3 sessions for Victor, all in August of 1926. These seem to have been largely ignored by reissue programmes until two recordings appeared on a "Jazum" LP in the 1970s. Later reissues were on French RCA and the British Collectors Items label. In 1977, Ralph Gulliver reported having heard "several masters of most of the titles" (Gulliver 1977b, 6), indicating that they were not familiar to most collectors. Hazzarding a guess, we can assume it was only with reissues that the Savoy Bearcats came known to a wider circle of collectors.

The Savoy Bearcat sides have a clarinet sounding very much like a New Orleans player- he is featured at some length on a couple of titles, notably "Senegalese Stomp" and "How Could I be Blue" in passages considerably looser than the surrounding arrangements - the piano is active and loose and brass bass and banjo seemingly drop out. The clarinetist is usually identified as Jarí, although there are two other reed players (Otto Mikell and Ramon Hernandez) present. Although we have already noted Harry Carney's admiration for Jarí and there are baritone saxophone solos on some of the Bearcats' sides, we are confident that these are by Otto Mikell, whose brother Gene later played very similarly with Mills' Blue Rhythm Band and, indeed, Demas Dean confirmed that Mikell played the baritone solos.

Jarí was described as the "fastest clarinet player in New York", which is true of some of his solo work for the Bearcats. At times he sounds "nervous" and too fast for his own comfort and that of his accompanist. Gulliver comments "...Jejo and Mikell are both too much on the beat to really swing... the influence of the great New Orleans men had not fully permeated the Harlem (sic) bands at this time" (Gulliver 1977b, 6). Demas Dean, whom Gulliver had interviewed, was convinced that Jarí would have become one of the greatest clarinetists had he lived longer (ibid.).

When judging Jarí's playing, we should not forget that he had only been in the US for fewer than five years in 1926 and that he was playing in a manner he had presumably only picked up during this time in New York.

Jarí's playing has a characteristic "bouncing trill" which helps distinguish him from contemporary clarinet players active in Harlem at the time. This could be a legacy of his Puerto Rican background. His playing can be described as frenzied and he plays ahead of the beat, lacking both swing and blues tonality. We have been able to find only two photographs of the Savoy Bearcats, both of them available only in very poor quality reproductions.

Although Rex Stewart and Demas Dean both praise Jarí as a musician, they give us no insight into his personality. There are no reminiscences or anecdotes. This might have to do with a lacking command of English - Noble Sissle tells us that the Puerto Rican musicians in the Europe band spoke only Spanish (cf. Thompson & Moreno, 6) - or with the fact that Jarí was a married man, about ten years older than his colleagues.

SAVOY BEARCATS, New York, Aug. 09, 1926

Gilbert Paris, Demas Dean - t/ James Reevey - tb/ Carmelo Jari - as-cl/ Otto Mikell -

as-cl-bar/ Ramon Hernandez - ts-cl/ Leon Abbey - vn/ Joe Steele - p/ Freddie White

- bj-g/ Harry "Bass" Edwards - bb/ Willie Lynch - d/ Duncan Mayers - dir

36030-1 Stampede Vic rejected, test issued on Frog DGF 12

36031-2 How Could I Be Blue ? Vic rejected, test issued on Frog DGF 12

SAVOY BEARCATS, New York, Aug. 23, 1926

Gilbert Paris, Demas Dean - t/ James Reevey - tb/ Carmelo Jari - as-cl/ Otto Mikell -

as-cl-bar/ Ramon Hernandez - ts-cl/ Leon Abbey - vn/ Joe Steele - p/ Freddie White

- bj-g/ Harry "Bass" Edwards - bb/ Willie Lynch - d/ Duncan Mayers - dir

36059-1 Senegalese Stomp Vic rejected, , test issued on Frog DGF 12

36059-2 Senegalese Stomp Vic 20182

36060-2 Bearcat Stomp Vic rejected, , test issued on Frog DGF 12

36060-3 Bearcat Stomp Vic 20307

36061-1 Nightmare Vic rejected, , test issued on Frog DGF 12

36061-2 Nightmare Vic 20182 20182

SAVOY BEARCATS New York, Oct. 11, 1926

Gilbert Paris, Demas Dean - t/ James Reevey - tb/ Carmelo Jari - as-cl/ Otto Mikell -

as-cl-bar/ Ramon Hernandez – ts-cl/ Leon Abbey – vn/ Joe Steele – p/ Freddie White

