LIFE IN THE PITS: A TRUMPETER'S LIFE IN NEW YORK'S MUSICAL THEATER

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the School of Music and Dance
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

June 2018

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Title: Life in the Pits: A Trumpeter's Life in New York's Musical Theater

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Degree awarded June 2018

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Pit musicians have fallen through the cracks of musical theater scholarship. In all my research, I have yet to come across any sources that thoroughly examine musical theater from the perspective of the musicians who perform in its orchestras day in and day out. Thus, this thesis documents Richard (Dick) R. Smith's life as a professional musician living and working—in vaudeville and on Broadway—in midcentury New York City. Smith might be relatively unknown, but he played a significant role in a variety of musical contexts. By understanding his life, we gain valuable insight into histories that have only focused on the experiences and achievements of actors, bandleaders, composers, orchestrators, and conductors, among others. Examining Smith's experiences also help us understand something about the hundreds, if not thousands, of similarly anonymous pit musicians whose talents and hard work made New York City's vibrant musical life possible.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express sincere appreciation to Professors Marian Smith, Loren Kajikawa, and Steve Owen for their assistance in the preparation of this manuscript. Special thanks are due to Richard R. Smith, who agreed to be the subject of this thesis. I also thank Karol and Marla Forrest for their help in arranging the interviews with Smith, and introducing him to me. And lastly, many thanks to Penny Nason, who helped transcribe part of the interviews, and proofed the final draft.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

To quote an old saying around the orchestra pit, "as the first trumpet goes, so goes the show."[1]

In the overture to *Gypsy*, composer Jule Styne instructed the second trumpet player to blow the roof off the house with "blaring strip-joint bump'n'grind E-flat shrieks."[2] On opening night, Styne—ecstatic at the audience's reception of his overture—cried, "They're applauding my music!"[3] Stephen Sondheim crossly replied, "They're applauding the trumpet player."[4] That trumpeter was Dick Perry.[5] *Playbill* contains no record of Perry ever playing in *Gypsy*, and the album cover for the original cast recording of the show does not include his name either. During the 2008 *Gypsy* revival with Patti Lupone, trumpeter Tony Kadleck stood up every night to play the screaming jazz solo. Kadleck explains in an NPR interview: "I mean we—we've been anonymous so long and, you know, to some degree we're still anonymous, but to stand up and have the spotlight, it's kinda cool."[6]

Pit musicians, such as Perry and Kadleck, have fallen through the cracks of musical theater scholarship. In all my research, I have yet to come across any sources that

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[1] Steven Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music: A Book of Orchestrators and Orchestrations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 232.
[2] Mark Steyn, *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight: Musicals Then And Now*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 14.
[3] Amanda Vaill, *Somewhere: The Life of Jerome Robbins* (New York: Broadway Books, 2006), 312.
[4] Ibid.
[5] As Steven Suskin writes, "Perry quickly became Broadway's most sought-after trumpeter." Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway,* 232.
[6] Jeff London, "Broadway's Best Musical Revival: The Overture?" accessed November 14, 2017, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=91480130.

thoroughly examine musical theater from the perspective of the musicians who perform in its orchestras day in and day out. Recent scholarship[7] focuses on specific composers,[8] cultural contexts,[9] and how themes in American musicals relate to national identity.[10] Interviews with pit musicians, orchestrators, and conductors are included in Steven Suskin's *The Sound of Broadway: A Book of Orchestrators and Orchestrations*; however, as the title suggests, Suskin concentrates on orchestrators, not pit musicians.[11] Since musical theater scholarship has examined what is performed on the stage, not under it, this thesis explores the life and professional experiences of an anonymous pit musician.

Methodology: Life History

Specifically, I interviewed retired trumpeter Dick Smith, who played vaudeville at Loew's State Theater in the 1940s and 50s, and performed on Broadway under the direction of Jay Blackton in the late 50s. Smith might be relatively unknown, but he played a significant role in a variety of musical contexts. By understanding his life, we gain valuable insight into histories that have only focused on the experiences and achievements of actors, bandleaders, composers, orchestrators, and conductors, among others. Examining Smith's experiences also help us understand something about the

[7] For an overview of musical theater history see Geoffrey Holden Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). For a collection of essays on the American musical, see Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Ellen Wolf, *The Oxford handbook of the American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[8] See the Yale Broadway Masters series for books on Irving Berlin, Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Frank Loesser, Cole Porter, and Sigmund Romberg.
[9] See Andrea Most, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
[10] See Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[11] In the dedication, Suskin writes, "and for the heretofore anonymous orchestrators whose names will nevermore be forgotten by anyone who reads these pages." See Steven Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music: A Book of Orchestrators and Orchestrations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

hundreds, if not thousands, of similarly anonymous pit musicians whose talents and hard work made New York City's vibrant musical life possible.

Life histories "can give us insight into the lives of the famous or can provide a view of a less-celebrated life that could contextualize history."[12] The two most common reasons for writing life histories "are to portray events and experiences of an extraordinary person, and to emphasize a person whose life illustrates the experiences and history of others in the region."[13] Thus, this thesis documents Dick Smith's life as a professional musician living and working—in vaudeville and on Broadway—in midcentury New York City. At the same time, life histories can also provide alternative views that deviate from common narratives. For example, an accepted narrative that appears in jazz history textbooks is that in the mid-1940s, swing-era dance bands gave way to small combos that performed bebop.[14] This narrative, however, does not explain where all the musicians went after the dance bands folded. After all, not all musicians were interested in playing bebop. As we see in Smith's story, many of these displaced musicians turned to Broadway musicals for work. Therefore, Smith's life history is significant, and should be archived because it can be used to revise historical narratives, such as those that pertain to jazz and musical theater.

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[12] Mary A. Larson, "Research Design and Strategies," in *Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Thomas Lee Charlton, Lois E. Myers, Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 108.
[13] William Schneider, *So they Understand: Cultural Issues in Oral History* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2002), 118.
[14] Scott DeVeaux and Gary Giddins, *Jazz: Essential Listening* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 207.

The Interview Process

I interviewed Dick Smith at his home in Chico, CA on 6 September 2017, and 20 December 2017.[15] My uncle, Karol Forrest, previously conducted, and recorded an interview with Smith—using questions I prepared—on 28 February 2015, since I was not able to travel to Smith's residence at the time.[16] I conducted the other two interviews myself. As Smith told his personal history, I asked questions as they became relevant, and when I could get a word in; Smith had no problem telling his story in great detail, even at age ninety. After reading through my transcripts of the interviews, I noticed a handful of themes that I explore throughout the chapters of this thesis, including audition scenarios, the competitive nature of finding and keeping jobs, what rehearsals were like in musical theater, how Smith dealt with playing the exact same music night after night, the importance of networking, subbing for fellow musicians, sight reading, and Smith's preference for playing vaudeville over Broadway.

[15] A copy of the release statement Smith signed is attached.

[16] The 2015 interview conducted by Forrest was originally used in a paper I wrote for Marian Smith's American Musical Theater Seminar at the University of Oregon. I must thank Karol and Marla Forrest—my aunt and uncle, respectively—for their help in setting up my interviews with Smith. Mr. Forrest is a retired High School Music teacher. Mrs. Forrest is a retired school teacher who has also taught flute privately for the past thirty-plus years. The Forrests introduced me to Smith, and happen to be Smith's neighbor in Chico, CA.

CHAPTER II

SMITH'S MUSICAL ORIGINS

Growing up in the Bronx

Richard (Dick) R. Smith was born on born July 31, 1927 in the Bronx, New York. By 1930 the Bronx was home to 1,265,000 people. Seventy percent of the population were either foreign-born or children of foreign-born (97,000 Irish; 106,574 Germans; 464,608 Polish, Austrian, and Russian Jews; and 165,004 Italians).[17] According to the 1930 Bronx census, forty percent of the 412,572 working men were listed in the category of manufacturing and mechanical industries.[18] This included carpenters, brick masons, house painters, tailors, and garment makers. Another twenty-five percent worked as store clerks, deliverymen, porters, small business owners, and salesmen. There were also twenty thousand truck drivers, four thousand policemen, a thousand garbage men, and fifteen hundred policemen.[19] In other words, Smith was raised in a community of working-class immigrants or first generation Americans, many of whom were hit hard by the Great Depression. Smith's own perception of money was shaped by the Depression, which explains why he never turned down a job.

Smith remembers not knowing what to say one day in grammar school when asked about his own family background. Smith's father told him he was a "Black Methodist…whatever that was."[20] According to Smith, his father was quite a character,

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[17] Jill Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising: The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of an American City* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 74.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] For the entirety of this paper, all quotations that are not set up or cited should be understood as Smith's own words taken from the interviews I conducted. I should also note that Smith did the best he could recalling dates. Thus, if a date is not mentioned it is because Smith could not remember it and I could not

and such descriptions of their heritage was his way of "not really saying anything." However, Smith believes he is a "Yankee" because all of his immediate family was born and raised in the United States. Some of his ancestors even fought in the Civil War. Smith's mother's side was German; thus, he claims he is "part German, and part Yankee…so, American."

Smith's father was a skilled welder, and since there was a shortage of welders during World War II, he often taught men the trade. During the war "everybody, taxi cab drivers, was trying to learn how to weld to get jobs working for the government." Welding students came to the Smith residence nightly. Once the war was over, many welders were out of work, and tried to get their cab driver jobs back, but Smith's father was such an accomplished welder he was able to continue his profession. Smith once had his father weld a broken cigarette lighter for Frank Venezia, who played trumpet in the New York Philharmonic under Toscanini.

Early Musical Experiences: Drum and Bugle Corps

Smith and his older brother were in the Samuel Young American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps as young boys (Figure 1). A page from the 1935 Ludwig and Ludwig catalog illustrates the growing popularity of junior drum and bugle corps. The title of the article might have been written by Professor Harold Hill himself: "The Junior Drum Corps Movement is Sweeping the Country!"[21]

> Echoing the success and phenomenal growth of adult corps, Junior Drums Corps are daily increasing in number and popularity. Public and Parochial School Drum

find evidence of the event from another source. Despite this, I have tried my best to order the events chronologically.

[21] A reprint of the 1935 Ludwig & Ludwig catalog page appears in Steve Vickers, *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps* (Madison, WI: Sights and Sounds Inc., 2002), 3.

> Corps, Boy Scout, Sea Scout, Camp Fire Girls, Cub and Junior Chamber of Commerce Corps, Sons of the American Legion Corps, and other juvenile organizations sponsored by Veterans of Foreign Wars and other fraternal or civic bodies—everywhere this great movement is providing worthwhile training and wholesome activity to the boys and girls of today. And these corps are not only proving worthy representatives of the schools or other sponsoring organizations, but are also building prestige and good will for the community as a whole.[22]

This passage reveals how Depression Era drum and bugle corps were thought of as "worthwhile" and "wholesome" organizations for young individuals, and that they benefitted local communities. "Among brass band participants," writes one scholar, "social benefits and musical benefits of participation were important, and that the organization existed for the musical enjoyment of its members while providing musical benefit to the community."[23] Drum and bugle corps were not only fun, but they helped young musicians like Smith develop social skills, and learn the importance of community service. Helping others in your community was especially important during the Depression years.

