

THE RECORDINGS OF ALICE LESLIE CARTER

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

CARTER, Alice Leslie

no biographical details known

Alice Leslie Carter was professionally active as early as 1907, when she made an international tour with Henderson Smith's Black Hussars. In New York during the mid-teens, she and partner Bert Titus were prominent in the "tango tea" craze that swept the Harlem cabaret scene.

(L. Abbott, D. Seroff, The Original Blues)

Daisy Martin, Alice Carter, Mattie Hite, Katie Crippen, Mary Stafford and many others sang in the celebrated night-spots in the wide-open resort of Atlantic City, particularly with Charlie Johnson's Orchestra at Rafe's Paradise. Such dance-halls provided work for the singers who made their way to the east.

(Paul Oliver, The Story of the Blues)

This personnel-discography is based on RUST, JAZZ AND RAGTIME RECORDS 1897 - 1942.

Personnel are taken from this source, but modified in the light of earlier or subsequent research or on the strength of my own listening, discussed with our listening group or other interested collectors.

- Documented, most certain and aurally absolutely obvious identifications are listed thus: **Alice Leslie Carter**

- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Alice Leslie Carter*

- Not attributable identifications – although the musician in question might be an otherwise well-known person – are listed thus: unknown

- If a possible identification for an otherwise unknown musician is suggested by the author without the possibility to prove the factual evidence, it is listed thus: (*Alice Leslie Carter*)

When feeling certain without a musician's documented presence, I have not refrained from altering Rust's statements without using italics. In any case, my statements are open to discussion and I would appreciate any contribution - pro or contra!

As always in my discographies on this website I have written recording sessions with their headings, dates, titles and names of musicians in italics, whenever I am convinced that the eponymous musician of this discography is not part of the accompanying group of this session! Documented names of musicians if known – in recording ledgers or on record labels – are listed in bold letters.

This discography still is - and will certainly be - a work in progress for a long time, if not eternally. Yet, on the way to a definite discography of all jazz recordings before 1942 - which certainly will never be possible - it is intended to fill some gaps that have not been treated before.

The following statements and the resulting list of recordings only reflect the opinion of this writer/listener and are open to discussion. More so, discussion is eagerly invited. Corrections, amendments and controversial opinions are much appreciated.

ALICE LESLIE CARTER

001 ALICE LESLIE CARTER Jimmie Johnson's Jazz Boys	New York,	c. Aug. 1921
Alice Leslie Carter – voc;		
June Clark, unknown – cnt; (<i>Jimmy Harrison?</i>) – tbn;		
unknown – clt; unknown – ten;		
James P. Johnson – pno; unknown – bbs, unknown – bells/ratchett (3)		
Dangerous Blues	Arto 9086,	Doc DOCD-5508
I Want Some Lovin' Blues	Arto 9086,	Doc DOCD-5508
The Also-Ran Blues	Arto 9095,	Doc DOCD-5508
Cry Baby Blues	Arto 9095,	Doc DOCD-5508
You'll Think Of Me Blues	Arto 9096,	Doc DOCD-5508

Miss Carter was one of a group of young singers who also performed at Rafe's Paradise Café in Atlantic City (see Keepnews/Grauer, A Pictorial History of Jazz, p. 108). The subsequent recordings, yet, are accompanied by Jimmie Johnson's Jazz Boys and recorded in New York, but should give a nice impression of what would have been delivered there accompanied by the early Charlie Johnson band.

Miss Carter owns a strong singing voice with medium vibrato and a low pitch. Her performance is dramatic, assured and convincing. The Band is named as Jimmie Johnson's Jazz Boys, and against my earlier assumption not to hear a piano (06-11-2021), I am certain now that there is one, played by the bandleader. Thus, James P. is conductor, probably arranger, and pianist.

Apart from James P. Johnson, the only musician listed by name in the discographies is June Clark. But very interesting is the note in B. Kernfeld's 'New Grove Dictionary of Jazz' re the trombonist as below!

The instrumentation given by Rust, Hilbert and Trolle is: cnt, tbn, clt, vln, pno, bbs, "possibly other instruments on some sides." So, two of the above-mentioned authors seem to have copied the third - presumably Rust.