– bj-g/ Harry “Bass” Edwards – bb/ Willie Lynch – d/nDuncan Mayers - dir

36030-7 Stampede Vic 20460

36031-5 How Could I Be Blue ? Vic 20307

36809-1 Hot Notes Vic rejected, , test issued on Frog DGF 12

36809-2 Hot Notes Vic 20460

36810-1 Senorita Mine Vic rejected, test issued on Frog DGF 12



It was during his sojourn with the Savoy Bearcats that Jarí came into contact with Clarence Williams.

Jarí with Williams

Jarí's probable first appearance is on a session with singer Bessie Brown in early July 1926, actually pre-dating the Bearcats' own recordings, but after they had started their residence at the Savoy. "Senorita Mine" and "How Could I Be Blue" are both titles also recorded by the Bearcats, albeit at quite different tempos.

Jarí plays a flowing slow solo on "How Could I Be Blue" readily identifiable as his playing through his insertion of bouncing trills.

BESSIE BROWN Jazz Band, New York, Jul. 17, 1926

Bessie Brown – v/ Charlie Gaines – t/ unknown – tb/ Carmello Jari – cl/

Clarence

Williams – p/ unknown – bj

-2 Senorita Mine Or 7161

6706-1 What's The Matter Now? Ban 1833-A, Do 3781-B, ?Or 698-A, Re 8143

6706-2 What's The Matter Now? Ban, Do, Or, Re not on LP/CD

6706-3 What's The Matter Now? Or 698-A

6707-1 How Could I Be Blue ? Do not on LP/CD

6707-2 How Could I Be Blue ? Do 37681-A, Or 698-B

6707-3 How Could I Be Blue ? Do 3781-A not on LP/CD

His next recordings for the Williams organisation were two accompaniments to Lucille Hegamin, "Nobody But My Baby Is Getting My Love" and, again, "Senorita Mine". The other instrumentalists on these sides are unidentified and there is a strong possibility that they too were members of the Bearcats, notably trombonist James Reevy and alto saxophonist Otto Mikell.

LUCILLE HEGAMIN Clarence Williams and Band, New York, Sep. 28, 1926

Lucille Hegamin – v/ unknown (James Reevy) – tb/ Carmelo Jari – cl/ unknown

(Otto Mikell) – as/ Clarence Williams – p/ Buddy Christian – bj

W142695-2 Nobody But My Baby Is Getting My Love Col 14164-D

W142696-2 Senorita Mine Col 14164-D

Like an unissued session of 29 October and a session with Eva Taylor made on 16 November, the Williams session of 10 December 1926 with Tommy Ladnier on trumpet is usually listed as having Buster Bailey on clarinet and Coleman Hawkins on tenor sax. Even John Chilton in "Song of the Hawk" accredits Hawkins with the tenor sax work, although others have expressed doubt. Majority opinion of the listening team mentioned at the outset is that the clarinet is played by Jarí and that the tenor saxophonist is Prince Robinson who had by that time joined the Bearcats. On the session with Taylor, the tenor sax playing is consistent with what we know of Arville Harris' work during this period.

CLARENCE WILLIAMS' BLUE SEVEN, New York, Oct. 29, 1926

Personnel possibly: Tommy Ladnier – t/ Jimmy Harrison – tb; Carmelo Jari – cl-as/

Prince Robinson – ts-cl/ Clarence Williams – p/ Leroy Harris – bj/ Cyrus St.Clair – bb