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Stephen F. Zdzinksi, "Contributions of Drum Corps Participation to the Quality of Life of Drum Corps Alumni," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education,* no. 159 (Winter, 2004): 47. This statement is based on the work done by N.D. Hosler, "The brass band movement in North America: a survey of brass bands in the United States and Canada" (Doctoral Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1992), 5.

Figure 1: Samuel Young American Legion Post 620 with Smith in center. Photo courtesy of Dick Smith.

After having been told that he was too small to play the drums, Smith was given a fife, which he hated. Smith's brother played the bugle, but rarely practiced (Figure 2). "But I had a bugle in the house. So every day, all day long, I was blowing his [Smith's brother's] bugle until I learned to play." One day, when Smith was supposed to play the fife, he blew calls on his brother's bugle instead. The man that ran the drum and bugle corps heard Smith and realized that he needed to give the boy a horn of his own. Despite never having taken a lesson, Smith soon became the top bugler in the group.

Figure 2: Smith (left) and his older brother. Photo courtesy of Dick Smith.

Dick was the first professional musician in the Smith family. His mother and many of their German relatives played piano, but not particularly well. His grandfather was a professional barber who played various instruments on Thursday evenings when his friends came to the house. Despite never having played an instrument, Smith's father became the director of the drum and bugle corps after Smith left the ensemble. "He made this little drum and bugle corps become a big one," and took the boys to parades. "They all loved it. He bought them hamburgers and took them to McDonald's.[24] My mother was crazy, like she said, she tried to get money from him to take care of the house and

[24] McDonald's restaurants did not yet exist. This fact must have slipped Smith's mind when he spoke about how his father used to take the young boys out to eat.

business, and she found out that he's buying twenty, thirty kids, hot dogs, and taking them all over the place."

When Smith was between the ages of eight and ten he began playing taps on Memorial Days for five dollars. One Memorial Day Smith played for a very large crowd in the Bronx. After the performance, when Smith's mother came to give him a ride home, a man approached her about her son's playing. He suggested that Smith move from the bugle to a trumpet. Smith's mother said something to the effect of "I am not buying any trumpet. Especially living in the Bronx in an apartment house. Who wants to hear a trumpet?" The man then insisted that she take his trumpet and give it to Smith. It could then be returned once he acquired his own horn. That man claimed he was a trumpeter in John Philip Sousa's United States Marine Band. Smith said, "So from that guy I became a trumpet player…I never met him. I was only a little kid." Smith played that very trumpet, which was a "beautiful French Selmer Trumpet" with a quick change to A, for many years.[25]

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[25] Maurice Peress, a contemporary of Smith's, had a similar experience, and wrote about it in his autobiography. See Maurice Peress, *Maverick Maestro* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 13-14.

> At some point I found a second old bugle that was loose at the seams, and with the help of some Vaseline I rigged up a kind of slide bugle between the two. I could now get more than the four or five famous notes, and with the slide I started figuring out various tunes. One day I was working up "*Orchi chornia*" ("Dark Eyes"), one of my mother's favorites, when the doorbell to our fifth-floor apartment rang. I opened the door to be greeted by a tall, erect eighty-plus-year-old man with an impressive white walrus mustache. "I'm Nell Speck," he spoke, with a slight whistle. "I live on the sixth floor. I played cornet for John Philip Sousa. What kind of cornet are you playing?" I showed him my contraption and he said, "You need a real cornet." The very next day he brought one that he borrowed from a nearby fellow cornetist. I opened the case and my heart leaped. Valves! And all kinds of pipes winding about, and the smell of stale brass and moldy velvet. Nell Speck wrote out the fingering for the C scale and I was flying. Over the next few weeks he gave me lessons and told me stories of his playing days: how he supported his large family with two or three jobs a day—marches and picnics and party boats up the Hudson. And how he had fallen off his horse when he was playing for the inauguration of President McKinley! This last story works out date-wise; in March of 1897 Nell Speck would have been in his twenties.

Peress was a conductor who worked closely with both Leonard Bernstein and Duke Ellington. His "twin passions for jazz and classical music were reflected in his penchant for reconstructing important concerts from the past." See Neil Genzlinger, obituary for Maurice Peress, *New York Times*, Jan 4, 2018, accessed

Learning to Play: Playing Along with Radio Broadcasts

Smith's mother would not pay for trumpet lessons, so he learned to play by reproducing what he heard on the radio. "And that's how I learned to play a little jazz." This was not an uncommon practice. In his autobiography, jazz legend Clark Terry writes, "I played a lot of blues that I had learned from the radio."[26] Because Smith had successfully taught himself the bugle, he had no trouble playing the open-fingered partials of the trumpet. Operating the valves, however, troubled Smith: "I had one down half way, and one all the way down. It was a mess. But by myself and my radio I eventually figured it out. I was able to play."

Playing what he heard on the radio really sharpened Smith's aural skills, and ability to play in any style. He mostly listened to big bands with superb trumpet sections, such as Gene Krupa's. Soloists like Roy Eldridge and Louis Armstrong quickly became his idols. If "they wanted a trumpet player to play some jazz I was the trumpet player. They wanted a first trumpet player, I was the first trumpet player. They wanted a fourth trumpet player, I was a fourth trumpet player, if I was out of work and needed money. I played no matter who called me." Growing up in the Depression era taught Smith never to decline a job opportunity. "I played Jewish music in theater, in the Bronx, in New York. Jewish Vaudeville. I played Polish, with a Polish band. Cause I could triple tongue hard and fast. I learned every kind of music, because I never turned down a job." As a result, Smith received a diverse musical education.

April 24, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/04/obituaries/maurice-peress-conductor-who-worked-with-ellington-dies-at-87.html.

[26] Clark Terry with Gwen Terry, *Clark: The Autobiography of Clark Terry* (London: University of California Press, 2011), 68.

First Trumpet Lessons

Smith's mother finally gave in, and bought him a twenty-five-cent lesson at the New York School of Music. The instructor there taught all of the band instruments, but did not specialize in trumpet. After one lesson, the man told Smith that he needed a teacher dedicated to teaching the trumpet because basic sound production was not a problem for Smith. During the lesson, the teacher just "opened the music book to 'Home on the Range' or something, and he marked the fingerings." He told Smith to "press down this finger, press down that finger, and the next finger." The next day the teacher called Smith's mother because the school wanted to put the young trumpeter on the radio to advertise music lessons. After that one lesson, Smith played "Home on the Range" on the radio. "I was scared shitless, playing on the radio. I didn't know what the hell was going on." Smith could not read music yet; he could only read the markings that indicated which fingers to press down. He never went back to the New York School of Music, but his mother found a dedicated trumpet teacher, Jerome Cnudde.

Cnudde gave lessons in a room he rented at Carnegie hall. Aside from their lessons, all the students played in Cnudde's band that met once a week. They played stock arrangements of tunes, and honed their sight-reading skills. During private lessons, Cnudde sat at the piano, and had Smith play from *Arban's Complete Conservatory Method for Trumpet* (the *Arban*'s). Smith could already blow the trumpet pretty well, so Cnudde simply marked in the fingerings. However, when Smith got lost or could not read the rhythms, Cnudde would tell him just to play whatever he wanted. "That's how I learned to play jazz choruses," said Smith, "because he just kept playing, played these chords." Smith played the melodies that were in his head, and heard how they sounded

against the harmony provided by Cnudde's piano. Cnudde would tell him the names of the chords as they passed by, which is how Smith learned to read chord changes.

Smith's recollections of Cnudde and his teachings are similar to those of Maurice Peress. The following excerpts are from Peress's autobiography.

> Mother decided that I needed a "real" teacher. The daughter of one of my dad's fellow Baghdadians was taking piano lessons at a studio in Carnegie Hall. They had a trumpet teacher. We took the subway down to meet Jerome Cnudde.
>
> Andrew Carnegie, famously, would not install elevators up to the balconies for the concert hall attendees, but for the apartments and studios on the 56th Street side of Carnegie Hall there was a magically silent hydraulic open-cage elevator that landed us on some upper floor. For the next four years, all through high school, I took that elevator to study with Mr. Cnudde. He told me he was French and Italian, which may have explained the elaborately curled blond mustache that he often trimmed during my lessons, when he wasn't drinking white wine or coffee. Mr. Cnudde must have been in his forties, a little too old for the on-going World War II draft. God love him, he was a jazz musician as well, and at the end of one of my first trumpet lessons he sat me down at the piano and showed me the blues chords in B-flat. Harmony lessons would soon follow. I learned to read music and could get around most of the difficult etudes in the *Arban* book, every beginning trumpet player's primer. Mr. Cnudde warned me off the newfangled bebop. "Listen to Louis Armstrong!"[27]

It is important to note that Cnudde taught not only classical methods (*Arban*'s), but improvisation, a skill that Smith needed on many occasions. The first instance was during a concert sponsored by the music school in which Cnudde taught. Smith said, "that came in handy, what he [Cnudde] taught me. I got so nervous playing this trumpet solo, that

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[27] Maurice Peress, *Maverick Maestro* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 14-15. Even though Peress started out as a trumpeter, he spent his career conducting the student orchestra at Queens College. He also conducted the premieres of some of Leonard Bernstein's music, as well as helped Duke Ellington orchestrate some of his compositions. Peress had a passion for both jazz and classical music. I included the excerpt from Peress's autobiography because understanding Cnudde's teachings reveal why Smith was so adept at playing popular musics such as musical theater. See also, Neil Genzlinger, "Maurice Peress, Conductor Who Worked With Ellington, Dies at 87," *New York Times,* Jan 4, 2018, accessed May 20, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/04/obituaries/maurice-peress-conductor-who-worked-with-ellington-dies-at-87.html.

when it came to the cadenza that was written, I forgot the whole damn thing. And when it came to that I just kept playing, making up my own." Cnudde was proud of his student. He told Smith, "You got there, and you didn't stop, you didn't quit. And you didn't play what was written, you made up your own thing, which came out good." Smith realizes that Cnudde made him a well-rounded trumpeter; one who could improvise, as well as play lead trumpet. Thanks to Cnudde's teachings, Smith felt comfortable sitting in with any band. He frequently went to band rehearsals looking for sub jobs. He could "sit down and play anything…didn't have to rehearse… They gave the downbeat and I played."

Joining a Dance Band

One of Smith's high school classmates, Benny, had a dance band. Smith would walk about a mile from his house to the ballroom where the group performed. One evening, Benny asked Smith if he brought his horn, because he knew Smith played first trumpet in the high school band. Smith did not have his horn, but ran home to get it after Benny asked him to play. "I tore out of that door, and ran the mile home to where I lived, and it was like nine o'clock at night. My mother was still saying you're not going anywhere. And as she was saying I was not going anywhere, I was running out the door." Smith arrived back at the ballroom, and played with the band. One of the trumpet players was soon drafted into the army, so Smith became a permanent member. "And after that I felt like I could play with any band." In other words, Benny's dance band served as Smith's conservatory. He learned to play in a section, and improved his ability to sight read even the most complex dance numbers. Both of these acquired skills, along with being able to convincingly play in various styles, prepared Smith for the musical theater

work he would play a decade later. Also, Smith made about thirteen dollars a week playing with Benny's band in clubs and dance halls. That was a lot of money to Smith, especially during the late 30s and early 40s.

