

Jeff Around Town – March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

**Otis:** Music from Puccini's great opera Tosca is Mario on the roof of Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome, banks of the Tiber down the street from the Vatican. He's up there singing, and the stars were shining as he's waiting to be executed. There you go. And if you're about town in Rome, perhaps you can still hear him singing. However, the roof of Castel Sant'Angelo is now a coffee shop. So... And the coffee's good. The coffee's good. We're not around Rome. We're going around Omaha with my friend Jeff. Jeff about town. Jeff.

**Jeff:** Otis. Well, coffee, all the coffee in Italy is good.

**Otis:** Oh, it is.

**Jeff:** It is.

**Otis:** It's worth a flight just for the coffee.

**Jeff:** It is, and it's cheap too.

**Otis:** Yes, it is.

**Jeff:** So, I guess when we said 7:45 AM, we were thinking of our listeners in the mountain time zone listening via the app.

**Otis:** Well the time change. I had mentioned it last hour. Yeah, we had two different, we had notes around here. It's at 7:45, so I figured you'd show up.

**Jeff:** Oh, sure.

**Otis:** I figured you'd show up when you showed up.

**Jeff:** Well, that's what a pop-up is all about, right?

**Otis:** Exactly.

**Jeff:** So Otis, you remember the famous quote from Duke Ellington, what he said about music?

**Otis:** Yeah, there are two kinds of music, good music and the rest.

**Jeff:** And the rest. And apparently that quote has been attributed also to Louis Armstrong and also to Rossini.

**Otis:** Oh, Rossini said it too?

**Jeff:** Apparently so. And Otis, when you think of Wynton Marsalis, what kind of music do you think of? This is not a trick question.

**Otis:** No, I think of jazz, but I know he does classical. He can do any kind of music.

**Jeff:** And we play Wynton Marsalis here on KVNO, because as you said, great music is as the Duke said.

**Otis:** Right.

**Jeff:** Well, for those of you in the Omaha area, just like Marsalis loved classical and jazz, you might be missing the Jewel, which was a terrific jazz club downtown. Well, what if I told you there's a spot in Omaha where you can hear great jazz a couple of nights a week from a musician who has played with Wynton Marsalis? And if you are also a musician of any age or ability, the wonderful thing is this little trio plays and then they open it up for a jam session.

**Otis:** Ooh, late at night? Like the old tradition?

**Jeff:** Well, not so late at night because they also want to accommodate students who might have to go to school, get up for band practice.

**Otis:** Remember, at my age, late at night means anything past 8:15.

**Jeff:** Then yes, late at night. So, if you are a musician or maybe your son or daughter is a musician, this is also the place for you. So, on a recent Monday, my friend Mark Kressel, you might know that name, he's over at the Omaha Conservatory of Music and he invited me out to hear some jazz. And he'd been asking me to do this for a while. And like you, Otis, when you do morning radio, you know, you have an early bedtime and we're all so busy. But I finally said, okay, I'm going to come out because sometimes you do have to stop and smell the roses or listen to the music, I guess, in this case. So, we met at the North Omaha Music and Arts, NOMA, on the corner of 24th and Lake.

**Otis:** Oh yeah, I've been out there.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And if you've been there, you know that there's so much rich musical history. The Duke played there back in the day, of course.

**Otis:** Right.

**Jeff:** So, he introduces me to Dana Murray, the executive director of NOMA. And for those of you who have been fortunate enough to meet Dana, you know what a humble guy he is. Did I know when I was talking to him that he's the guy who played the drums with some of the greats in music, including Marsalis. And he spent several years, Otis, in New York and played all the great jazz clubs like Small's Jazz Club, which you've certainly heard of.

**Otis:** I've heard of that.

**Jeff:** Well, I had no idea that Dana had done that. So then, as this is an Omaha question, where you went to high school. So, it's a small world. Dana and I both went to Omaha South.

**Jeff:** So now we're talking Packers in the old days. So, I love that. Omaha's such a small... such a small world kind of thing. So, Mark and I and his girlfriend Peggy take our seats. And there are a few others in the audience. And Dana sets up behind the drums and they kick it off in Otis, incredible, incredible music from that first downbeat. It was... I felt transported. I felt

like I was in a New York jazz club. And unlike Small's Jazz Club, which I think maybe the cover charge is like 25 bucks.

**Otis:** It might be more.

**Jeff:** Exactly.

**Otis:** And a three drink minimum.

**Jeff:** Uh-huh. This, totally free.

**Otis:** Oh wow.

**Jeff:** Totally, completely free. And so, a few tunes in, the place is packed. And not just with fans, with other musicians of all ages. And then they set up after the first set, then they invited others to come up on stage. It was a magical night, Otis. And again, if you love great music, as the Duke said, there's great music and then all the rest, no matter what it is, this is such a wonderful opportunity for you to hear some top talent here in Omaha. There's plenty of parking right there on the corner.

**Otis:** It's a neat space. It really, really is.

**Jeff:** It is. And yeah, and it's a great way to support up and coming local talent as well. So just wanted to share that with you. And so, thank you very, very much.

**Otis:** When's the next one?

**Jeff:** Next week. We'll let you know. It's a pop-up. You never know when I'm going to pop up around town and pop up here and talk about it.

**Otis:** And let us know about the next jazz session.

**Jeff:** Every Monday and Wednesday.

**Otis:** Every Monday and Wednesday. Okay.

**Jeff:** Absolutely.

**Otis:** That's what I wanted to know.

**Jeff:** And yeah. Oh, and Faye, Dana's mom, she's... she's the great, she's so great. She's, you know, they serve a couple of adult beverages and then soda and all that. And you can bring in your own food. It's, yeah, it's a great place.

**Otis:** Old school.

**Jeff:** It is old school. It's great. Love it.

**Otis:** Enjoy going about town, buddy.

**Jeff:** Thank you.

**Otis:** We enjoy having you and that's going to pop up your about town deal. Like you said, without warning.

**Jeff:** Without warning.

**Otis:** Perhaps without scheduling.

**Jeff:** Without scheduling. You never know.

**Otis:** Have a good weekend, buddy.

**Jeff:** Thanks, Otis.

**Otis:** Thanks. Yeah. Jeff. About town. KVNO.