80197-A Would Ya ? OK unissued not on LP/CD

80198-B Senegalese Stomp OK unissued not on LP/CD

EVA TAYLOR Clarence Williams' Blue Seven, New York, Nov. 16, 1926

Eva Taylor – v ommy Ladnier – tp / Jimmy Harrison – tb/ Carmelo Jari – cl-as/

Arville

Harris – ts/ Clarence Williams – p/ Leroy Harris – bj

80214-A Candy Lips (I'm Stuck On You) OK 8414-A, 40715-A

80215-A Scatter Your Smiles OK 8414-B, 40715-B

CLARENCE WILLIAMS' BLUE SEVEN, New York, Dec. 10, 1926

Tommy Ladnier – t/ Jimmy Harrison – tb/ Carmelo Jari – as-cl/ Prince Robinson – tscl/

Clarence Williams – p/ Leroy Harris – bj/ Cyrus St.Clair – bb

74443-A Would Ya? OK 8443-A

74444-B Senegalese Stomp OK 8443-B

It is possible that Jarí is one of the clarinets on the Jazz Kings sessions of 25 January 1927 which produced "Gravier Street Blues" and "Candy Lips", but both have no clarinet solos. Likewise, the 10 March 1927

Washboard Band session for Vocalion is a possible Jarí item, but without his characteristic trills. It might well be Arville Harris again.

Unknown (Carmelo Jari), Bennie Moten - cl/ Clarence Williams - p/ Buddy Christian

- bj/ Cyrus St. Clair - bb

143348-1 Gravier Street Blues Col unissued not on LP/CD

143348-2 Gravier Street Blues Col 14193-D

143349-2 Candy Lips Col 14193-D

143349-3 Candy Lips Col unissued not on LP/CD

CLARENCE WILLIAMS AND HIS WASHBOARD BAND, New York, Mar. 08, 1927

Ed Allen - c/ Arville Harris or Carmelo Jari - cl-as/ Clarence Williams - p-v;/ Floyd

Casey - wb/ Clarence Lee - v

E-21786/E-4728 Cushion Foot Stomp Br 7000-B, OrE 1012-A, Voc 1088-B

E-21787/E-4729 Cushion Foot Stomp Br 7000-B, VoE V1034

E-21788/E-4726 P.D.Q. Blues Br 7000-A, OrE 1012-A, Voc 1088-A

E-21789/E-4727 P.D.Q. Blues Br 7000-A, VoE V10034

The next fairly definite appearance by Jarí on a Williams session is documented in the file cards (cf. Storyville 70, p.160): the Dixie Washboard Band recordings for Columbia, made on 10 March 1927 with "Anywhere Sweetie Goes (I'll Be There)" and "Cushion Foot Stomp". On these Jarí plays very straight low register alto sax, and little to really excite on clarinet.

DIXIE WASHBOARD BAND, New York, Mar. 10, 1927

Ed Allen - c/ Carmelo Jari - cl-as/ Clarence Williams - p-v;/ Floyd Casey - wb/ Clarence Lee - v

143612-3 Anywhere Sweetie Goes (I'll Be There) Col 14239-D not on LP/CD

143612-4 Anywhere Sweetie Goes (I'll Be There) Col 14239-D

143613-2 Cushion Foot Stomp Col 14239-D

143613-4 Cushion Foot Stomp Col 14239-D

It was at around this time that Walter Allen listed Jarí (as Jejo) for a Fletcher Henderson session, but none of the three titles ("Wabash Blues", "The Wang Wang Blues" or "St. Louis Shuffle") has a note attributable to Jarí. He possibly accompanied Sara Martin on "Cushion Foot Stomp" and "Take Your Black Bottom Outside" which were recorded for OKeh on 9 April 1927, although the clarinet work is frequently credited to Ben Waters, who was, mainly working as a saxophone player at the time and thus unlikely.

SARA MARTIN Clarence Williams' Blue Five, New York, Apr. 09, 1927

Sara Martin - v Charlie Irvis - tb/ Carmelo Jari - cl/ Ben Whitted - as/ Clarence Williams - p/ Leroy Harris - bj/ Cyrus St. Clair - bb

80712-B Cushion Foot Stomp OK 8461, PaE R3506

80713-B Take Your Black Bottom Outside OK 8461, PaE R3506

The same two titles were recorded as instrumentals by the Washboard Five for OKeh on 13 April and here majority opinion of our listening team favours Jarí on clarinet. A session as the Blue Five on the next day finds Jarí working in tandem with Arville Harris who was to be used very frequently by Williams over the next two years or so. The titles are "Black Snake Blues" and "Old Folks Shuffle" Jarí's clarinet is clearly to be heard on "Black Snake".