The Borscht Belt

When Smith was in high school he played four nights a week in Bronx nightclubs. Because of his musical career, he nearly did not graduate. "But the thing was, I was two years ahead of my time. I skipped twice [skipped two grades], so when I was in high school, when I was graduating, and I was sixteen years old, all those guys with me they were all like eighteen." If his memory is correct, that means that Smith was only thirteen or fourteen when he began performing regularly in nightclubs, and his reputation grew quickly during those years. In fact, a saxophonist that Smith often played with hired him for a summertime gig in the Borscht Belt.

The Borscht Belt "consisted of a string of summer camps, hotels and bungalows in the Catskill and Adirondack mountains," and brought in some of the biggest names in show business. [28] Catering to Jewish American clientele looking to escape urban centers in search of relaxation and entertainment, these establishments customarily had at least one band. Large hotels had bands of a dozen members, but even the four- and five-piece bands readily called themselves orchestras.[29] This was the case for the small ensemble in which Smith performed. The band included Smith on trumpet, one saxophone, and a rhythm section. Such bands were assembled rather informally, and "contracts were often

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[28] Phil Brown, *In the Catskills: A Century of the Jewish Experience in "The Mountains"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 225.
[29] Phil Brown, *Catskill Culture: A Mountain Rat's Memories of the Great Jewish Resort Area* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 123.

written on musicians' paper lunch bags."[30] In the 1930s and 40s, bands often provided more than just music. According to Henry Foner

> Hotel owners—usually two partners, who, by summer's end, were no longer speaking to each other—felt that, once they had hired an orchestra, they had discharged their obligation to provide their guests with entertainment. Thus, it devolved upon the band to furnish not only music, but other types of diversion as well. These usually took the form of "skits" or "blackouts"—sketches whose origin is probably found in burlesque.[31]

This explains why Smith said that the Borscht Belt was where he learned to play stage shows. In fact, many of the hotels offered "cut-down versions of musicals."[32]

One of the entertainers Smith met in the Borscht Belt was Jerry Lewis. At fourteen, Lewis was a mischievous tearoom boy at Brown's hotel. He started fires, and purposely dropped entire trays of peach melbas just to get a laugh.[33] By fifteen, Lewis was on stage, pantomimed Betty Hutton records, and played with a yo-yo. As teenagers, Smith and Lewis used to ride in Lewis' car "fooling around." Smith realizes now that Lewis "was driving around without a license. Because he was only a year older than me. He could have crashed or something. And he was a big act. I got to know him." Years later, Smith reminded Lewis of their adventures, but Lewis just looked at Smith as though he did not know who he was. By that time, Smith said, Lewis was already a big star, and had partnered with Dean Martin.

One of the many professional connections Smith made in the Borscht Belt was with a piano player who was to conduct a movie soundtrack. The man, whose name Smith cannot recall, hired Smith to play in his orchestra after he got to know the young

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Henry Foner quoted in Brown, *Catskill Culture,* 126. Brown's source is not cited.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Brown, *In the Catskills,* 232.

trumpeter. Smith said, “I would never have gotten hired to do that by regular contractors because they didn’t know me. But I got to play movie scores through him, because he was the conductor, you know, and he trusted me, so he hired me.”

Recording a Movie Soundtrack

Smith arrived late to his first movie soundtrack recording; he did so because he was not keen on warming up. The only chair open when he got there was the lead chair. At first, he was not sure why his fellow musicians left that chair open; after all, they were well-respected players. Smith remembers, “The first thing I was perfect at. It was like a marching band, it was all triple tonguing and double tongue. These other guys saw the triple and double tongue, and they all figured they wouldn’t sit down there [in first chair], you know.” One of the trumpeters was Leon Merian, a virtuoso player who became one of Smith’s life-long friends. That Smith had no trouble with the difficult tonguing reflects his ability to effortlessly employ techniques typical of classical music. Apparently, those *Arban* studies with Cnudde paid off.

Touring with Louis Prima (1944-45)

When Smith was in high school, someone informed him that Charles (Chas) Colin, author of *Lip Flexibilities* (1941), was a trumpet teacher who prided himself on getting his students jobs.[34] “That Colin was teaching his students solely to enter the fields of various kinds of popular music,” writes André M. Smith in the *International Trumpet*

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[34] Colin’s *Lip Flexibilities* is a staple among brass musicians, especially trumpeters.

Guild Journal, "was never in doubt by him or his students."[35] Smith knew that he would soon be out of school, and in need of work, so he began studying under Colin.

Colin's studio was a trumpet player's hangout. He rented seven rooms on the third floor at 111 West 48th St, which was a stone's throw away from Radio City Music Hall (50th St.), Carnegie Hall (57th St.), and the Metropolitan Opera (38th St.), among many other important music venues in New York.[36] Smith remembers meeting other trumpeters that dropped by on their way to and from jobs as he waited for his lessons. In fact, Smith used to play duets with Dizzy Gillespie "cause he used to hang out there." For commercial[37] trumpet players, Colin's studio was analogous to the jazzman's jam session in that musicians went there to "practice, to work out new ideas and techniques, to exchange information, to network with their colleagues…all useful and necessary activities that could not practically be carried out on the bandstand."[38]

Colin led a band comprised of his trumpet students. Aside from Smith, the band featured Al Porcino, who was known as "Double High C Porcino," and Smith's best friend Tony Russo.[39] One day in 1944, Colin got the boys together, and passed out some music so that they could play for Louis Prima, who was looking for a new trumpet

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[35] Andre M. Smith, "The Life of Charles Colin and the Silver Jubilee of the New York Brass Conference, 1973-1997," *ITG Journal* 21, no. 3 (February 1997):15.
[36] Ibid., 17, 34.
[37] I am using the term commercial to describe popular music of the era because musicians, such as Smith, used the term to make the following distinctions. Commercial trumpeters are distinct from jazz trumpeters in that they typically are not as skilled at improvisation. Commercial players are distinct from orchestral players in that they are well versed in popular music genres (i.e. swing, Latin, show tunes, etc.), not classical (i.e. Classical, Baroque).
[38] Scott Knowles DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 207.
[39] Porcino was eighteen when he joined Prima's band. He played lead trumpet with Count Basie, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, Thad Jones-Mel Lewis, Buddy Rich, and other big bands. As a studio musician he worked with Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, Judy Garland, and Peggy Lee. See "In memoriam: Al Porcino (1925-2013)," *International Trumpet Guild*, accessed April 30, 2018, http://www.trumpetguild.org/news/news05/398carrollmcgill.htm.

section for his big band that was heading out on the road. Prima hired all of them on the spot (Figures 3 and 4). That Prima came to Colin's studio looking for musicians reveals Colin's reputation as a teacher, and his relevance in New York's popular music scene. As a result, Smith got what he wanted from taking lessons with Colin: a job.

Figure 3: Louis Prima's 1944 Big Band at the Strand Theatre in New York, with Dick Smith standing behind Prima's left shoulder. Photo courtesy of Dick Smith.

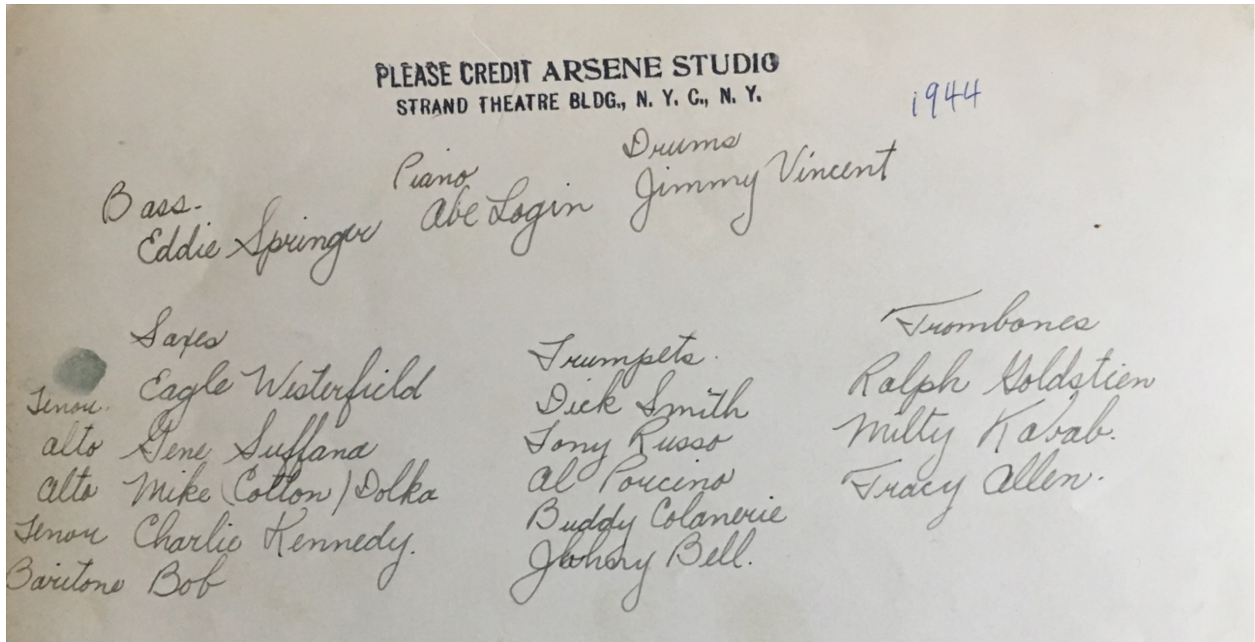

Figure 4: Back of Figure 3. List of personal from Prima's 1944 Band, including Smith, Porcino, and Russo. Photo courtesy of Dick Smith.

The new trumpet section was to join Prima's band in Rochester, New York that coming weekend. As he was packing his bags, Smith's mother told him he was not allowed to go. Despite her wishes, Smith got on a train headed to Rochester. From there the band traveled together all over the country. Smith remembers riding in a car with Prima not long after he joined the band. They were on their way to Columbus, Ohio when Smith tried to keep Prima awake because he had been driving all night during a snow storm. Smith recalls Prima coaching him on how to "make it with girls," and how to get them to come back to his hotel room after a show. Smith was only sixteen years old.

Smith hit the jackpot as a musician in Prima's nationally renowned band. Smith explains why he was so fortunate.

> I'll tell you, I was there at a time that, very lucky because the war drafted a lot of the best people…They drafted all the trumpet players, so people needed trumpet players. Who would hire a sixteen-year-old kid to play in their big band? But they hired a sixteen-year-old kid because it was hard to find trumpet players. The good ones were drafted. So, I was really lucky. But I had to produce.

The success of Prima's band is documented by Ben Griefer, the managing director of the Adams Theatre, who wrote to Prima after his October, 1944 appearance: "You smashed every existing attendance record at the theater…Secondly, from the standpoint of showmanship and entertainment, yours was one of the finest shows ever presented at the Adams."[40] Similarly, during a six-week run at the Strand Theater in New York (pictured above, Figure 3) Prima brought in more than $440,000, which was the theater's biggest sum in its thirty-year history.[41] Along with its theater appearances, the band recorded in the studio as well.

