JUBALAIRES 1947-1948
The Singing Waiters

Heritage
HT CD 48

Front Cover Picture:
The Jubalaires – Singing Stars of Amos 'n' Andy Radio Show.
Photograph: Courtesy of Rico T. Rhythm Records. L-R: John Jennings tenor, William Johnson lead, George McFadden bass, Theodore Brooks baritone.

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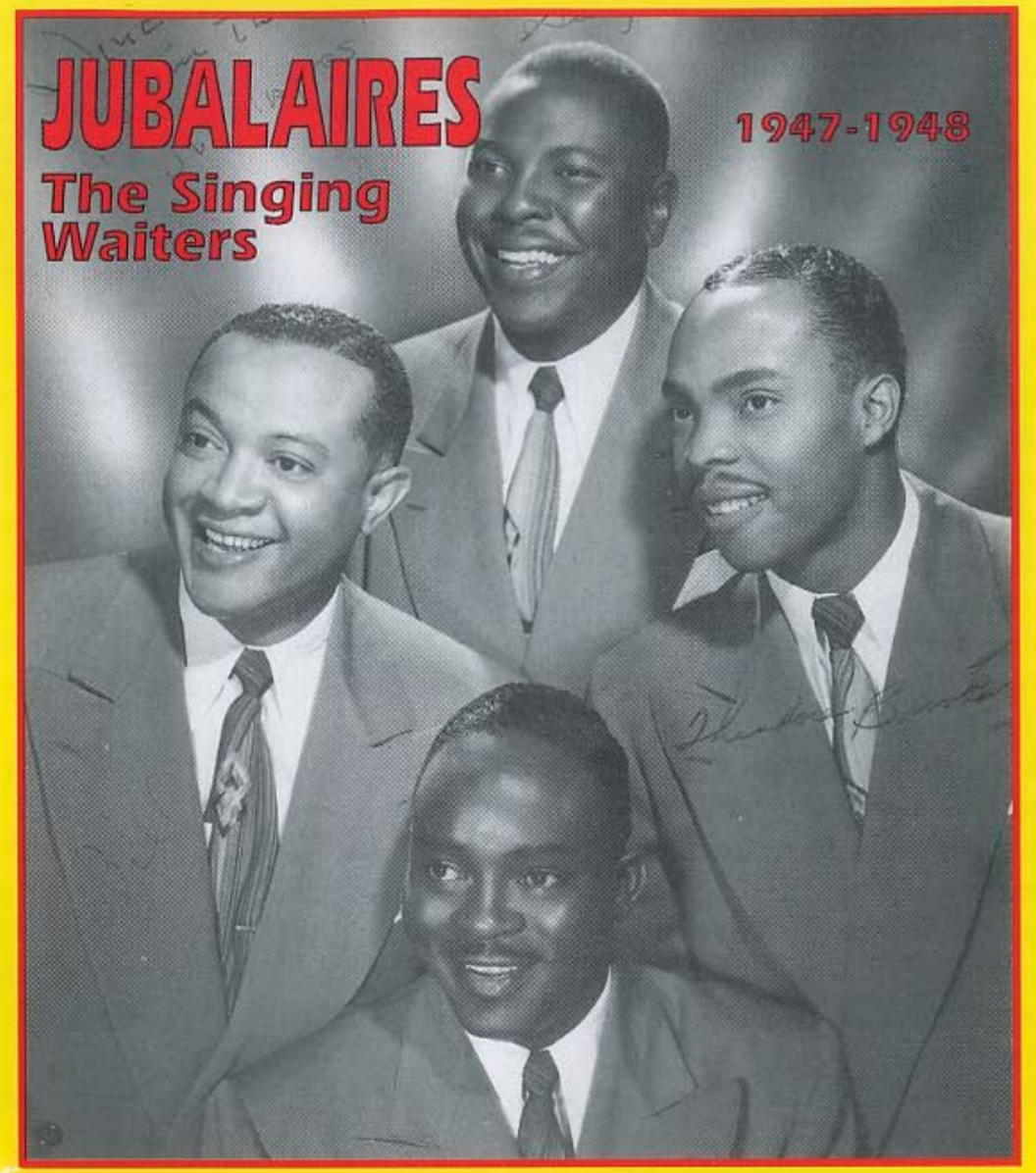

Our long and complicated history of The Jubalaires begins with Caleb Nathanael Ginyard Jnr, born the son of a sharecropper, grandson of a slave, on the perimeter of St. Matthews, Calhoun County, South Carolina on January 15, 1910. Showing little propensity for music as a child, he would infrequently sing along with his mother in the congregation of the local Ebenezer Baptist Church. His brothers Roy, Willie and Harvey went on to sing in a group called the Southwest Jubilee Singers (more on them later.)