CLARENCE WILLIAMS' WASHBOARD FIVE, New York, Apr. 13, 1927

Ed Allen - c/ Carmelo Jari - cl/ Clarence Williams - p, v/ Cyrus St. Clair - bb/ Floyd

Casey - wb

80688-E Cushion Foot Stomp OK 8462, PaE R-3383, R-2305; HJCA HC-125, WS 106

80689-F Take Your Black Bottom Outside OK 8462, PaE R-3381, Odeon 07626, HJCA WS 106

CLARENCE WILLIAMS' BLUE FIVE, New York, Apr. 14, 1927

Ed Allen - c/ Charlie Irvis - tb/ Carmelo Jari - as-cl/ Arville Harris - as-cl/ Clarence Williams - p/ Leroy Harris

- bj/ Cyrus St. Clair - bb/ Floyd Casey - d

80728-B Black Snake Blues OK 8465

80729-B Old Folks Shuffle OK 8465

While Jarí was one of the candidates discussed for the remarkable Doddsian clarinet solo on "Red Hot Flo from Kokomo", we are now almost certain that it is Arville Harris, another reed player deserving further research on the strength of his work for Williams.

During the period Jarí recorded with Williams, two publicity photographs were taken with a band,. The saxophone player on the left was identified by Eva Taylor as Alberto Socarras, but this is obviously not the case as can be easily concluded from the publication of genuine photos of Socarras from his own collection in Storyville 90. There is a strong possibility that Eva Taylor was confusing the two Spanish speaking reed players that Clarence Williams used for recordings and the saxophonists on the left-hand sides of the photos of the Bearcats and the Williams outfit are very likely the same man.

The South American Interlude

The Savoy Bearcats disbanded around April 1927, since the leader, Leon Abbey, had been offered the chance to tour South America. Not all of the band joined Abbey, but Jarí was among the members who did.

The Abbey band arrived in Rio de Janeiro on 25 May 1927. Its stay is the subject of two articles by Ralph Gulliver (Gulliver 1977a, 1977b) drawing heavily on interviews with Abbey and the diary and reminiscences of Demas Dean, another former Bearcat who made the trip.

Leon Abbey's band arrived back from Rio on the Southern Cross on 11 October 1927. Carmelo Jarí gives his date of birth as 16 July 1894, place of birth as Puerto Rico, and address as 116 East 116th Street, New York City. He is recorded as married. Other band members are: William H. Lynch, Leon A. Abbey, Earl Fraser, Prince Robinson, Phillip F. Blackburn, Joseph C. Garland, John N. Brown, Reidus Horton, Henry Edwards, Demas Dean.

After return to New York in October 1927, the band broke up and Abbey assembled a new band which toured England. Along with Demas Dean and "Bass" Edwards, Jarí joined Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1928 (Gulliver 1977a, 10), Dean saying that this was because he wanted to work with Florence Mills. As it turned out "(t)he only time I got to play for her was in the Abysinnia Baptist Church in New York" (for her funeral, MR) (Demas Dean in Gulliver 1977a, 10).

At least two photographs were made of the Abbey band while on tour in South America. A photo on stage at the Maipu Theatre in Buenos Aires in July 1927 was reproduced both in Storyville 73 (p. 11) and in Gene Fernet's "Swing Out".

The Storyville version is rather dark, but does have the names of the musicians hand-written in and thus we can be sure that Jarí is the musician second to the left. The IAJRC Journal article has another photo of the same band in the same location, originally published in La Nacion newspaper in June 1927 (Gulliver 1977b, 7). Here Jarí can be seen quite clearly, third from left, in almost exactly the same pose as on the photo of the Clarence Williams band shown above.