Smith remembers a record date when he played second trumpet, and Porcino played lead. When the music was passed out, Smith noticed that there were chord symbols on his part signifying a trumpet solo. "I was playing the part and then we stopped, it was supposed to be Louis Prima playing the solo, but I had the second part, and all of the chord symbols were there, so I played everything that was in front of me no matter what." Later that night, the band performed the piece on a radio show. Prima let Smith play the solo, and even announced his name afterward. "You know, Al Porcino playing double B-flats, and then he [Prima] announces me playing…And he let me play the solo." Prima, who was never one to shy from the spotlight, must have liked Smith to give up a solo on a radio broadcast.

Smith toured with Prima for about a year until someone told him he should ask for a raise. "We were at the Strand Theater in New York, and I went and asked him [Prima] for a raise. And he wouldn't give me a raise, so I quit. I didn't know what I was

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[40] Griefer cited in Garry Boulard, *"Just a Gigolo": The Life and Times of Louis Prima* (Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1989), 75.
[41] Ibid.

going to do, but I quit." Even though his time with Prima was short—only about a year—Smith was now a seasoned veteran. Prima offered audiences something that other big bands did not: "I offer them comedy routines between numbers. Dance bands that are only that are dead. I use my musicians for much of the comedy. Every guy I got is a hambone."[42] The Prima band was theatrical; thus, Smith's tenure with Prima prepared him, much like his work in the Borscht Belt, for the musical theater jobs to come.[43]

[42] Ibid., 60.
[43] The musical comedy aspect of bands has been overlooked in jazz histories due to the unstated agenda of treating jazz as a serious art form. It highlights the interconnection between supposedly different musical worlds, and should be integrated into musical theater narratives as well as jazz. The Spike Jones band serves as an example.

CHAPTER III

VAUDEVILLE AND THE LATIN QUARTER

Loew's State Theater ca. 1945

Smith never showed any interest in pursuing classical music because he saw early in his career how lucrative the popular music world could be for him.

> All I know is when I started playing, I never even thought about playing with the philharmonic or any of those places. Because I immediately went on the road with Louis Prima, and was making over one hundred bucks a week. And then when I came back into town, I was recording every day. Recording days were only forty dollars, I think. We were making one hundred odd bucks a salary and then making the forty dollars for the recording dates…Harry Glantz [principal trumpeter for the New York Philharmonic] was one of the greatest trumpet players in the world. I probably made more money than he did when I was a kid.

Despite having learned a handful of common audition pieces, such as the "Ballerina's Dance" from Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, Smith's training—as mentioned earlier—was more or less in so-called commercial music. After all, he learned to play the trumpet by playing along with dance bands he heard on the radio. And the dance bands Smith played with in high school taught him how to play in a section.

After Smith quit Prima's band he returned to New York, and worked as a freelance musician. He soon became a regular in several orchestras, including the one at Loew's State Theater at Broadway and Forty-Fifth Street.[44] Loew's was Broadway's four-a-day vaudeville, and the theater advertised itself as "the nation's leading vaudeville theater" after the Palace—which was two blocks to the north—ended its variety shows in

[44] "VAUDEVILLE BIDS BROADWAY ADIEU." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Dec 24, 1947, accessed May 8, 2018, http://libproxy.uoregon.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/docview/108006442?accountid=14698.

1935, and became a movie house.[45] The 3,427-seat theater featured acts that ranged from musical saw players to comedians, such as Milton Berle.[46]

Each show at Loew's was ten acts long, and there was no down time between acts. After an act finished, the bows began, and the cutoff for the bows was the downbeat to the next act. During the bows, conductor Joe Lombardi would point to the sky, signaling Smith to scream in the trumpet's upper register. So, after playing an act, "which was hard enough," says Smith, "in the bows he [Lombardi] wanted me to scream." Leon Merian, fellow trumpeter and friend of Smith's, recalls his experience subbing for Smith one night in his autobiography:

> So I got the gig, and man, it was one brutal show…One act right after another. Singers, dancers, jugglers, dog acts. It was a normal gig for me, however. Playing all the acts and burlesque shows in my early years, I was hardened by this kind of playing. My chops were like leather by then. But I could see why Joe [Lombardi] had been concerned. It was a burnout for trumpet players and many a horn player burnt out his chops on that gig. Continuous blowing, playing the music for the acts, then right into the chasers and direct segues going in the next act. Brutal![47]

According to Smith, trumpeters played at Loew's for "six months, and they were out of the business. They couldn't play anymore." Good players left the ten acts of vaudeville with "swollen lips and cuts." If "you took your horn away from your face to wipe your chops," writes Merian, "he'd [Lombardi] would give you a glare that only Lombardi could give" because he liked to hear the trumpets blowing constantly.[48] In order to avoid damaging his embouchure, Smith subbed at Loew's only three nights a week. Another reason Smith never experienced the ill effects of playing at Loew's was because he never

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Leon Merian with Bill Bridges, *Leon Merian: The Man Behind the Horn* (Bradenton, FL: Diem Publishing Company, 2000), 112.
[48] Ibid.

felt the trumpet on his face. In other words, he played with less pressure than those that could not survive the demanding show night after night. Smith was not aware of the pressure/no pressure concept until later in life, when he studied with various teachers (Appendix A). However, an accident at the Latin Quarter taught Smith what can happen when too much pressure is established.

The Latin Quarter: Smith in His 20s

When Joe Lombardi left Loew's State Theater to be the Latin Quarter's musical conductor he asked Smith to come with him. The Latin Quarter (Figure 5) was a Broadway night club with its main entrance on 48th St. between Broadway and 7th Ave.[49] It was previously known as the Palais Royal and the Cotton Club, which relocated from its Harlem address in 1936.[50] Lou Walters—father of Barbara Walters, the famed TV personality—bought the club and became its impresario around 1940.[51] Many of the shows Walters organized featured dance teams, some of which were classically trained. Thus, the music at the Latin Quarter spanned from opera to jazz. For example, five or six opera singers would sing, and then Joe E. Lewis, or a similar comedian, would do their routine.[52] Smith said that "one show was like two musicals" in regard to the amount of music he had to play.

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[49] "NIGHT CLUB HELD UP AS 500 DINE, DANCE," *New York Times (1923-Current File),* Mar 23, 1947, accessed May 9, 2018, http://libproxy.uoregon.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/docview/107989302?accountid=14698.
[50] Louis Calta, "Lou Walters; Nightclub Impresario and Founder of Latin Quarter, Dies," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Aug 16, 1977, accessed May 10, 2018, http://libproxy.uoregon.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/docview/123436733?accountid=14698.
[51] Ibid.
[52] For example, Walters built a revue around Joe E. Lewis for the winter of 1953. See Sam Zolotow, "REVUE IS IN SIGHT FOR JOE E. LEWIS," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jul 29, 1953, accessed

Figure 5: Small Latin Quarter poster from one of Dick Smith's scrapbooks.

Smith described Joe Lombardi as an old Italian man with long hair who constantly yelled at his musicians. He was "a really nasty guy," and the "guys hated him." Smith, however, was able to maintain a positive, working relationship with Lombardi. Leon Merian's depiction of Lombardi supports Smith's view: "Joe's

May 10, 2018, http://libproxy.uoregon.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/docview/112667346?accountid=14698.

reputation in New York could be summed up in one word…tough. He was very strict, a slave driver in the true sense of the word."[53]

Smith preferred playing at the Latin Quarter to Loew's "because you played in a show, then you were off for an hour and a half, and then you played another show, that night show, and on Saturday you played three shows." The breaks between shows allowed Smith to rest his embouchure, play a hotel gig, or grab a bite to eat. On Saturdays, after the first show, Smith would go with the conductor, drummer, and piano player to the Waldorf Astoria or some other hotel and play a casual.

Smith met his first wife, Barbara Watson, while working at the Latin Quarter. She was a dancer, and Smith saw her perform onstage every night until he left the Latin Quarter for musicals. Watson was fired, but Smith knew a stage manager that got her a job in Guy Lombardo's show, which featured swimming girls. Smith told his friend that Watson could swim, "so she ended up she had to swim [Smith laughs]." It also helped that Smith played in Lombardo's orchestra on and off throughout his New York career.

Injury at the Latin Quarter

At the end of the Latin Quarter shows, Smith stood up to play a solo on "Night and Day." Fellow trumpeter Gino Bozzacco used to "screw around with the saxophones" during Smith's solo. One night, the "three hundred pound" Bozzacco straightened up after messing around with the saxes, and his back smashed Smith's horn into his face while he was playing. Smith just stood there, and stared at Lombardi as blood ran down his face. After the show, Smith told the band, "I'll see ya." Smith could not play with a

[53] Leon Merian with Bill Bridges, *Leon Merian: The Man Behind the Horn* (Bradenton, FL: Diem Publishing Company, 2000), 111-12.

damaged embouchure, and not only was Smith out of work, but he had recently proposed marriage to Barbara Watson.

Smith could see Lombardi was in a panic since he just lost a key musician. Lombardi asked, "Come on, when are you coming back?" Like many conductors, Lombardi relied on Smith as his first trumpeter to lead the band. And Lombardi, according to Smith, was "incompetent…He didn't know what the hell he was doing, but he listened to me. I would set the tempo…he followed me. That's why he was in a panic, because I wasn't there." Lombardi begged Smith to come back and play as soon as he could, even if he could only play third trumpet.

Smith's recovery took months, and he went to several teachers looking for help. Maurice Grupp, who was "a breath-control expert," taught Smith to use hot water and Vaseline to soothe a swollen lip.[54] This cured many a bruised lip for Smith over the years, but the home remedy was not enough to get him playing again; so, he decided to try a different teacher, Carmine Caruso. During his first lesson with Caruso, all Smith could muster from his horn was a *shhh* sound. Pressing the mouthpiece to his face was still extremely painful. Caruso discovered that Smith was not placing the mouthpiece on both lips equally in order to protect the injury. A trumpeter's air blown through the horn helps make both lips vibrate in the mouthpiece. This creates a buzzing sound. Smith's lips were not vibrating because they were not both in the mouthpiece. Caruso had Smith reposition the mouthpiece, and attempt to play again. Tears came to Smith's eyes because of the

[54] Smith went to Grupp because he knew that Al Porcino had success with his teachings. According to Smith, Porcino perfected his upper register playing with Grupp's breath-control exercises. Billy Eckstine also reveals that he learned breath-control techniques from Grupp that helped his trumpet playing and singing. See John S. Wilson, "Pop/Jazz," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Apr 22, 1983, accessed May 12, 2018, http://libproxy.uoregon.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/docview/122305706?accountid=14698.

pain, but also because he was finally able to produce a quality sound. In fact, he was so encouraged that he called Lombardi at the Latin Quarter and told him he would be there to play that night.