I hear: two cornets (or trumpets), one trombone, one clarinet, one tenor sax, a piano playing a straight melodic/chordal rhythm, and a tuba. On 'Cry Baby Blues' there seems to be an alto sax or a second clarinet, maybe additionally, but it might also be a tenor sax doubling alto or clarinet. But there certainly is no violin!

Although all these tunes are titled "Blues", only the fifth 'You'll Think Of Me Blues' has 12-bar blues chorus/changes.

The last item is one of the records found in June Clark's uncle's house (see George Hoefler papers)! This might be seen as June Clark's gift to his uncle when arriving in New York and – perhaps – asking for intermediate lodging. But it also looks like a proof of Clark's presence at this recording session. There is a fine cornet/trumpet duet in the first title, in which one of the performers must then be June Clark.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: featuring June Clark (tp); James P. Johnson (p); others*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: James P. Johnson's Jazz Boys: June Clark (tpt) included*

- R. Hilbert/S.E. Brown, *James P. Johnson, A Case of Mistaken Identity: Carter, vocals; June Clark, cornet; unknown trombone, clarinet and violin; Johnson, piano; unknown, brass bass; possibly other instruments on some sides.*

- BGR*2,*3,*4: Alice Leslie Carter, vcl; June Clark, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bbs, poss others on some sides.

- Rust*3,*4.*6: Alice Leslie Carter -v; June Clark -t; unknown -tb; unknown -cl; unknown -vn; James P. Johnson -p; unknown -bb; possibly others on some sides

- *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, p. 217: Clark, June: "... where the two (June Clark and James P. Johnson – KBR) met Jimmy Harrison and invited him to join them; the group accompanied the blues singer Alice Leslie Carter on recordings made in New York in 1921."*

Tunes Structures:

Dangerous Blues Key of F Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 32 bars AA' voc + ens)(Chorus A2 32 bars (ens 28 bars, voc + ens 4 bars))(Coda 2 bars cnt – ens)

I Want Some Lovin' Blues Key of C Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 7 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 18 bars AA' voc + ens)(Chorus A2 18 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A3 18 bars ens)(Coda 2 bars cnt – ens)

The Also-Ran Blues Key of F Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars bells – ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 18 bars voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 18 bars voc + ens)

Cry Baby Blues Key of Ab / Db Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars reeds – ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 20 bars AA' voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars reeds – ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 4 bars ens)

You'll Think Of Me Blues Key of F / Bb Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 12 bars voc + ens)(Verse 8 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A3 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A4 12 bars ens)(Chorus A5 12 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars clt – ens) (This is the only 12-bar blues in the series!)

002 ALICE LESLIE CARTER	Jimmie Johnson's Jazz Boys	New York,	c. Sep. 1921
Alice Leslie Carter – voc;			
June Clark – cnt; (Jimmy Harrison?) – tbn;			
unknown – clt; unknown – alt;			
James P. Johnson – pno (no pno audible); unknown - bbs			
	Aunt Hagar's Children Blues	Arto 9103,	Doc DOCD-5508
	Down Home Blues	Arto 9103,	Doc DOCD-5508

Mainly the same of the above mentioned applies to this session. But on 'Aunt Hagar's Children Blues' and 'Down Home Blues' I hear: cornet, trombone, clarinet, alto sax, and tuba. Certainly, no violin as in Rust.

This 'Aunt Hagar's Children Blues', W.C. Handy's later very famous composition, gets its first recording treatment here on these sides. It is sung by Miss Carter with her deep and resolute voice in a convincing manner.

Although James P. Johnson's piano can only be guessed, but it should be assumed that he played the chords and the melodies from his own scores.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: featuring June Clark (tp); James P. Johnson (p); others*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: James P. Johnson's Jazz Boys: June Clark (tpt) included*

- R. Hilbert/S.E. Brown, *James P. Johnson, A Case of Mistaken Identity: Carter, vocals; June Clark, cornet; unknown trombone, clarinet and violin; Johnson, piano; unknown, brass bass; possibly other instruments on some sides.*

- BGR*2,*3,*4: Alice Leslie Carter, vcl; June Clark, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bbs, poss others on some sides.

