

Petite Fleur (Little Flower)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 14 October 2011 16:15 - Last Updated Sunday, 15 March 2015 19:40

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Who was the New Orleans jazz pioneer who did most to make this music a unique art form? When this question is asked, the name of Louis Armstrong invariably comes to mind, and rightly so. But there is another jazz musician whose name deserves to be coupled with Armstrong as the greatest of the New Orleans Jazz players. His name is **Sidney Bechet**.

In fact, Sidney Bechet was the first important jazz soloist on records in history (beating Louis Armstrong by a few months).

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Sidney Bechet was born in New Orleans in May 1897, of Creole ancestry, grew up in a middle class environment. His father, Omar, who was a shoemaker, played the flute as a hobby. Indeed, music had an important role in the Bechet household, as Sidney's four brothers also played instruments.



Creole Jazz in New Orleans 1921

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Sidney Bechet studied clarinet in New Orleans with Lorenzo Tio, Big Eye Louis Nelson, and George Baquet and he developed so quickly that as a child he was playing with some of the top bands in the city.



Sidney Bechet in New Orleans

Bechet left New Orleans for the first time when he was 19, traveling to Chicago with pianist, Clarence Williams and his variety show. Here Bechet came to the attention of the noted Swiss Conductor, **Ernst Ansermet**, who conducted the music of Stravinsky for the Ballets Russa. Ansermet wrote in a Swiss musical Journal, *"The extraordinary clarinet virtuoso Bechet is an artist of genius!"*



Sidney Bechet

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Bechet made his recording debut in 1923 and during the next two years he appeared on records backing blues singers, interacting with Louis Armstrong and playing some stunning solos.

Most of the 1930s were comparatively lean times for Bechet. He worked with Noble Sissle on and off and had a brilliant session with his New Orleans Feetwarmers in 1932 (featuring trumpeter **Tommy Ladnier**).



Tommy Ladnier - trumpeter

Though starting out as a clarinetist, Bechet eventually became even better known as a virtuoso of the soprano saxophone. He first tried to play on a beat-up old soprano sax he purchased in a pawn shop. Such was the difficulty of the soprano sax; an instrument extremely difficult to play in tune that he gave up and obtained his money back from the pawnbroker. A year later in London, he purchased a brand new instrument and tried again. This time he was successful and succeeded in making the soprano saxophone an important voice in jazz.



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Sidney Bechet

Sidney Bechet's fortunes changed drastically in 1949. He was invited to the **Salle Pleyel Jazz Festival** in Paris, caused a sensation, and decided to move permanently overseas. Within a couple years he was a major celebrity and a national hero in France, even though the general public in the U.S. never did know who he was.

Much of the latter part of his life, he spent in France. Many of his compositions are inspired by his love for that country. In 1951 Bechet wrote a successful instrumental piece **Petite Fleur**. It was recorded in January 1952 with the **Sidney Bechet All Stars**.



Chris Barber's Jazz Band

In 1959 it was a big hit for **Chris Barber's Jazz Band**. Following the Chris Barber instrumental recording, lyrics were added by **Fernand Bonifay** (french) and **Mario Bua**

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(spanish) in the same year.

The French version was first released by **Henri Salvador** in **1959**.



Henri Salvador

It was in Europe that Bechet achieved his greatest success and where eventually made his home, but he never forgot the New Orleans tradition that nurtured and inspired him.



Fernand Bonifay

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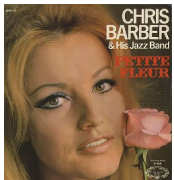
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His last decade was filled with exciting concerts, many recordings, and infrequent visits back to the U.S. before his death from cancer. Bechet died in Paris, France, on his 62nd birthday, May 14, 1959.

Petite Fleur

J'ai caché Mieux que partout ailleurs Au grand jardin de mon coeur Une petite fleur Cette fleur Plus jolie qu'un bouquet Elle garde en secret Tous mes rêves d'enfant L'amour de mes parents Et tous ces clairs matins Fait d'heureux souvenirs lointains Quand la vie Par moments me trahi Tu restes mon bonheur Petite fleur Sur mes vingt ans Je m'arrête un moment Pour respirer Le parfum que j'ai tant aimé Dans mon coeur Tu fleuriras toujours Au grand jardin d'amour Petite fleur Quand la vie Par moments me trahi Tu restes mon bonheur Petite fleur Sur mes vingt ans Je m'arrête un moment Pour respirer Le parfum que j'ai tant aimé Dans mon coeur Tu fleuriras toujours Au grand jardin d'amour Petite fleur



Petite Fleur - cover

Pequeña flor

Yo arranqué del jardín del amor una pequeña flor que en mi pecho guardé. Talismán que me hablaba de ti, que cuidaba de mí en el bien y en el mal. Pero se marchitó y perdió su poder, porque ya tu querer murió. De ese amor, que era mi sueño azul sólo me quedas tú, pequeña flor. Te guardaré toda una eternidad. Te besaré cuando quiera otra vez soñar. De ese amor, que era mi sueño azul, sólo me quedas tú pequeña flor. Y de aquel sueño de juventud sólo me quedas tú pequeña flor.

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A musical score for the piece 'Petite Fleur'. The score is written for piano and includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The music is in a simple, lyrical style with a clear melodic line and a supporting accompaniment. The score consists of several staves of music, with the first staff being the most prominent.

Petite Fleur - melodic line