

## Preservation Hall Jazz Band of New Orleans rocked San Francisco Symphony Hall with Creole Christmas

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New Orleans' traditional jazz standard-bearers Preservation Hall Jazz Band raised the Davies Symphony Hall roof with a rollicking Creole Christmas concert Saturday night. They were slap your mama good, for true. Preservation Hall Jazz Band lived up the legend as the symphony promised. The band delighted the full house from the opening with the Charlie Brown song, *Christmastime is Here* to the rollicking finale, a second line parade through the aisles. They made me feel as if I was back in the French Quarter, in my purple poofery and blessing the river. Back then I would ride my bicycle through the Quarter and run into Ernie K-Doe, Frankie Ford, Jon Cleary. Michael Doucet of Beausoleil would sing in the cathedral on Jackson Square at Christmas with the angelic-voiced Swede Theresa Andersson.

One forever young lady with candy cane antlers even brought her parasol and led the line. The band kept in step as revelers assembled all around the band on stage, the parade clapping and dancing merrily. The entire symphony hall right up to the balcony remained on it's feet, elevated by joy and probably memories of the French Quarter. The set list:

*Bourbon Street*

*Short Dressed*

*Sweet Substitute*

*Old Man Mose*

*Sister Kate*

*Bells Will Be Ringing*

*His Eye is on the Sparrow*

*Mardi Gras*

Intermission

*Tailgate Ramble*

*St. James Infirmary*

*Louisiana IA*

*Basin Street (banjo)*

*Tootie Ma (banjo)*

*Piano Holiday Medley*

*Closer Walk with Thee*

*(Band March on Stage)*

*Les Onions/El Manicero/Saints Encore/Merry Christmas*

Rickie the piano player also plays with the Blind Boys of Alabama and performs gospel. He strapped on a tail—literally just the tail—to turn his suitcoat into a tuxedo for his elegant piano Christmas medley. Ben with his wild afro and tuba introduced Walter the bass player as his first grade music teacher. Ben said, *I been knowing him all my life*. He also called San Francisco the second home of PHJB as the band has been coming to SF since Ben was born. He mentioned Stern Grove.

### ***Bells will be ringing***

Clint sang with soul in his intoxicating style and his pencil thin mustache and slicked back black hair. The sax player when empty handed except for the microphone would swing his right arm as if rolling dice while singing, oozing sincerity. A divine young man who would wave to the audience endearingly and discreetly while keeping his hand at his side. He had them in the palm of his hand, the audience would call out to him in response as he sang from the depths of his young heart. He sang a few things, starting with the upbeat *Short Dressed* and escalating the emotion to dynamic as he got into *Bells Will Be Ringing*. Indeed.

Joe performed a drum solo.

Ben introduced clarinet player Charlie as fourth generation PHJB. He sang

*Sweet Substitute*. I first heard this at the Sacramento Jazz Jubilee performed by a young white high school girl with surprising sophistication. Meanwhile Timothy B. Schmit of the Eagles just wrote the happy tune *White Boy from Sacramento*. He even has the Blind Boys of Alabama join him on the album, [Expando](#).

I was still laughing with joy as I headed for BART with my old buddy Kent Coddington, who took me to the [Sacramento Jazz Jubilee](#) for the first time.

The best time of my life happened in the French Quarter when I lived there during the millennium, music on every street corner. Has it been ten years? I owned nothing but a bicycle. I would ride to the PBS studio to work mid-town from my attic room in a townhouse on Esplanade at Rampart, on the edge of the quarter. Here are some pictures from those days, the joy of which I recaptured last night with Preservation Hall Jazz Band. I never did see them in the Quarter, they perform in a breadbox with a long line.