When Smith arrived at Latin Quarter that evening, he told Bozzacco, "Gino, move over. I'm playing." Smith sat in the lead chair just as he used to. Not long after Lombardi gave the downbeat, Smith realized his range was not there. He could only play up to a middle E. After having displayed a sense of confidence minutes earlier, Smith begged, "Gino, get over here!" Smith ended up playing third chair for a couple of months while his lips continued to heal.

CHAPTER IV

BROADWAY MUSICALS

Audition for a Broadway Musical

A trumpeter that used to substitute at the Latin Quarter was hired to play the next Ethel Merman musical on Broadway. However, the trumpeter decided to take a radio orchestra job with the Bell Telephone Hour instead. In need of finding a replacement for his spot in the musical, the man recommended that Smith audition for the chair. Smith was eager to get work because he had been out of commission due to his lip injury, but he was wary because his embouchure still had not healed completely. The other trumpeter told Smith something along the lines of "if you play that show [at the Latin Quarter]…a two-hour show, and it was one of the hardest shows in New York…if you can play that show you can play anything on Broadway." These words really helped ease Smith's mind, and led him to schedule an audition with conductor Jay Blackton.

Jacob Schwartzdorf (Jay Blackton) was discovered by Oscar Hammerstein when he conducted the Kern-Hammerstein musical *Gentlemen Unafraid* when it was a visiting show at the St. Louis Municipal Opera.[55] Hammerstein hired Blackton to conduct *Sunny River* (1941), which flopped. Hammerstein again hired Blackton for his next musical, *Oklahoma!* (1943).[56] Blackton then continued on to conduct many more shows, including two Ethel Merman hits, *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Call Me Madam.* Aside from directing

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[55] Steven Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music: A Book of Orchestrators and Orchestrations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 131.
[56] "While he was conducting a radio show during the run of *Oklahoma!* the advertising agency asked him 'for a more euphonious name': hence Schwartzdorf—German for 'black town'—became Blackton." See Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway,* 131.

and orchestrating successful Broadway shows, Blackton earned an Academy Award for scoring the 1955 film version of *Oklahoma!*[57] During Broadway's golden age, Blackton was one of its leading conductors.

Smith arrived at the theater at 8 a.m. for his audition with Blackton, and Dick Perry was just leaving Blackton's office. "I thought he [Perry] would audition, and I was thinking, 'Oh God, this guy is a tremendous player. I gotta go after him?'" Knowing Perry had played lead with Tommy Dorsey was a bit intimidating. But, Perry evidently was not there for an audition. Smith's audition began, and he wondered "what the hell I was going to do, trying to get to the end of this thing [the audition]." Because of his injury, he had not been practicing; thus, his embouchure had weakened. However, "… I started playing and it all came out. I kept getting better and better. At the end I ended on a high E-flat. I hadn't seen that [note] in a long time."

When it came to different parts in the music, Blackton asked Smith to emulate various trumpet players. "He'd say, 'Play this like Harry Glantz' [who played first trumpet in the New York Philharmonic[58]]…There was a little jazz solo, and he said, 'Play this like Dizzy Gillespie.' And he had me play this like Harry James." Blackton listened to Smith play through the entire score, which was most likely from *New Faces* (1956), the show Blackton was conducting at the time. Smith could emulate the tones and inflections of all the trumpet players Blackton mentioned because of the copious hours he spent listening to the radio. Afterwards, Blackton sat down at a piano, and asked Smith to

[57] "Jay Blackton, 84, Music Director Who Won Oscar for 'Oklahoma!,'" *New York Times (1923-Current File),* January 11, 1994, accessed May 12, 2018, http://libproxy.uoregon.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/docview/109322252?accountid=14698.
[58] "Harry Glantz, Played Symphonic Trumpet," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Dec 21, 1982, accessed May 12, 2018, http://libproxy.uoregon.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/docview/122044863?accountid=14698.

improvise over a Dixieland tune. When they finished, Blackton told Smith that he would hear from Sol Gusikoff, but he did not tell him whether or not he was hired.

Sol Gusikoff was a musical coordinator; his job titles, as listed in *Playbill*, include orchestra personnel manager, music contractor, orchestra supervisor, and orchestra manager.[59] He organized the orchestras for *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), *South Pacific* (1949), *The King and I* (1951), *My Fair Lady* (1956), *The Sound Of Music* (1959), along with fifty other musicals.[60] In order "to get a Broadway show you had to know this guy [Gusikoff], or have someone introduce you to him." In other words, Gusikoff was the gate keeper for musicians who wanted to play Broadway musicals. Reed player Seymour "Red" Press, however, explains that this tradition was challenged:

> Another change that came in [Press does not give a date as to when] was that you started to get better musicians in the pit. The union had gotten a better contract; if you could get a pit job, you were in seventh heaven. So the band guys—the orchestrators and conductors who came from the bands—brought in their favorite musicians, much to the consternation of the old-time contractors [like Gusikoff]. Look at the pit of *Gypsy*: Jimmy Crawford, the drummer, and the bass player (I forgot his name) were from the Ellington band; the pianist was Frank Signorelli from Paul Whiteman; the trumpeter, Dick Perry, and I were from Tommy Dorsey.[61]

By the late1940s, most swing bands had folded, and the "radio stations, with their sixty-five-piece orchestras, dried up."[62] As a result, many musicians were jobless, and in need of steady work. This explains why so many of them turned to musicals.[63] After all, a job

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[59] "Sol Gusikoff," *Playbill*, accessed May 13, 2018, http://www.playbill.com/person/sol-gusikoff-vault-0000000816.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Red Press still works as an orchestra contractor and manager on Broadway. He became a musical contractor/coordinator and his most recent productions are *Hello, Dolly!* (2017), and *Carousel* (2018). See Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music*, 228. See also "Seymour 'Red' Press, *Playbill*, accessed May 13, 2018, http://www.playbill.com/personrolespage/person-role-page?person=00000150-ac7a-d16d-a550-ec7eb01c0001.
[62] Red Press quoted in Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music,* 228.
[63] As previously mentioned, many of these musicians, such as Smith, were not interested in learning the bebop idiom, which replaced dance band music, according to the commonly accepted jazz narrative.

in a musical meant playing seven nights a week. According to Smith, "Once you got into his [Blackton's] orchestra, you were in his orchestra unless you did something wrong and he fired you…His orchestra would follow him. He wanted his *own* orchestra."

Gusikoff called Smith around seven o'clock in the evening after Smith's audition. Smith remembers when he picked up the phone, and heard, "Hello, Cookie. How are you, Cookie?" Gusikoff then said, "Jay likes your playing. You're hired for the Ethel Merman show [*Happy Hunting*]." He also told Smith where to get fitted for a uniform. Without knowing it, Smith was hired not only because of his trumpet playing, but because he passed a looks test. He was supposed to play on stage with a Dixieland band. They needed someone who looked young, and Smith, with his crew cut, fit the bill. However,

> …they cancelled the part that I was gonna play in the show, and I took the show, because I was gonna get seventeen dollars a week more for playing on the stage. So that was cancelled, because the conductor didn't want me to be on the stage, because it was right by the big blowing show for the pit band. And if I left to get on the stage to play this Dixieland Band, I wouldn't be playing down in the pit, where I had a lot of blowing to do in the pit. And I had a high jazz solo… So he said no, I can't go up there. So, that was sixteen, seventeen dollars a week that went right out the window.

Broadway musicians work for union scale, but they receive overrides for doubles (typically reed players double on flute, clarinet, and the various saxes), and appearing on stage. Also, the first trumpet chair "has long received a special bonus, and is paid a higher wage than the other instruments."[64] Smith explains:

> in those days, in New York, you couldn't work anywhere without being in the union. You met all the best players in town in the union hall on a Tuesday or Friday, or whenever the union was open. You met them all and even the musicians playing in radio stations or playing musical comedies. They'd show up in the union, except some guys who were playing steady for five years, they'd

[64] Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music,* 216-17.

> stop coming to the union, until they knew they were going to be out of work. Then they'd be back at the union looking for a job.

Smith was originally hired to play second trumpet in *Happy Hunting,* though he was later promoted to first when the lead player left for another job. Smith then stayed with Blackton for two more shows including *Oh, Captain!* (1958), and *Redhead* (1959).

A *New York Times'* review of *Happy Hunting* praised Ethel Merman's return to Broadway after a six-year hiatus more than the musical itself (Figure 6). "So, it was a bomb," Smith said. "It just made it one year. It was a dog." Smith knew after rehearsing the first act that the show was not going to be a winner. In fact, he wrestled with the idea of taking another job offer. Not long after he was hired for *Happy Hunting*, Gusikoff asked Smith if he would rather play in the Judy Holliday show *Bells Are Ringing*. But, Smith decided to continue with *Happy Hunting* because he wanted to work in a show that starred Ethel Merman, as she was "the top one in a Broadway musical." Smith told Gusikoff that Merman's shows run for five years or more. Smith observes, "So, I took the only bomb that she ever made…but I got to work with the top [Broadway] conductor [Blackton]."

Theatre: Return of Ethel Merman: She Rocks Broadway in '<span ...
By BROOKS ATKINSON
New York Times (1923-Current file); Dec 7, 1956; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times
pg. 30

Theatre: Return of Ethel Merman

She Rocks Broadway in 'Happy Hunting'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

THE explosion in Forty-fourth Street last evening was nothing to be alarmed by. It was merely Ethel Merman returning to the New York theatre and being welcomed by her friends.

After wasting six years of our lives she has come back in "Happy Hunting," which opened at the Majestic last evening. Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, who wrote her last show, "Call Me Madam," have put this one together with a minimum of originality and enterprise. Step by step the Broadway theatre is getting back to the mechanical mishmash of the old standard Shubert musical.

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But the Merman is as swagger and brassy as ever, glowing like a neon light whenever she steps on the stage, full of self-confidence and band concert music. Mr. Lindsay and Mr. Crouse have cast her as a rich Philadelphian who is not accepted by Main Line society, but snares a royal duke who outranks Grace Kelly's husband. As a story this one is old-fashioned fare with jokes that are not much more sprightly.

But the authors, the audience and the star no doubt agree that the chief purpose of a book is to get Miss Merman out there in center stage, bawling Harold Karr's songs into the gallery. The part is thoroughly becoming. For it gives her a chance to startle the rich with her exuberant vulgarity, fall in love with breezy informality, play fabulous host to the audience and sing very loud in stirring rhythms.

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"I've got that proverbial glow," she bellows in one of Matt Dubey's happiest lyrics. Like the authors of the book, the composer has given her a score that is hardly more than adequate. But Miss Merman pitches into it with her familiar gusto. By the time she is through you have a definite impression that you have been considerably sung at.

Who is the Duke of Granada who outranks Grace Kelly's husband? He is Fernando Lamas, tall, dark and handsome, with agreeable manners and an excellent singing voice. To be glamorous on the musical stage today a man had better powder his head gray if it is not already aged by itself. Mr. Lamas belongs in that irresistible age group. As Miss Merman's atomic missile he is wholly satisfactory and a valuable property in the midst of a mediocre show.