After working menial jobs in Orangeburg and Fayetteville, Ginyard Jnr spent his mid-to-late teens building roads and picking oranges in Florida. After a short spell in Daytona, Florida, he moved to New York where he chauffeured for Everett McCabe, co-owner of U.P.S. Following the grizzly murder of his boss by his deranged wife, Ginyard returned to Jacksonville where he married and joined the Brooklyn Royal Social Club, a slightly less ambitious goodwill organization than St. Vincent DePaul. In order to raise money for charity, Ginyard formed the first of a handful of harmony groups. Thus in 1931 Ginyard put together the Royal Harmony Singers, a spiritual singing a-cappela aggregation.

A solidified membership evolved around Elijah Wright, Willy Wright, Theodore Brooks and Ginyard who served as both leader and trainer. The group was tutored to expressly sing spirituals and work songs in the Afro-American tradition, often going out with inspirational poets and orators from the church. The group performed at local churches and concert halls for the admission of ten or fifteen cents. Other monies were raised through local broadcasts over Jacksonville's tiny WMBR. The outfit was managed by Charlie Newsome.

By 1940 the Royal Harmony Singers had evolved into a group of

singing hotel waiters decked out in white duck pants with red streaks down the side and red vests. The hotel owner gave the group a used Chrysler Royal, $1,000 front money, and paid them $25 to $30 a week. Out of kindness, the manager advised the group to move north in order to avoid stiff competition. They found work at KYW in Philadelphia. KYW was where the Deep River Boys enjoyed a regular weekly program. After taking in a show at a military camp, a duly impressed top brass Navy officer used his influence to find a useful, regular engagement for the Royal Harmony Singers at Philadelphia's naval shipyard. The group was required to show up at a particular pier at twelve noon every day to sing in their dress suits at a barge launching ceremony for the general public. Before launch time the group was required to look like ship builders working a shift and to pretend they were lifting and carrying in the assembly shops. This entailed a lot of dramatic skill and walking around.

Charlie Newsome found the boys a spot on Philly's WCAU whereon the Wings Over Jordan programmed, but disagreements among the ranks scotched the idea. On Thursday, December 11, 1941 the Royal Harmony Singers (a.k.a. Florida Boys) billed as the Royal Harmony Quartet cut one gospel session for Decca Records in New York. By this point tenor Willie Wright had been replaced by second lead tenor John Jennings. In tight jubilee a-cappela style the group recorded "The gospel train," "Jezebel" plus two other Golden Gate styled numbers. "Jezebel" was released in February 1942 and "The gospel train" in the Fall of that same year.

A second gospel session was conducted in New York for Bob Rolontz's Key Records label on Broadway. Like the Golden Gate Quartet who had also waxed patriotic material in support of the U.S. war effort, the Royal Harmony Quartet cut a cover of Frank Loesser's "Praise the Lord and

pass the ammunition." However, it was Kay Kyser who chalked up the hit version. By this time Georgie "Biggie" McFadden had become bass singer and tenor John Jennings was out of the group.

To capitalize on the Golden Gate Quartet's success, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition" was reissued on Jack Lauderdale's Downbeat label in 1947. On the performance front, the Royal Harmony Quartet was engaged to concertize with their old rivals in Jacksonville, the Dixie Hummingbirds, on October 14 at the Mother Bethel AME church in Philly. The Philadelphia Afro-American tabloid declared "quartet war" between the two groups. Admission to the battle was the princely sum of sixty-five cents for adults and thirty-five cents for children.

The group's recordings sufficiently impressed John Hammond who enlisted the group to substitute for the celebrated Golden Gate Quartet at New York's Café Society. Café Society was founded in 1938 by political activist Barney Josephson and booker/promoter John Hammond. The club offered top notch black entertainment and opened its doors to folk of any race or color. They offered dinner and dancing plus a first-rate stage show.

Billed as the Café Society New Quartet Uptown, the Royal Harmony Singers worked with Trinidad-born pianist Hazel Scott. Scott built a large and faithful following at Café Society to which she was tenured between 1939 and 1945. The group appeared for two weeks at fifty dollars per week. On Thursday, October 26, 1943 the Royal Harmony Singers, now going by the name the Jubalaires, a change bestowed by their current manager, Paul Kapp, with Ginyard, Jennings, Brooks, McFadden and Elijah White in the line-up, the group recorded a second session for Decca Records. By now the boys had adopted a bluesier sound and had

added rhythm accompaniment. For some reason, Decca chose not to issue the proceedings.

