
MATURE LIVING

in Indiana

Autumn, 1988

“The Music Makers”

- **Hoagy Carmichael**
- **Claude Thornhill**
- **Marilyn Maxwell**
- **Cole Porter**
- **Wes Montgomery**
- **Dick Powell**
- **All-Girl Bands**



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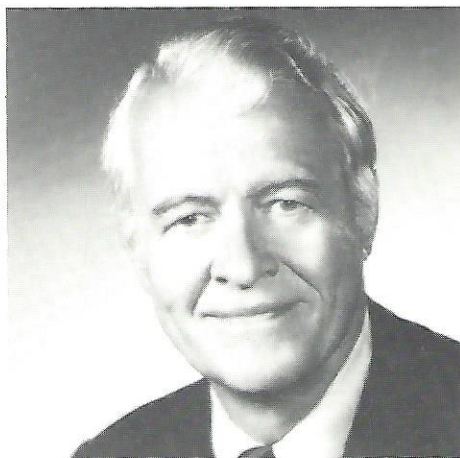
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Please address any inquiries or
correspondence to
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COVER — A painting of Hoagy
Carmichael courtesy of Indiana
University.



Robert D. Orr, Governor
State of Indiana



Jean Merritt, Commissioner
Indiana Department of
Human Services

Dear Older Hoosiers:

What's wrong with most histories of American music? They ignore midwestern contributions. More importantly for Hoosiers, they ignore Indiana.

Yet, Indiana gave the world premier popular musicians. Who can forget Hoagy Carmichael and Cole Porter? What melodies! What lyrics!

"Stardust," "Lazy River," "Can't Get Indiana Off My Mind," "I've Got You under My Skin," "Night and Day," "I Love Paris."

There's Dick Powell whose biggest boost to stardom came following his Indiana years. Marilyn Maxwell got her professional start here.

The unforgettable Wes Montgomery made history with his unparalleled mastery of the guitar. Wes loved Indiana.

Before an all-girl band was even a gleam in the eye of Phil Spitalny, similar Indiana groups were paving the way.

There were hundreds of others. Some of their exceptional work is recounted here.

Also recounted are the contributions of those who competed in the Older Hoosier of the Year competition, all of whom — in the up-beat spirit of musicians — have given of themselves to make our great state a better place to live.

Sincerely,

Jean Merritt

Jean Merritt
Commissioner

“Musical Will Rogers” Is One Description Of Hoagy Carmichael

Bell Memorial Public Library

Hoagland Howard Carmichael has been called a “musical Will Rogers.” Although much of the music and many of the lyrics composed by this native of Bloomington, Indiana, fit this description, some do not.

Which of the following Carmichael songs do you consider Will Rogerish? There are no right or wrong answers.

- *March of the Hoodlums*
- *Washboard Blues*
- *Georgia on My Mind*
- *Lazy River*
- *Ole Buttermilk Sky*
- *Hong Kong Blues*
- *Stardust*
- *Skylark*
- *The Nearness of You*
- *Bread and Gravy*
- *Lamplighter's Serenade*
- *Can't Get Indiana off My Mind*

You can easily expand this test of trivia by obtaining a new book and record set co-published by the Smithsonian Collection of Recordings and the Indiana Historical Society. Called *The Classic Hoagy Carmichael*, it contains 57 recordings on either four long-playing records or three cassettes, plus a 64-page book written by the album's producer, John Edward Hasse, curator of American Music at the National Museum of American History of the Smithsonian Institution.

Maternal Influence

Hasse reveals that Carmichael, who was born November 22, 1899, was influenced and taught piano by his mother, Lida. She played piano at Indiana University dances and was an accompanist for silent movies.

Baby sitters weren't much in evidence in those days. So, Mrs. Carmichael toted her son along to the dances. With gusto, she pounded



Hoagland Howard Carmichael out an amazing repertoire of rag time music.

Her rendition of *Maple Leaf Rag* became a lullaby for the infant, Hoagy, who fell asleep at fraternity dances. His bed was a board placed between two chairs.

In his autobiography, *Sometimes I Wonder, The Story of Hoagy Car-*

michael, the composer recalls, “Her life was lived in ragged time, on the ragged edge, but she was always there. Eighty pounds of solid rock which nothing could dismay.”