"Happy Hunting" has all the appurtenances of a big show. It is a "24 carat utopian giganticum," in the circus vocabulary of Bill Nye. It has abundant and entrancing scenery by Joe Mielziner; costumes by Irene Sharaff that are either saucy or stunning, according to the mood; pleasant dances staged by Alex Romero and Bob Herget; direction by Abe Burrows, and a number of good actors and stimulating chorus girls. The secondary leads are attractively played and sung by Gordon Polk, and Virginia Gibson.

But it is easy for almost anyone to be invisible when Miss Merman is on the premises. Those she doesn't outdazzle, she outsings. And where the book limps, she swings along like a syncopated parade. Welcome home, Miss Merman. The neighborhood is always a little more jaunty when you are here.

Ethel Merman and Fernando Lamas in "Happy Hunting"

The Cast

HAPPY HUNTING, a musical comedy in two acts and sixteen scenes. Book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, lyrics by Matt Dubey, and music by Harold Karr. Staged by Abe Burrows; produced by Jo Mielziner, with scenery and lighting by Mr. Mielziner; costumes by Irene Sharaff; dances and musical numbers staged by Alex Romero and Bob Herget; musical direction, Jay Blackton; orchestrations by Ted Royal; dance music devised by Roger Adams; production stage manager, Robert Downing. At the Majestic Theatre.

Sanford Stewart Jr. .... Gordon Polk
Mrs. Sanford Stewart Sr. .. Olive Templeton
Beth Livingstone .... Virginia Gibson
Harry Watson .... Gene Wesson
Liz Livingstone .... Ethel Merman
Mary Mills .... Estelle Parsons
Maud Foley .... Mary Finney
Arturo .... Leon Belasco
Duke of Granada .... Fernando Lamas
Count Carlos .... Renato Cibelli
Ship's Officer .... John Leslie
Mrs. B .... Florence Dunlap
Mrs D .... Madeleine Clive
Mrs. L .... Kelley Stephens
Daisy .... Moe
Mr. T .... John Leslie
Mr. M .... Jay Velie

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Figure 6: 1956 *New York Times* Review of *Happy Hunting* by Brooks Atkinson

The Rehearsal Process for Musicals

For the musicals that Smith was a part of, rehearsals were minimal and did not feel much like rehearsals. "You gotta read, because when you go to a rehearsal for a show it's not a rehearsal, really. Just like they pass out the music, and everybody plays it just like they've been playing it for all year, you know. There's no mistakes. Nobody misses a note." These musicians were superior sight-readers. The orchestra would have two or three rehearsals and then the show would open. Smith never even mentioned anything about a sitzprobe. Musical interpretation was left, for the most part, to the musicians since there was not much time to discuss how the music should be played. Such time restraints explain why Blackton resorted to handing out performance notes to his musicians throughout a show's run (discussed in the next section).

Smith remembers meeting the lead trumpet player at the first *Happy Hunting* rehearsal, and described him as "old guy," even though he was probably only in his forties. This trumpeter had signs for what was happening on stage. "As soon as he heard the music he knew where the show was. Here: the guy gets the girl. Then they break up. At the end of the show they get back together again." He could tell what was happening on stage by the sound of the music. One of his signs would be hugging himself to show that the couple came together. That the trumpeter had developed these signs reveals that many Broadway shows during the 1950s were predictable, and centered around heterosexual courtship. It also demonstrates the music's role in telling the story, something that audiences might have taken for granted, but was obvious enough to pit musicians to become an inside joke.

Blackton Made Changes…All the Time

Blackton regularly asked his musicians to change the way they played the music. "In fact, the last day of the show, when we would say the music's going to Cain's Warehouse,[65] and this conductor, Jay Blackton, sent these notes. We get these notes, change this or change that, 'Your top tones are a little strident'…It's amazing." Since rehearsal time was limited, Blackton resorted to writing notes such as these, much to the chagrin of his musicians who sometimes took it as a personal affront. For example, when Smith's fellow trumpeter, Paul Cohen, received a note from Blackton, he ripped it up and threw it into the air. "He [Cohen] didn't give a shit." Even though Smith and Cohen were annoyed with Blackton's constant suggestions, the fact that Blackton continually tried to improve the orchestra's performance of the music demonstrates his integrity. Towards the end of a run, Blackton did not merely go through the motions, and wave the baton on autopilot. Instead, he asked his musicians to make changes he thought were for the better.

Smith had his own problems with Blackton's notes during *Happy Hunting.* There was a short little solo in the show, a jazz solo, that Smith improvised every night.[66] After each show Blackton sent Smith notes on how he should play the improvised solo. He asked him to play an octave higher, with different mutes, with various growl effects, the list went on. After a while, Blackton's recommendations irritated Smith. Finally, one night, Smith and Blackton left the stage door at the same time, and Smith told the

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[65] "Opened by John J. Cain in the late 1880s or early 1890s, it specialized in storing theatrical scenery of closed Broadway shows. The scenery was then rented to touring and stock companies. 'Going to Cain's' became a euphemism for closing a show. The warehouse itself closed in 1938 when the shrinking road and the decline of stock companies deprived it of its market." See "Cain's Warehouse," *Oxford Reference*, accessed June 5, 2018, http://www.oxfordreference.com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195169867.001.0001/acref-9780195169867-e-0472?rskey=AYv1H4&result=1.

[66] The solo must have been in a dance number that was not recorded on the original cast recording of *Happy Hunting*.

conductor, “You know, I don’t have to stay here. I don’t have to play in this. I’ll get a job as soon as I leave here…You don’t like the way I play, I can say goodbye right now.” Blackton said something along the lines of the following: “No, No. I like the way you play…it’s my prerogative. I’m looking for something.” Blackton’s words made Smith feel appreciated, and he could tell that Blackton wanted him to stay in the orchestra.

Once Blackton found what he was looking for in Smith’s solo, Smith had to play it the same way every night for a year and a half. He eventually had to write it down because he was promoted to first chair for the last three months of the show. “A guy came in to play my part [second], and I had to have my solo written out for him. But, the guy couldn’t play it because it went from high D to an F [on top of the staff], and up to a high F. And this old guy came in… He could play the notes [of the score proper] and everything, but when it came to play that [Smith’s solo], he wasn’t that tough to play that.” It is important to note that not every professional trumpeter (i.e. Chet Baker) has the high range of Roy Eldridge or Dizzy Gillespie. Second trumpeters play an important role in any ensemble, nonetheless, and lead players often rely on them for support.[67]

Subbing in Musicals

Smith subbed in the original productions of *The King and I*, *West Side Story,* the *Music Man,* among many others. He was even offered to go on the road with *West Side Story* when it left Broadway for a national tour, but he declined. Smith also subbed in *The*

[67] In many popular music settings, the lead trumpeter is responsible for playing the high notes (he or she is often not a skilled improviser, but is a master in leading the band stylistically).The second trumpeter has the solo chair. The third and fourth chairs are typically held by section players who can read flawlessly, and play in any style. The lower trumpets provide a foundation on which the lead trumpeter can float above with his or her high notes.

Princess and the Pea, which was Carol Burnett's musical debut. Playing eight shows a week for weeks, even years on end wore on many musicians. "Some trumpet players wanted to get off to do something else, and the conductor would never let them off unless they could get somebody that was going to take their place. So, they knew that if they called me and I came in, they used to say, 'He can read fly shit.' I would read anything."

When Smith was called to sub in *West Side Story* he was asked to come look at the book the night before. "Usually I didn't go [ahead of time]. They called me in. I just went in and got in the pit and played the show. But that scared me when they told me to come in, and look at the book." His fellow trumpeter said things like, "Watch out for this," and, "You have a solo here." He showed Smith all the tricky spots, and gave the overall warning, "Be careful!" Smith was very glad he went because the score seemed nearly impossible to read with the ever-changing meters and tempos.

Smith did the best he could the following night. After the show was over, he saw conductor Max Goberman make his way to the trumpet section. Smith was nervous and thought, "Holy crap, this guy's gonna hit me. I thought I did pretty good, you know?" But actually the conductor gave Smith a kiss, and thanked him. Smith explains: "It's hard for them [conductors]. They have their musicians playing the show, and then you got four hundred people sitting out there, and the trumpet is loud. If the trumpet makes a mistake, the whole four hundred people, the whole place hears it." When subs play a show, "the conductor is up there scared to hell, he's wondering what's going to happen because he don't know you." If one played too many clams on a sub job, he or she was less likely to get another job with the same orchestra. But "if you could read, then nobody was afraid to call you to take their place." After all, regular members of an orchestra did not want

their reputation damaged because they hired a sub that was not up to par. Thus, Smith and his colleagues were masters at sight reading music and section playing, and many of them, such as Smith, developed that skill playing in dance bands.

Recording Musicals

"When you did a musical," according to Smith, "the first week you recorded the music." Everyone that performed in the pit played on the record; studio musicians were not used. "The music was nothing hard," especially since the big dance numbers were not recorded. They typically only recorded the overture and vocal numbers. I have not been able to find Smith's name listed as a musician for any of the musicals he played. However, Smith recalls that on one album his last name was spelled "Smitz."

Down Time During Musicals

Between musical numbers Smith played chess with the musicians seated near him. He would make his move, and then pass the board down. But, Smith warns, "You had to keep one eye on the conductor because that's a good way to get fired too. Not to be ready. Especially with Jay Blackton, you had to watch him. His right hand, and the left hand." Smith and his fellow musicians were also known to pull pranks now and then. During a fight scene (Smith cannot recall which musical this was) the "drummer and the tympani would be banging, and doing all this. So, one day we thought we were funny. We got hard hats, and when the fight scene went on, we, the trumpet section, we put the hard hats on, and we looked up, and the conductor [Blackton] looked back at us, and he wasn't happy at all." The musicians were free to play chess, read, solve crossword

puzzles, anything to pass the time, as long as it did not disrupt the show, or distract the conductor or other musicians.

Smith often played daytime gigs as well, including record dates. The recording sessions typically began at 8:00am, and ended around 3pm. Afterward, Smith headed back to the theater for an evening show. When he did not have a gig during the day he played handball with Bernie Glow, or would pal around with Leon Merian. The two practiced their trumpets together. "Instead of me playing out of the book there I was playing with him [Merian] or some other guy." Smith preferred this form of social practicing to spending hours in a room by himself. This is how Smith learned what other players were practicing to improve their range, technique, and improvisatory skills.

Playing Broadway vs. Vaudeville

Smith did not enjoy playing musicals.

> Playing musicals, to me, was the worst thing I ever played, as far as playing music. Up until that point, I enjoyed playing. I was always doing something different. I was playing at a different show, going into play for somebody at a night club or at a dance show or something. And if I wasn't playing steady, I was playing different kinds of music. I was playing Jewish vaudeville in the Bronx, I was playing a show, *The Princess and the Pea* down, in Greenwich Village… I couldn't wait to pick up the horn and play. You'd play in theaters, play on record dates, played vaudeville, anything. I couldn't wait to play. I enjoyed it. This [musicals] I played every night, the same notes. And you know six months or a year. The same notes every night, every night. And then having the conductor sending you notes, 'Do this, do that, change this, change that.' It got to the point that I hated going to work.

Smith preferred playing vaudeville at Loew's, and dinner shows like those at the Latin Quarter to Broadway musicals.

