

The
FLUTE
of
ALBERTO SOCARRAS

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last updated: July 25, 2011

Born: Manzanillo, Cuba, Sept. 19, 1908
Died: NYC. Aug. 26, 1987

Introduction:

Alberto Socarras was, apart from being a very competent performer on clarinet and alto sax, the earliest flutist in jazz, beating Wayman Carver narrowly. That is one good reason for making his flute solography. Another one is the very good quality of his flute playing.

History:

After playing with local orchestras moved to the U.S.A. and began a regular series of recordings with Clarence Williams. With 'Blackbirds' shows from 1928 until 1933, including tour of Europe. Briefly with Benny Carter in 1933, then formed own band, in 1934 again visited Europe, this time as musical director to an all-girls' band. With Sam Wooding in 1935, then again formed own band. Worked with Erskine Hawkins for '1937 Cotton Club Parade', then again formed band for residency at Harlem Uproar House from September 1937. From 1939 regularly led own band, residencies include: Glen Island Casino, Boston Beachcomber, Rendezvous Inn, etc... For many years specialized in classical flute playing - gave solo performance at Carnegie Hall in 1945 and was solo flautist in first performance of Eddie Bonnemere's 'Missa Hooierna' (May 1966). (Ref. John Chilton).

ALBERTO SOCARRAS SOLOGRAPHY

CLARENCE WILLIAMS' ORCHESTRA **NYC. July 1927**
Ed Allen (cnt), Charlie Irvis (tb), possibly Arville Harris (cl, as), Alberto Socarras (fl, cl, sop), Clarence Williams (p), Cyrus St. Clair (tu).
Two titles were recorded for Paramount, one has flute.

2837-2 Shooting The Pistol Solo with ens 24 bars. (FM)

Possibly this is the first recorded flute solo in jazz! That it is rather modest and pretty much arranged does not matter much in this context!

EVA TAYLOR **NYC. June 2, 1928**
Ed Allen (cnt), Alberto Socarras (fl), Buster Bailey (cl, sop), Clarence Williams (p), David Martin (cello), Eva Taylor (vo).
Two titles were recorded for Okeh but no flute soli.

LIZZIE MILES **NYC. June 30, 1928**
Joe "King" Oliver (cnt), Alberto Socarras (fl, as), Clarence Williams (p), Lizzie Miles (vo).
Two titles were recorded for Columbia one has flute:

146430-6 You're Such A Cruel Papa To Me Obbligato 48 bars. (M)

An interesting item with a lot of background playing, not too well recorded but enough to understand his qualities as an innovator on the instrument.

ADELAIDE HALL VOCAL ACC. BY LEW LESLIE'S BLACKBIRDS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Aug. 14, 1928**
Bigband personnel including Alberto Socarras (fl, cl, as).
Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, but no flute soli.

EVA TAYLOR **NYC. Dec. 20, 1928**
Ed Allen (cnt), Alberto Socarras (fl, cl), Russell Procope (as), Clarence Williams (p), Cyrus St. Clair (tu), Eva Taylor (vo).
Two titles were recorded for Okeh but no flute soli.

CLARENCE WILLIAMS' JAZZ KINGS **NYC. Feb. 5, 1929**
Ed Allen (cnt), Arville Harris (cl, ts), Alberto Socarras (fl, cl, as), James P. Johnson (p), Clarence Williams (vo, ldr), possibly Leroy Harris (bjo).
Two titles were recorded for Columbia, one has flute:

147928-3 Have You Ever Felt That Way? Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. (FM)

This is a real jazz solo, even with growl (!) and one of the very best AS has left us on the flute.

LAZY LEEVEE LOUNGERS **NYC. June 25, 1930**
Charlie Gaines, unknown (tp), Alberto Socarras (fl, cl, as), Prince Robinson (cl, ts), Clarence Williams (p, vo), Leroy Harris (bjo), Cyrus St. Clair (tu).
Two titles were recorded for Columbia but no flute soli.

CLARENCE WILLIAMS' HIS JAZZ KINGS **NYC. July 23, 1930**
Unknown (tp, (tb), (cl, as), (cl, ts), Alberto Socarras (fl, cl, as), Clarence Williams (p), probably Leroy Harris (bjo), unknown (tu).
Two titles were recorded for Columbia, one has flute:

150659-2 High Society Blues Solo/straight with (ts) 32 bars. (FM)

Relaxed and swinging, lovely performance!

BENNETT'S SWAMPLANDERS **NYC. Sept. 5, 1930**
Walter Bennett (tp), unknown (tb), Alberto Socarras (fl, cl), J. C. Johnson (p), Bernard Addison (g), unknown (tu), (vo).
Three titles were recorded for Columbia, one has flute:

150768-2 You Can't Be Mine Long intro. (S). Duet with (tp) 32
And Someone Else's Too bars to obbligato 32 bars. (M)

This seems to be AS' most important recorded flute performance, and it is just so regrettable that he did not have the opportunities he deserved, as a pioneer on his instrument and a very professional performer. Should have liked to have a chase with Wayman Carver!

WOODING's GRAND CENTRAL RED CAPS NYC. May 20, 1931

Two unknown (tp), possibly Benny Morton (tb), Alberto Socarras (fl, as), two unknown (reeds), unknown (p), (bjo), (tu), Percy Robinson (dm), Dick Robertson (vo).

One title was recorded for Victor:

69609-4 That's My Desire Straight in orch 16+8 bars, (tb) on bridge.
Obbligato 32 bars. (M)

The last recorded flute performance by this great artist, giving his personal stamp on this item, as well as playing very nice background.

As you see below, AS was in good shape for several decades, and we sorely miss the flute sessions he so definitely deserved!

BABS GONZALES

NYC. April 27, 1949

J. J. Johnson (tb), Alberto Socarras (fl), Don Redman (sop), Sonny Rollins (ts), Wynton Kelly (p), possibly Ray Nance (vln), Bruce Lawrence (b, vo), Roy Haynes (dm), Babs Gonzales (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Capitol, but no flute soli.

No further recording sessions.

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