- Rust*3,*4.*6: Alice Leslie Carter -v; June Clark -t; unknown -tb; unknown -cl; unknown -vn; James P. Johnson -p; unknown -bb; possibly others on some sides

- *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, p. 217: Clark, June: "... where the two (June Clark and James P. Johnson – KBR) met Jimmy Harrison and invited him to join them; the group accompanied the blues singer Alice Leslie Carter on recordings made in New York in 1921."*

Tunes Structures:

Aunt Hagar's Children Blues Key of C Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 2 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 12 bars voc + ens)(Verse B1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A3 12 bars voc + ens)(Vamp 2 bars voc + ens)(Verse B2 16 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars clt – ens)

Down Home Blues Key of Ab Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 16 bars voc + ens)(Vamp 8 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 12 bars voc + ens)(Verse A2 16 bars ens)(Vamp 8 bars ens)(Chorus B2 12 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars clt – ens)

003 ALICE LESLIE CARTER Jimmie Johnson's Jazz Boys	New York,	c. Nov. 1921
Alice Leslie Carter – voc;		
June Clark – cnt; (<i>Jimmy Harrison?</i>) – tbn;		
unknown – clt; unknown – ten (3,4);		
James P. Johnson – pno; unknown – bbs;		
unknown male – voc (4)		
Heart Broken Blues	Arto 9118,	Doc DOCD-5508
I Want My Daddy Now	Arto 9118,	Doc DOCD-5508
Decatur Street Blues	Arto 9112,	Doc DOCD-5508
Got To Have My Daddy Blues	Arto 9112,	Doc DOCD-5508

On 'Heart Broken Blues' and 'I Want My Daddy Now' I hear: cornet, trombone, clarinet, piano, tuba, but no violin and no tenor sax. So, there might have been two sessions here, but lacking matrix-numbers, this only is my assumption. But on 'Decatur Street Blues' and 'Got To Have My Daddy Blues' I hear: one cornet, one trombone, one clarinet, one tenor sax, a piano and a tuba. Certainly, no violin, again. The pianist – James P. Johnson – plays together with the wind players along the scores. There are no improvised portions in these performances. Finally, I'd like to state that Miss Carter's only recordings offer a nice inside in what could be enjoyed in theatre establishments like Rafe's Paradise Café on Illinois Avenue in Atlantic City.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: featuring June Clark (tp); James P. Johnson (p); others*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: James P. Johnson's Jazz Boys: June Clark (tpt) included*

- BGR*2: Alice Leslie Carter, vcl; June Clark, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bbs, poss others on some sides.

- R. Hilbert/S.E. Brown, *James P. Johnson, A Case of Mistaken Identity: Carter, vocals; June Clark, cornet; unknown trombone, clarinet and violin; Johnson, piano; unknown, brass bass; possibly other instruments on some sides.*

- BGR*3,*4: Alice Leslie Carter, vcl; June Clark, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bbs; unknown, ts, definitely present.

- Rust*3,*4,*6: Alice Leslie Carter -v; June Clark -t; unknown -tb; unknown -cl; unknown -vn; James P. Johnson -p; unknown -bb; possibly others on some sides

- *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, p. 217: Clark, June: "... where the two (June Clark and James P. Johnson – KBR) met Jimmy Harrison and invited him to join them; the group accompanied the blues singer Alice Leslie Carter on recordings made in New York in 1921."*

Tunes Structures:

Decatur Street Blues Key of C Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 20 bars voc + ens)(Verse A2 16 bars (stop-time) voc + ens)(Chorus B2 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars cnt – ens)

Got To Have My Daddy Blues Key of Bb/Eb Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 12 bars voc + ens)(Verse B1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus C1 16 bars AABA voc + ens)(Chorus C2 16 bars AABA voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars clt – ens)

Heart Broken Blues Key of C Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 20 bars AB voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A2 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B2 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 4 bars ens)

I Want My Daddy Now Key of Ab Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 32 bars AA' voc + ens)(Chorus B2 32 bars AA' voc + ens)

All these three recording sessions of Alice Leslie Carter render a good impression of what an early vaudeville blues singer was expected to deliver on stage in the early 1920s. There is much less blues material in their repertoire than might be expected today.

K.-B. Rau
06-11-2021
19-03-2025