> [In vaudeville] I used to get to play bows. And during the bows I'd scream…I'd get to play something I felt like playing. Musicals you just played the notes, and God help you if you changed one note. You don't change anything, you don't

> play an octave higher, you don't do anything different from what was there till you can't stand it anymore.

Smith's remarks relate to sociologist Howard S. Becker's arguments in "The Professional Dance Musician and His Audience" (1951). Becker claims that the dance musicians he interviewed had a desire to "live in terms of the creative principle," and recognized the many forces that influenced them to abandon that principle.[68] The musicians felt that they needed to "go commercial" in order to succeed.[69] Similarly, Dick Smith relinquished some of his creative autonomy—playing jazz (i.e. improvising during the bows and playing solos on "Night and Day") in vaudeville and at the Latin Quarter—in order to further his career. As previously mentioned, Smith took the *Happy Hunting* gig because he thought a show starring Ethel Merman would guarantee him employment for five or more years, not because it provided a creative outlet.

Even though many of the same production numbers were recycled at Loew's and the Latin Quarter, the music changed frequently enough to keep Smith on his toes and interested. New acts and headliners frequently came in from out of town. "It was always new music, and you could blow. In the pit [Broadway] you were sucking on the horn [playing softly]." Under Blackton, for example, Smith had to be conscious of how loud he played. Every day was different according to how the singer felt. "Like when Ethel Merman was up there. When her throat wasn't feeling so good, then his [Blackton's] left hand was there all the time, in your face. So you never could really blow. You were always just holding back, and not blowing hard." Smith remembers musicals when he sat next to Paul Cohen, who later played lead trumpet for Count Basie. Smith did not realize

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[68] Howard S. Becker, "The Professional Dance Musician and His Audience," *American Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 2 (September 1951), 140.
[69] Ibid.

how accomplished a trumpeter Cohen was until years later when he saw videos of him on YouTube. “I used to play with him…and I never knew he played that good…So, I listened to him play, and he played I don’t even know how high, must have been a double C, and he’d get up high, and lip trill, like trilling on an F or a G.” Pit orchestras were, and still are, full of musicians that could have solo careers. After playing nothing but musicals for a few years, trumpeters—according to Smith—lost their edge. “You better practice like hell,” otherwise, one will cease to grow as an artist. Smith joined a rehearsal band full of pit musicians that met on Saturday nights after musicals were over “just to get away from that music we played every day.” Rehearsal bands, much like Colin’s trumpet studio, served as the commercial musician’s jam session. They were a place for musicians to network, exchange ideas, and play music that was different from their regular gigs. But meeting only once a week with such a band was not enough for Smith. “I really shouldn’t have stayed [in musicals], because I went downhill playing in a musical.” Playing the same notes exactly the same way night after night took its toll on Smith. He missed being challenged artistically.

CHAPTER V

LIFE AFTER NEW YORK AND CONCLUSIONS

Producing Rice Cakes

Smith moved to Chico, California in 1961 when he and several other New York musicians, including trumpeter Bob Kennedy, decided they wanted to produce food. Smith met Kennedy when they played at the Roxy Theater in New York. Kennedy later played lead trumpet in the CBS orchestra for thirteen years. Not long after Smith and Kennedy arrived in Chico they started renting a little room on Second Ave to start their food business.

> We wanted to produce food, and we ended up finding this rice cake, and mass producing it. We had to make the machine to be able to make the product. See, you can, that's another thing I found out in my life. You can do anything you want if you want to do it. I mean, people think they have to know something to do it. We didn't know anything about electricity or machinery, Bob [Kennedy] and I. We didn't know anything. We knew how to play trumpet. But, we ended up building a factory, and making a machine to make the product, and producing, and hiring people.

They named their rice cake company Chico-San because one of their partners was a Japanese man, and "'san' is like 'mama san,' 'papa san.' So we named our company Chico-San" (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Advertisement for Chico-San Rice Cakes

I cannot say that Smith, Kennedy, and company invented the rice cake, but they are responsible for the product in the form we know today. In 1963 George Ohsawa, a macrobiotics expert, informed Kennedy that puffed rice cakes were popular in Japan, and there were machines available to mechanically manufacture them.[70] Smith and Kennedy had one of these machines shipped from Japan, but they found it "required a strenuous effort to stamp out individual crackers."[71] The machine frequently sent many of their employees to the chiropractor. As a result, they designed a new, user-friendly machine that could produce enough rice cakes to meet market demand. Chico-San grew, and

[70] For a history of the rice cake and its development in the United States, see William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, *History of Soybeans and Soyfoods in Japan, and In Japanese Cookbooks and Restaurants Outside Japan (701 CE to 2014)* (Soyinfo Center, 2014), 2078. Also see Leonard Jacobs, "The Chico San Story: Popularizing rice cakes in America, *East West Journal,* April 1982, 58-61.
[71] Ibid.

opened a handful of factories throughout the United States. The company also offered a variety of other Japanese health foods, including miso and tamari. By 1984, Smith and Kennedy were ready to retire from the food industry, and sold Chico-San to Heinz.[72] The Quaker Oats Company bought Chico-San from Heinz in 1993, and acquired its Gridley, California plant (just outside Chico), which employed about one hundred people.[73]

Musical Opportunities for Smith in Chico

Not long after Smith arrived in Chico a real-estate man called, and said that he heard Smith played the trumpet. Smith told the man he no longer played, but his wife said, "Yes he does!" The man invited Smith to play at The Drop in Club on Broadway in Chico (where La Salles is now), which he owned. That Friday night, Smith put on his tuxedo just like he used to for all of his New York jobs. "I went over there, and I swung open the doors, and I'm standing there in a tuxedo, and all the drunks are at the bar, and their pants hanging out, their ass sticking out." The scene was not what he was used to. The band stand was small, and the piano player was drunk. The drummer was dressed in cowboy attire. Smith took off his jacket as soon as he got on stage. By the time the first set ended, he was down to just his short-sleeve under-shirt. The first hour of music he played with the band was comprised of tunes he did not know. "They were playing tunes that were famous out here, I guess." But Smith's aural skills helped him improvise his way through the evening. "I played that as if I had been playing with them for years." After the band finished that night, the owner asked if they could all play at the club three

[72] "Quaker Oats to Buy No. 2 Rice-Cake Brand From Heinz," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, May 19, 1993, accessed May 18, 2018, http://libproxy.uoregon.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/docview/109177526?accountid=14698.
[73] Ibid.

nights a week. Smith said, "Sure, because I am not making a dime anywhere," and the rice cake business had not taken off yet.

Smith also got a gig playing at the Silver Room with Murry Slim's band. According to Smith the group was terrible, and Slim played the piano like "chomp, chomp, chomp, really bad." Slim apparently did not know how to voice many chords either. Thus, Smith "played in the key of C for a year." The group had a lot of tunes, but they played all of them in C so that Slim could manage. "So, not only did I have to play a tune I didn't know, I had to play it in the key of C." Slim finally learned another key, which Smith believes was F. The important thing is that Smith was never out of work, just like when he lived in New York. The entire time he and Kennedy built their rice cake company he worked as a musician every weekend.

A third group Smith played in was a drum, trumpet, and organ trio. He really enjoyed playing in this group because his was the only horn, and was free to play whatever he wanted. In other words, he did not have to blend with other players in a horn section. Smith played with the bell of his trumpet about an inch away from the microphone. Even though he played softly into the mic, his sound seemed really big due to the amplification. "If I ever played a 'hah' sound like I did in that job [Latin Quarter], then one of those dancers [from the Chico gigs] would run out screaming, and hold their ears." In order to sound the way he preferred, Smith played softly, right into the microphone. This was quite different from his Broadway days in which he was never amplified.

Retirement in Tahoe

After Chico-San sold to Heinz, Smith and his wife moved to Tahoe. It was not long after the move that Smith began gigging yet again. Someone told him about a band in Carson City, Nevada, and when Smith went down to check out the band he was underwhelmed: "They sounded like a lousy bunch of guys." Two men covered the first book, and three were on the third part, which completely distorted the balance of the band. One of the trumpeters had to leave early, so Smith sat in for the remainder of the rehearsal. Afterward, the band leader asked Smith if he could join them on a European tour. Smith declined. Still in need of a musical outlet, Smith looked up another friend of his, Al Shay, to find a better place to play. Al said, "What do you mean you went to Carson City? What are you doing there? Come play with my band." Smith joined Shay's band in Reno for a while. However, the Smiths decided to move back to Chico, and bought a house next to my aunt and uncle, where they still reside.

Chuck Cameron, who played with Smith at the Latin Quarter, came to visit the Smiths when they still lived in Tahoe. Cameron started playing musicals when Smith moved to Chico. During his visit, Cameron told Smith of his successes on Broadway. Smith left New York a bit too soon perhaps. "The shows I played in were bombs, and he [Cameron] got in after I left, started playing shows, and everyone was a smash hit. He played *Annie*. He played *Dolly… Hello, Dolly!*...Real big hits."

Stroke

About four years ago, Smith suffered a stroke that made it nearly impossible for him to play his horn again.

> I tried to play the trumpet a couple of times, just picked it up to blow. I know why, because I remember now when Benny Baker taught me and Doc Severinsen. One of the first things he taught us, he says, 'Firm corners and soft in the middle,' he says, 'And you got to tighten your lips.' You keep the corners firm, and then you just blow. And I forgot that, [and] now that I had the stroke I remember that because I couldn't play. Because I had no corners. This one side of my mouth was down like this. So I had no corner there.

When Harry James was in the hospital he told a friend of Smith's that "When you lose the corners you lose the sound. When you lose the sound, you lose the nerve. When you lose your nerve, you put it [the horn] in the case, and put it in the closet."

Conclusion

Dick Smith accomplished a great deal in his brief tenure as a professional musician in New York (See Figure 8, a list Smith made before his stroke of all the people he remembers playing with). He began as a bugler in a youth drum and bugle corps, and then switched to trumpet around age ten. He learned the instrument by playing along with radio broadcasts of his favorite bands. This practice developed his aural skills, and taught him how to play in a variety of popular music styles. In high school, Smith joined a dance band, where he learned to play in a trumpet section, sharpened his sight-reading skills, and strengthened his ability to convincingly play in various styles. I argued that the dance bands served as a commercial musician's conservatory, and prepared Smith for the musical theater work he would take on later in his career. The music Smith played in the Borscht Belt and Louis Prima's band also served as a precursor to musical theater. Smith

preferred performing in pit orchestras at Loew's State Theater (vaudeville) and the Latin Quarter (night club) to pit orchestras in Broadway musicals because they did not restrict his creativity as much as musicals did.

Adding Dick Smith's life to the historical record forces us to ask several questions about jazz and musical theater histories, among others. First, how important was radio in the development of commercial musicians like Smith? How many dance band musicians turned to musical theater after the Swing Era? Did the influx of these musicians to Broadway alter the sound of pit orchestras, or influence how orchestrators arranged their music? What roles do pit musicians play in musical theater? How do these roles differ in various musical theater contexts, such as vaudeville, night clubs, and Broadway musical comedies. Have these roles changed over the years, especially after the advent of electronic instruments? Answers to these questions and more can be discovered when we continue to document and research the lives of musicians like Dick Smith.