Wedding March

Hoagy's mother was also a featured performer at his wedding reception in March, 1936, where she reprised *Maple Leaf Rag*. An Associated Press story of the wedding, datelined New York, read:

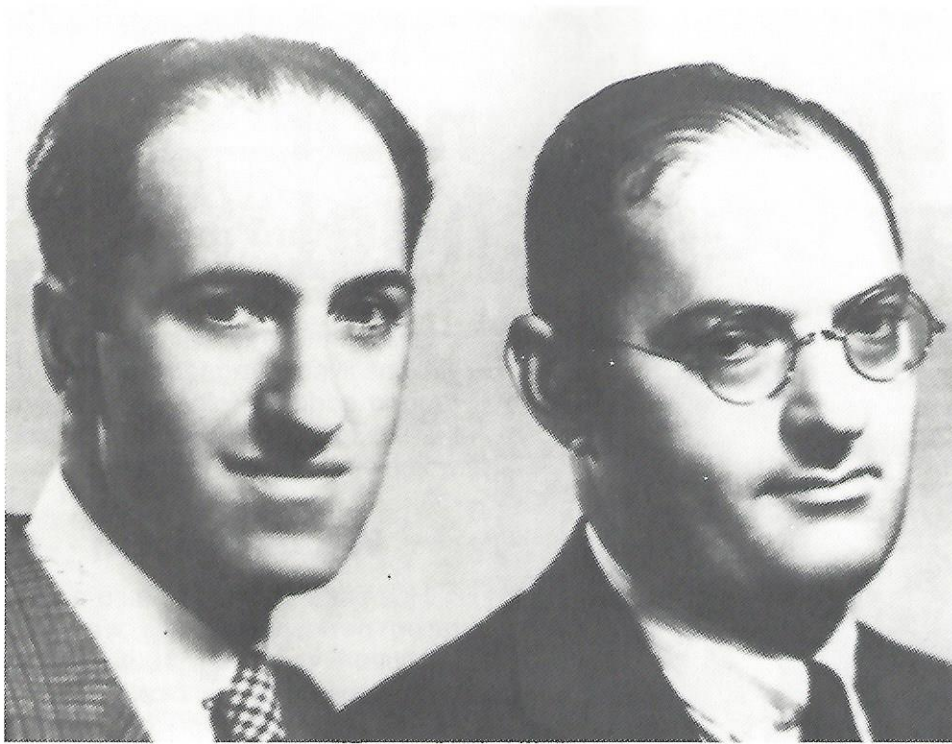
“Hoagland Carmichael, the man who composed *Stardust*, married the girl on the magazine cover today.

“It was a wedding of art and music. The bride, Miss Ruth Minardi, has posed often for McClelland Barclay, the painter, and he gave her in marriage to the song writer. Howard (Wad) Allen was best man.

“George Gershwin played piano — a recital of his own latest tunes — at the reception afterward, and Conrad Thibault,



Hoagy (playing piano) and Friends



George and Ira Gershwin

the baritone, sang. A 'jazz' band furnished stomp music in between

"At the reception, Carmichael's mother, who taught him piano as a boy, played *Maple Leaf Rag* in the family tradition. Gershwin followed her to the piano, asking first what she wanted to hear and finally playing the entire suite of his *Porgy and Bess* folk opera.

"'Gershwin was playing just for mother,' Carmichael said with delight later.

"Explaining his choice of 'Bunny' Berigan and his Famous Door Five for the occasion, he added: 'That's just the best band in the country.'

"Berigan borrowed 'Bud' Freeman from Ray Noble's Orchestra to play saxophone and Carmichael directed several numbers.

"The reception room resembled a meeting of Indiana University alumni

"There were New Yorkers, too. Among them Condé Nast, publisher, and Sherman Fairchild, aviation executive."

Rag Time Mainstream

From childhood on, Hoagy was part of the rag time mainstream. And Indiana was a good place for a budding musician.

When Hoagy was 17 years old, his family moved to Indianapolis. Among a number of people who were to shape his musical career, was a 24 year old black pianist named Reginald DuValle.

Hoagy credited DuValle with inspiring some of his later compositions. DuValle, who originally played banjo, had switched to piano by the time he and Hoagy became friends.

Jazz buffs remember that DuValle led a highly successful band for many years, often providing music at Brenecke's Academy on Meridian Street in Indianapolis. The academies featured dance instruction and were the predecessors of ballrooms.