The following Decca gospel date of March 16, 1944 produced two releases. By now Orville Brooks had been added and Elijah White was completely out of the picture, having been replaced by tenor/rhythm guitarist William Johnson from the Golden Gate Quartet. The session produced the notable "Ezekiel saw the wheel a-rollin'." Freshman member Orville Brooks was from Fruitland, Maryland and had sung with the Southern Sons in the early 1940s. Orville Brooks became the Jubalaires' new lead. In December 1944 the group cut their first secular song for Decca called "When it's all over but the shouting." "Before this time another year" was decided for the topside. The group moved permanently to New York City in 1945 where they secured a Sunday afternoon program on WMCA, home of black music pioneer deejays Symphony Sid and Harold Jackson.

The Jubalaires stuck to a rigid jubilee singing format with songs from the Golden Gate Quartet repertoire. This was evidenced on the group's Decca session of May 1945 whereon they cut a beautiful version of "Go down Moses." On November 27, 1945 they joined Andy Kirk and his Orchestra and recorded two national R & B hits on two releases, "I know" and "I don't know what I'd do without you." This was quite a departure for a quartet who had, up to this point, more or less stayed in the style of the winning Golden Gate Quartet formula.

Both songs were led by freshman Orville Brooks. Ginyard never minded mixing spiritual songs with "the devil's music," and the group often played outside of the church. Rivalry between the Jubalaires and Gates was usually friendly, a good thing at that as the two groups often

toured together.

The Jubalaires had cut five known soundies during the war years. Soundies were short, three-minute films shown on "juke box" type machines in thousands of bars and hotel lobbies across the country. In one of these they played their old "singing waiter" selves.

In February 1947 the Jubalaires (Ginyard, Jennings, Theodore Brooks, McFadden, and William Johnson on guitar) cut one mixed session for Queen/King Records in Cincinnati. This resulted in 5 1/2 singles (three songs being secular) issued between March and June of 1949. Matrix numbers indicate they were soon back in the King studios to cut secular songs like "Get lost" and "Jean." A total of eight releases were issued by the King label. The last ("I've waited"/"Let it rain") emerged in December 1949.

The Jubalaires were fortunate enough to snag a regular slot on the Arthur Godfrey radio show. This brought in a steady income. But the group insisted on touring, and during a fracas between manager Paul Kapp and the group, Kapp quit the outfit. As it turned out, the Jubalaires made a poor decision by opting not to make amends as not long after the break Arthur Godfrey took his entire show to CBS television (Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts) in December 1948 with mixed black and white group the Mariners taking the place of the would-be Jubalaires.

In Chicago during January 1947 the Jubalaires cut one record for Mayo Williams' Harlem label. Later issues of the single were label-copied as by the Dixieaires. During this time the Jubalaires landed a spot on The Amos N Andy Show on CBS radio, but Ginyard, unhappy with the way things were turning out, quit the program and put an all-new vocal group together — The Dixieaires. Members included Thomas "Johnny" Hines,

bass, Jimmy Moran, baritone, Tom Moran, tenor, and Abe Green, guitar.

Label-hopping without thought to contract obligation, the Dixieaires recorded for Continental, Lenox, Exclusive, Coleman, Melford, Spirituals, Castle, Sittin-In-With, Sunrise, Time, Pontiac and Remington using a variety of aliases such as the Angel Voices and Royal Harmonaires. As luck would have it, they scored with a jukebox hit in 1948 called "Go long" on Gotham Records.

Meanwhile, William Johnson, the old Jubalaires guitarist and tenor singer, formed a second Jubalaires group around John Jennings' second lead tenor, Theodore Brooks, baritone, and George "Biggie" McFadden, bass. It was this group that is the subject of our CD made up of Standard Transcriptions, cut between 1947 and 1949. According to Doug Seroff, the Jubalaires cut many transcriptions, sixteen inch vinyl-coated records, for both World and Standard, and they chose to select an equal amount of gospel and secular material, some of which was accompanied by Jimmie O'Brien at the piano.

The actual discs, thought to be made in California, featured from one to five songs per side. Of the gospel tunes, only one, "Mene mene tekel," was remastered and issued on Capitol Records in July 1949. Generally speaking, the quality of the material recorded on transcription is as good, if not better, than most of their work in commercial release.

The Jubalaires were fortunate enough to cut one secular recording for Decca's Coral subsidiary towards the close of 1948 with Orville Brooks in the lead spot. The result was the wonderful "I waited all my life for you." Apart from the "Mene mene teke" released on Capitol in July 1949, the Jubalaires recorded in December that same year behind Capitol thrush Kay Starr on her excellent waxing of "Tell me how long the train's been

gone".

At around the same time, the Jubalaires, headed up by Johnny Smith, recorded "Home home home." Billed the same way, the group showed up again in early 1950 when Capitol released the Jubalaires singing "Blue ribbon gal." By the time the group again recorded secularly for Capitol Records Johnny Smith was gone as lead soloist. A rendering was made of "That old piano roll blues" in an effort to have them sound like a mainstream pop entity.

