



MEDIA RELEASE

Memorial for Connee Boswell and the Boswell Sisters

Event: October 11, 2006

More Information: Yvette Voelker 504-452-3657; Cynthia Lucas 512-740-4412

Press Kit available at www.bozzies.com/press

A Second Line Parade and Memorial in Honor of the Boswell Sisters Marks the 30th Anniversary of Connee's Death

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana, September 28 –Bozzies.com and the Pfister Sisters will honor the lives and music of New Orleans' own Connee Boswell and the Boswell Sisters with a Second Line parade and Memorial Wake in their honor. The second line will begin at the corner of Decatur and St. Ann at 6 PM on Wednesday, October 11, 2006. The parade will end at the Spotted Cat jazz club at 623 Frenchmen Street where a memorial wake will be held. The Pfister Sisters will provide entertainment with songs made famous by the Boswell Sisters beginning at 7:00 PM. A short documentary on the life of Connee Boswell and the Boswell Sisters by The Swing Shift will be presented at 8:00 PM. The public is invited to join in the Second Line and Memorial Wake at the Spotted Cat.

"When Connee Boswell passed away she was living in New York City," recalls David McCain, New Orleans native and biographer of the Boswell Sisters. "Although Connee always thought of New Orleans as her hometown, her services and burial took place in New York. She and her sisters would have loved the idea of a second line through the streets of the Quarter in their honor."

The Boswell Sisters left New Orleans in 1928 to seek fame and fortune and returned in triumph in October 1932 after their jazz-infused harmony singing took the world by storm on network radio, on records and in the movies. On that trip they were met at the L&N Train Station on Canal Street by the mayor's limousine and taken by police escort to the Roosevelt Hotel. There they were honored by the city for their success as ambassadors of New Orleans music and given a sirens-blazing ride to their home at 3937 Camp Street.

"This won't be the first parade in New Orleans for the Boswell Sisters," said Bozzies.com Director Cynthia Lucas. "But there was no memorial for Connee or either of her sisters in this city when they died. These women changed the course of popular music. They continue to draw new fans over 80 years after they made their first record for Victor in a practice room at Werleins Music

Store. They deserve to be honored as beloved daughters of New Orleans and to take their place among the great artists from this city.”

Vocal blending, tempo changes and their wonderful ability to swing a song have kept the Boswell Sound fresh and exciting. Their success is made all the more amazing by the fact that Connee spent most of her life in a wheelchair after a bout with polio left her legs partially paralyzed.

“Their incredible music alone would be enough to make us remember them,” said Lucas. “When you add their story of devotion to one another and understand the courage it took to for Connee to carry on a successful career on her own, it’s a memory worth celebrating.”

Marriage and family ended the careers of Martha and Vet Boswell in 1936. Connee Boswell went on as a solo act, appearing in films, on Broadway and on TV including a feature role in NBC’s 1959 series “Pete Kelly’s Blues.” She recorded many hits during her career including several chart-topping duets with Bing Crosby. She continued to perform until a year before her death and made her final appearance with Benny Goodman in New York in 1975.

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About the Pfister Sisters

The Pfister Sisters, Holley Bendtsen, Yvette Voelker and Debbie Davis, are New Orleans artists who have made the music of the Boswell Sisters the foundation of their repertoire. The group was founded over 20 years ago and has appeared regularly in New Orleans and across the nation at top jazz festivals. The Pfisters latest honor was to be selected as New Orleans’ artists in residence at Abbaye aux Dames in Saintes, France. This sojourn will take them to a nunnery in the Bordeaux region where they will perform throughout the month of November and early December.

Bozzies.com

The first website devoted exclusively to the Boswell Sisters and Connee Boswell, Bozzies.com features bios, articles, pictures, interviews and music from the Boswell Sisters and Connee Boswell, as well as podcasts and features on musicians who perform their music and the fans who still avidly enjoy them.