Before

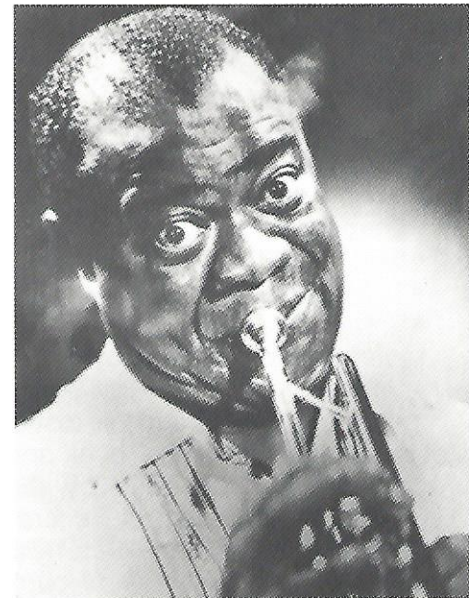
In one of his two autobiographies, Hoagy harked back to early childhood. He related his first experience with a piano:

"With one finger I began picking out the notes. Suddenly, I was amazed, shocked at myself. I was picking out the notes correctly

"I had been exposed to the piano all my life but no one ever told me to try it, to touch its keys. It was the first time I knew I had some special talent. You can say the moment was propitious. Yes.



Leon "Bix" Beiderbecke



Louie Armstrong



Tommy Dorsey

I had discovered a whole new world, had found a new love . . .

"My mother coming home at dusk discovered me sitting on the stool picking out tunes and chords.

" 'Oh, Hoagland, this is so wonderful.'

" 'I'm playing.'

" 'Of course you are.'

" 'Really playing.'

" 'Yes, Hoagland.'

"She put her arms around me from behind and held me ever so tightly and I felt her tears falling on my shaggy neck. I didn't turn around. I went on playing. I knew that my mother had realized a secret goal and that neither of us would be lonely again, as long as we kept that piano."

After

The key phrase in Hoagy's true confessions was, "It was the first time I knew I had some special talent," and "I went on playing."

Did he ever! During his graduate and undergraduate years at Indiana University, he led a band, more often than not called "Carmichael's Collegians."

They played campus gigs and also made the rounds of dance halls which were sprouting like mushrooms in spring.

Among stellar musicians he encountered during this period were Leon "Bix" Beiderbecke and Louis Armstrong. Both played trumpet and Bix is repeatedly referred to as the first great white instrumentalist to master the intricacies of jazz.

John Edward Hasse, in his *The Classic Hoagy Carmichael*, reports, "In the spring of 1924, Carmichael engaged Bix Beiderbecke's rising jazz band, The Wolverine Orchestra, for 10 engagements at Indiana University, and the two formed a fast friendship. The Wolverines recorded Carmichael's earliest surviving composition, *Riverboat Shuffle*.

"Beiderbecke served as the strongest musical influence on Carmichael during the 1920's. Carmichael also deeply admired Louis Armstrong, whom he first heard perform in Chicago about 1923."

Record

In those days, recordings were not the things of beauty people play today on sophisticated equipment. One midwestern studio, Gennett Records, was located above a furniture store in Richmond, Indiana.

Burlap was mounted on the walls to absorb sound. Musicians had to move around as if they were engaged in a "Chinese fire drill" to reach microphones so somewhat acceptable sound reproduction could be achieved.

Hoagy's group first recorded at Gennett in 1925, the same year Hoagy earned his bachelor's degree at I.U. One year later, he not only earned his law degree, he also earned the beginning of a national music reputation.

Mills Music, a leading New York publisher, produced his compositions and famed band leaders began to perform them.

Stardust

Among these songs was *Stardust*. Even Hoagy told different versions of its origin. One of the most interesting involves Hoagy reminiscing:

"The first eight bars of *Stardust* were whistled by me as I walked across the campus of Indiana University. (One guess was the year 1924). I was on my way to bed, but I was so intrigued with the melody, and I had the sense to know I might forget it.

"So I went back to the college

hangout I had just left and pounded on the door until Pete Costas, the proprietor, let me in so I could play the strain on the piano and see the chord structure and enable me to remember it. That was a wise move."

Indeed it was. Early instrumental recordings of the song were performed at a fast tempo. Later, especially after Mitchell Parish added the beguiling lyrics, it became a slow moving ballad.

Stardust was first recorded October 31, 1927, by Hoagy's college band. Since then, it has become probably the most frequently recorded song in history.

Estimates place the number of different recorded versions at 1,300. It has been translated into 40 languages.

Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra and Trumpeteer Wynton Marsalis have recorded *Stardust*. Far and away the most musically compelling of all *Stardust* versions was Artie Shaw's masterpiece, about which John Edward Hasse wrote:

"This is a performance whose luminescence does not dim even after repeated listening. One can imagine young people standing at jukeboxes all over America, selecting *Stardust* over and over."

They not only listened. They bought more than 2 million copies of the recording in five years.

Cafes, bars, night clubs and even a Las Vegas gambling casino are named *Stardust*.



Ella Fitzgerald



Nat King Cole