A further Jubalaires release showed up on King in April 1950. This was the excellent "Chattahoochie Lullaby" sandwiched with "Twelve o'clock and all is well." After the King release of "Chattahoochie Lullaby" Capitol continued to put out secular/gospel Jubalaires material. "Living a lie" came first followed by "David and Goliath" in December 1951, their last release.

It was quite clear that without Ginyard or Paul Kapp in the picture, the Jubalaires would not find sufficient work. Although releases continued to appear, the group broke up towards the end of December 1949. Due to similar reasons, Ginyard and the Dixieaires disbanded a little while before their final recordings for Prestige hit the streets in December 1951. Ginyard tried his hand as a solo, then joined his brothers for a while in the Southwest Jubilee Singers. In 1952 he formed the Du Droppers, a strictly R & B outfit, out of members of the gospel group. They signed to Bobby Robinson's Red Robin label shortly thereafter. Following one release, they got with RCA and scored with "I wanna know" and "I found out" (What you do when you go 'round there) during 1953. Ginyard quit the group while on tour during the summer of 1956. The Du Droppers continued for a short while without Ginyard but found it impossible to

find work without him and disbanded in 1956.

Ginyard joined the Golden Gate Quartet for their first European booking to France and played the Olympia in Paris. In France the group signed a contract with Columbia where they had a long and successful recording career. Both second tenor Clyde Reddick and bass Orlandus Wilson were still in the group and served in it for over twelve years. During the last three the Golden Gates had no recording contract.

This contributed to the fact that the group made the decision to settle in Europe where a healthy and loyal fan base was close to hand. Although the Gates' repertoire was mainly gospel, they did nearly always add in a few of "the devil's songs." In 1960, Ginyard and the Gates cut remakes of some of the Du Droppers' old hits for Columbia. In 1961, three of the original Jubalaires (Johnson, Brooks and McFadden) in addition to Jimmy Adams, who had joined the group at the time of the Capitol session, came together to form the Jubilee Four. Adhering to the old standard jubilee formula utilized on the early Decca sides, the Jubilee Four cut an entire album for Warner Reprise. The collection included remakes from Standard Transcriptions such as "Swing down chariot," "Shadrack," "David and Goliath," "You better run" and "I've been in the storm too long."

In 1971 Ginyard was asked to quit the Gates because of irrational behavior. He was becoming an embarrassment to the group. He settled in Basel, Switzerland and, moving full circle, built himself an uncertain career as a singing waiter. He died on August 11, 1978.

Opal Louis Nations November 2003

With thanks to Rico T and Mark Carrodus

Principal Sources:

a. Liner Notes to **My Trouble Is Hard** – Dixieaires – Heritage LP 319 (1989) – Peter Grendysa

b. **Great God A'mighty** – The Dixie Hummingbirds – Jerry Zoltan – Oxford University Press (2003)

c. **Discography of R & B and R & R Vocal Groups**, 1945-1965 – Robert D. Ferlingere (1992)

d. **Best of The Jubalaires – Jubes' Blues** 1944-1950 – Big Q CD 102 – George Moonoogian (2002)

	Matrix	Title	Trans.#
1	SRR 1292	John saw the number (fast version)	U263
2	SRR 1292	He understands, he'll say "well done" (slow version)	U263
3	SRR 1292	Ezekiel (mid. tempo)	U263
4	SRR 1292	Handwriting on the wall (mid tempo)	U263
5	SRR 1293	I declare this world is in a bad condition (fast)	U263
6	SRR 1293	The preacher and the bear (mid tempo)	U263
7	SRR 1293	Wade in the water (slow)	U263
8	SRR 2181	Alphabets of the Bible (John the Revelator) (fast)	U268
9	SRR 2181	Dese bones gwine rise again (mid tempo)	U268
10	SRR 2181	Moses smote the water (fast)	U268
11	SRR 2181	My father's rich (slow blues)	U268
12	SRR 2182	What did Jesus say (mid tempo)	U268
13	SRR 2182	Old lamb (sic.) (slow)	U268
14	SRR 2182	Sampson and Delilah (mid tempo)	U268
15	SRR 1288	You better run (fast)	U260
16	SRR 1288	When the moon goes down (fast)	U260
17	SRR 1288	Live a-humble (fast)	U260
18	SRR 1289	Swing down chariot (fast)	U260
19	SRR 1289	My trouble is hard (mid tempo)	U260
20	?	Jube's Blues (slow blues)	U261
21	?	When the midnight choo choo leaves for Alabam (fast)	U261
22	?	Casey Jones (fast)	U262
23	?	Rockin chair (mid tempo)	U262
24	?	Long, lean and lanky (fast)	U262
25	?	St. Louis Blues (fast)	U262