Last years and death

Jarí joined the band for Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1928 revue which in addition to Dean and Edwards included two more Caribbean reed players: Alberto Socarras and Ramon Usera. The band recorded 4 titles including two accompaniments to Adelaide Hall. Jarí solos on "Bandanna Babies". Shortly before this, we believe that Clarence Williams used Jarí again on the 23 June 1928 remake of "Sweet Emmaline" (mx W400620-C). He was to make no more known recordings. Although he was tentatively identified by Bernard Addison as the clarinet player on Jelly Roll Morton's Fussy Mabel/Ponchatrain (Oh. Mr. Jelly, compiled by William Russell, p. 520, published by JazzMedia Copenhagen), the date of the session was after Jarí had died. It also sounds nothing like the man we have identified as Jarí on other recordings. Rex Stewart mentions Jarí attending jam sessions in his "Jazz Masters of the 30s", but we feel that Stewart is taking liberty with dates to pay tribute to a valued colleague.



Clarence Williams Band with Jarí at extreme left. Previously thought to have been from the Summer of 1927, but almost certainly before May 1927

CLARENCE WILLIAMS' WASHBOARD FIVE, New York, Jun. 23, 1928

Ed Allen – c/ Carmelo Jari – cl/ Clarence Williams – p -talk/ Cyrus St. Clair – bb/ Floyd

Casey – wbd

W400620-C Sweet Emmaline OK 8572

LEW LESLIE'S BLACKBIRDS ORCHESTRA, New York, Aug. 14, 1928

Pike Davis, Demas Dean –t/ Herb Flemming – tb/ Carmelo Jari – as- cl/ Albert Socarras – as- cl-f/ Ramon Usera – ts- cl- vn/ George Rickson – p/ Benny James – bj/

Henry Bass Edwards – bb/ Jesse Baltimore – d/ Lew Leslie – arr (2,3,4)

E-28057- Bandana Babies Br 4030, A-7891

E-28058- Magnolia's Wedding Day Br 4030, A-7891

ADELAIDE HALL Lew Leslie's Blackbirds Orchestra, New York, Aug. 14, 1928

Adelaide Hall – v/ Pike Davis, Demas Dean –t/ Herb Flemming – tb/ Carmelo Jari –

as- cl/ Albert Socarras – as- cl-f/ Ramon Usera – ts- cl- vn/ George Rickson – p/ Benny

James – bj/ Henry Bass Edwards – bb/ Jesse Baltimore – d/ Lew Leslie – arr (2,3,4)

E-28059-I Must Have That Man Br 4031

E-28060-A Baby Br 4031

E-28060-B Baby Br 4031

E-28061- Dixie Br rejected not on LP/CD

He died from appendicitis... he kept putting off getting it fixed” (Demas Dean in Gulliver 1977a, 7) and is listed as deceased in the AFM local 802 death roll for January 1929 (Allen 1974, 565). Serrano has since established that Jarí died on December 18, 1928 and was buried in San Juan some time later (personal communication to Mr. Rader, November 2015).

In conclusion

We hope to have shown that even this late in the day and in absence of eye witnesses, it is still possible to sort out some discographical mysteries and to give credit to lesser-known musicians where this is due. Our own research has relied entirely on published or widely available sources. It should be possible with a search of publicly accessible documents, such as newspaper files, to fill in the holes in Jarí's biography and obtain a better impression of his movements from 1921 to 1929.

We also sincerely hope that someone will turn up a better quality photograph of the Savoy Bearcats and that Jarí will no longer be simply an exotic name in personnel listings. Above all we hope that people will listen to and appreciate his recordings.

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The Bearcats' recordings are on Frog DGF 8 – "Hot Notes – New York Volume 1" and Frog DGF 12 "Don't You Leave Me Here – New York Volume 3". Jarí's recordings with Clarence Williams are on Collectors Classics COCD 19 "The Clarence Williams Collection Volume 1, 1927-1928", the session with Lucille Hegamin is on Frog DGF 14 "Dreaming the Hours Away – Clarence Williams: The Columbia Recordings", the accompaniments to Bessie Brown on Sweet and Hot "The Complete Clarence Williams 1923-31, Volume 4, 1926" or Document.... The two instrumental recordings with Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1928 were released on Harrison LP, the two sides with Adelaide Hall, "I Must Have That Man" and "Baby", are available on Avid AMSC720 "Adelaide Hall: A Centenary Celebration".

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