QUOTES AND COMMENTARY

Connee Boswell

"Who influenced me? There was only one singer who influenced me. I tried to sing like her all the time because everything she did made sense musically and that singer was Connee Boswell. When I was a girl I listened to all the singers, black and white, and I know that Connie Boswell was doing things that no one else was doing at the time. You don't have to take my word for it. Just check the recordings made at the time and hear for yourself." *Ella Fitzgerald*

"Connee Boswell is, without a doubt, the most widely imitated singer of all time." *Frank Sinatra*

"She (Connie Boswell) was my favorite gal - I called her Sister Constance and she called me Brother Bingstance. A great lady with boundless courage and divine talent. I loved her". *Bing Crosby*



The Boswell Sisters

Classic Jazz: The Essential Listening Companion
by Scott Yanow

There were many sister vocal groups in the 1920s including the Keller Sisters and Lynch (who recorded with Jean Goldkette), the Brox Sisters and the Hannah Sisters. Most at best featured appealing voices and little else, but the Boswell Sisters were on a completely different level all together. Not only were they the finest of all the sister groups of the last century, but the Boswell Sisters were arguably the best vocal jazz ensemble prior to Lambert, Hendricks and Ross of the late 1950s.

Martha (1905-58), Connie (later known as "Connee") (1907-1976) and Helvetia (better known as "Vet") (1911-88) were raised in New Orleans. Connie contracted polio at age three and was never able to walk. Each of the sisters played instruments early on with Connie learning cello, piano, sax and trombone, Vet playing violin and banjo, and Martha, the only one to record playing an instrument*, became an exceptional pianist.

After creating a stir in Los Angeles in the 1920s where they appeared on radio five nights a week, they began recording in 1930. From the very start they offered something different than most vocal groups of the time. Their adventurous arrangements, done mostly by Connie and Martha, had surprise tempo and key changes, mixed together lyrics and hot scatting, built up to unpredictable conclusions and swung hard. Connie was almost always the solo voice, but the harmonies of Vet and Martha were just as important.

Although some radio listeners called in to ask where the melody was and many assumed that the white siblings were African Americans, the Boswell Sisters became a hit in 1931 when they appeared at New York's Paramount Hotel.

The Boswell Sisters had spots in several films (the best is "Crazy People" in 1932's *Big Broadcast*), they toured Europe in 1933 and 1935 and, other than the Mills Brothers, they had no competition among jazz vocal groups. Many of their records featured top jazz soloists including Bunny Berrigan, the Dorsey Brothers and Joe Venutti, and they still sound fresh and exciting today.

The group came to a premature end in 1936 when all three sisters got married and Martha and Vet decided to retire. Connie Boswell, whom Ella Fitzgerald always cited as her main influence, continued with her solo career that included memorable recordings with Bob Crosby's orchestra, short appearances in a number of movies, Broadway revues and a role in the late 1950s television series "Pete Kelly's Blues".

The Sisters and Connie made over 300 sides, sold over 75 million records and are still delightful to listen to decades after their last recording.



Times Picayune Lagniappe, December 2003

The three Boswell girls grew up in New Orleans early in the 20th century, absorbing the same varied African and European influences as pioneering jazz instrumentalists. They formed a vocal trio and moved first to the West Coast, then New York. Featured on a national radio show, they helped usher in the swing era, enjoying widespread acclaim until two of the sisters married and the group dissolved in the 1930s. But they left a lasting impression on scores of singers, most notably the Andrews Sisters, of "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" fame, and Ella Fitzgerald.

"The Boswells were so influential on American music and so successful that nobody realizes that they are indigenous to New Orleans," Bendtsen said. "The whole

jazz vocal group thing was started by two groups: The Boswell Sisters and the Mills Brothers. And the Boswells recorded first, in 1925, right along with Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong."

Period obituaries, "Ambassador of Harmony" documents, hi-res photos and additional information available at www.bozzies.com/press