BANDS. LOUIS PRIMA 16 YEARS OLD
ENOCHE LIGHT
GEORGIE AULD
TOMMY TUCKER
ART MOONEY
RAYMOND SCOTT
LES ELGART
RAY McKINLEY
RAY EBERLE
GUY LOMBARDO
VINCENT LOPEZ
JOHNNY MESSNER
BOBBY BYRN
BLUE BARON
RICHARD HIMBER
TED LEWIS
HENRY JEROME
ORRIN TUCKER
HARRY JAMES
GRAY GORDON
JOHNNY RICHARDSON
DON REDMOND
GRAY GORDON

PLAY RADIO SHOW WITH
ENOCHE LIGHT
GUEST BAND LEADERS
WOODY HERMAN
RANDY BROOKS
LES. BROWN
BUDDY RICH
JIMMY DORSEY etc.
LATIN BANDS
ERNESTO LECUONA'S
CUBAN BOY'S
TITO PUENTE
" RODRIGUEZ
PUPI CAMPO
MIGUELITO VALDEZ
CHICO O'FARRIL
MUSICALS. BROADWAY
REDHEAD, HAPPY HUNTING
ETHEL MERMAN A FEW
OTHERS

Figure 8: List of people and bands Smith played with. Courtesy of Dick Smith

APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This appendix includes information about Smith's life that is not relevant to musical theater, but provides background on Smith's musical education and professional experiences. The following subsections are in no particular order.

Trumpet Lessons and Teachers

One of Smith's trumpet teachers early on was Benny Baker. Baker always compared Smith to Doc Severinsen, and told Smith that he did not practice enough. Doc, on the other hand, would "get up at eight o'clock in the morning, even if he was drunk the night before, and practice for three hours." Baker accused Smith of taking the horn out of the case, playing a few notes, and then putting it back in the case, satisfied that he had played enough. Smith remembers Baker telling him, "That's why Doc is going to be a great trumpet player, and you're not." Doc Severinsen was a household name once he became the band leader for the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson. Smith realizes, "When I came out in the end, forty years later, I thought he [Baker] was right. Because I never sat down and really practiced."

Gino Bozzacco told Smith that he should take a lesson from Izzy Black, who was the first trumpet player at the Met. When Smith arrived at his lesson early one morning, Black told him to warm up. "I don't warm up. I never warm up." Smith picked up his horn, and played middle G to low C, then up to a high G. "I swear to God that was the biggest, most beautiful high G I ever hit in my life." That night, when Smith went to work at the Latin Quarter, Bozzacco had already heard of Smith's feat earlier that

morning. Apparently Bozzacco heard Black telling another trumpeter from the Met about this guy who picked up his horn at eight in the morning, and played a beautiful high G. Black told Smith that Izzy said, "You would have taken your horn and thrown it out the window" if you had heard it.

Smith realizes that for a lead trumpet player he did not have a great range. However, he could play up to high G all day and night. Friends of Smith, such as Leon Merian, could hit double high Cs that Smith could only dream of playing. That is why Smith was always looking for a different teacher. He was constantly looking for someone that had a method to improve his range. Because Smith's colleagues—such as Paul Cohen, Al Porcino, and Leon Merian—could all play double high Cs effortlessly, Smith never thought his Gs were that impressive.

Smith studied under Carmine Caruso when the famed pedagogue first began teaching in New York. Smith remembers Caruso as an accomplished saxophonist with an excellent ear. During their first lesson, Caruso had Smith blow as hard and loud as he could through the horn. Right away, "I found out from him, you don't play loud just by blowing a lot of air…And he showed me to play loud without blowing my brains out." Overblowing the horn led to fighting the horn.

Caruso also taught Smith how to pop the horn. The idea is to hear the pitch that comes out of the horn after banging one's hand into end of the mouthpiece. That is supposed to be the pitch of the horn. "See, most guys will start blowing, and getting all screwed up with the mouthpieces trying to make the sound. And then I was lucky. I never had to do that…Carmine showed me, pop the horn, get the pitch, and play that pitch, and you get this beautiful sound that comes out." Smith argues that this helps a player avoid

fighting his or her horn. “Most guys, the pitch of the horn will be dah [sings a note], and then they blow ehh [sings a not slightly sharper than the previous note], above the pitch. And they are fighting the horn.” Once Caruso showed Smith how to pop the horn, playing the trumpet became even easier for him.

Smith also learned the following from Caruso:

> With Carmine, you don’t play the room. Like when you’re in a theater in New York, you have these curtains when you got out on the stage go play, like in Birdland. To play, it [the sound] disappears. It’s gone….So when we were kids first starting to play, we all played strong and loud, you know. And that’s the way we played. When we were strong enough that we could do it, we played these curtains that were hanging that just took the sound and disappeared. But Carmine taught us not to play that sound, the room. Because you’d kill yourself. You’d practice, and you’d know what loud is from the way you play…You’d blow the horn, and you’d know that’s loud. So, you don’t go to a room, and go ahhh and it doesn’t sound that loud, that doesn’t make any difference. That’s loud. That’s what you play…You gotta know what loud is when you pick up the horn to play. And if you don’t, if you try to play loud, and you go into that room, and you don’t hear the sound, you forced it to make that sound, you’d kill yourself.”

Potentially a Great Player

> Everybody said I was potentially great. Down Beat, they wrote, I was with Georgie Auld, a great jazz band, and they reviewed the band in Chicago, and they mentioned everybody’s name except for me. So, then Georgie answers, the band leader answers, saying how it was the greatest band he ever had, and he said, “And don’t overlook Dick Smith.” And whether he said Smith or Smitz, he said don’t overlook Dick Smith, who is potentially a great trumpet player.

Art Mooney’s Band

Smith played a few dates with Art Mooney’s band in New York. At Charlie’s Tavern one night, Mooney asked Smith to join the band in Los Angeles. Smith regretted agreeing to go before the band even got to Los Angeles. They played ninety-one one nighters on their way to the West Coast. “When we got there, he fired the whole band

except me, and another trumpet player…he only kept about four of us, and then he hired all musicians from Los Angeles." One of those musicians was Henry Mancini.

While Smith was in Los Angeles he went to a shop that manufactured mouthpieces. The man at the shop asked Smith to play First Call. "You don't need a mouthpiece," said the man. Smith was recruited as a mouthpiece salesman, despite the fact that he did not purchase or play on one from the Los Angeles shop. Once Smith got back to New York, several of his colleagues, including Bernie Glow, and three other studio musicians, asked for mouthpieces. The mouthpieces arrived on the day of a recording session, and Glow told Smith to bring them to the session. "It was a famous album…one of the best jazz players…they were making an album for him. A Spanish album. There was hard fingering for the trumpet section, and they were having trouble playing these parts. So, they took the mouthpieces I gave them, and put them on there, and it was worse than their own mouthpieces." That record date, which Smith sat in on, was for Miles Davis's *Sketches of Spain* (1959). The trumpeters ended up returning the mouthpieces to Smith.

Musicians' Antics

A conductor Smith knew hired him to play on a record date for a movie soundtrack. When Smith arrived at the studio, the other trumpeters, Ernie Royal and Leon Merian, had left the first chair open. Smith played lead for about two hours, and was ready to trade parts with one of his colleagues, which was common practice during long recording sessions. "Ernie Royal had something on his lip, and everybody had something, pimple or they were out late last night. They all had excuses."

Hours of playing lead eventually took a toll on Smith's embouchure. One piece they recorded had a lot of high Es and Fs, and shakes. "I figured one of these guys would do it, because they are all guys that play these things with one hand (and they all had jazz backgrounds)." The next piece was a light interlude that started on a B-flat above the staff, which had to be played pianissimo. "And after I played that thing [the piece before] my sound wasn't a big and beautiful sound. It was the sound of a tired trumpet player." In fact, Smith thinks Merian felt sorry for him, and could tell he was hurting. The men did not move positions, but Merian played Smith's part from his chair to give his friend a break. Merian cracked the first B-flat. Smith says we will never forget what Merian said right after his clam, "You getting tired there, Dick? I'll take it?" Smith thought to himself, "That's a lot of bullshit that happens." After the session, Smith spoke to the conductor, who knew that Merian was the one who split the note. Smith said, "You don't have to do that. But you'll meet people like that. You better just ignore it."

Jam Sessions

Smith rarely frequented New York jam sessions due to his own performance schedule. One night, however, Smith was with a friend who knew Charlie Parker, and the friend took Smith to New Jersey to see Parker perform at a "wealthy person's home." Smith laughingly said, "But I listened to Charlie Parker and the guys, I wasn't going to take out my horn and play with them, you know." Smith used to see Parker perform in various bars. One night, he asked Parker, "How do you play all the right notes when you play jazz." Parker told him that there are no right notes; they are all good notes. This

made sense to Smith, “That’s why he [Parker] could play that, what he played. Because there’s no wrong notes. He just played whatever came out, and he made it sound good.”

Latin Bands

Smith joined Tito Puente’s band when it first formed. One of the trumpeters that Puente hired was Smith’s first band leader in high school. He recommended Smith to Puente. Smith also played with the Lecuona Cuban Boys. As a result, Smith claims he “ended playing a terrific conga drum.” Smith remembers performing with these bands.

> I’d play with them old Spanish music, and also got out in front, and danced around playing the trumpet. Like in a show, I was the only trumpet player, and they had a girl singer go around me while I played the trumpet. And then they had me play the trumpet with a stick, instead of using fingers. Make it a little harder…
>
> I always knew what I wanted to do, like Vincent Lopez. I knew that show, I did a substitute in that show. I said that’s the show for me, that’s what I need because it was luncheon with Lopez and dinner. And you played in the afternoon for lunch, and then you were off for two or three hours, and then you went to work, and you played the night. And then you were off. After that you didn’t play all night. So, I thought that was great. I said that’s a show, I gotta get that show. Once I concentrated on something it usually ended up that I got it. So, I got that show, and I stayed there a couple of years.

Guy Lombardo

Guy Lombardo used to call Smith to sub in his band. Apparently Lombardo’s trumpet playing brother, Lebert Lombardo, was a drunk, and often did not show up to gigs. Lombardo asked Smith how much money he wanted to fly out to Indiana for a show. Smith told him he would do it for fifty dollars a day, and if Lombardo covered the cost of the plane ticket. Because Smith had heard the band on the radio so often, he had

no trouble blending with the group, and "played just like his [Guy Lombardo's] brother." Whenever Lebert was on a bender, Smith was Guy's first-call sub.

Figure 9: Photo of Smith and me at his home during the September 6, 2017 interview.

APPENDIX B

RELEASE FORM

I, Richard R. Smith, give Ryan Nason permission to use my name, likeness (including reproductions of photographs), and any other information I provided him in the three interviews he conducted on the dates listed below.

Interview Dates:

28 February 2015, Chico CA

6 September 2017, Chico CA

20 December 2017, Chico CA

I acknowledge that this information will/may be used for Ryan Nason's Master's Thesis at the University of Oregon, and any of his future writings.

Signature: Richard R. Smith

Date: 12/20/2017

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