

Product Endorsee

Musician **Percussionist** Clinician CONSULTANT

# Jake Jerger

Side Man

Studio Musician *Composer* **Professor** Contractor

by Billy Jeansonne

**Above** all the recordings made, celebrities accompanied, television shows performed in, books published, lessons taught, concerts directed, arrangements written, contests judged, and clinics given, Jake's favorite experience took place in Carnegie Hall on Monday evening, March 25, 1991. Jerger and his Oakton Community College Jazz Percussion Ensemble brought the house down with their own percussive rendition of Sing Sing Sing. Gene Krupa performed this same song with Benny Goodman at Carnegie Hall in 1938! Jake's group was the first college jazz percussion ensemble to have been invited to perform at Carnegie Hall.



J a k e  
Jerger was  
born in  
Chicago,  
Illinois on  
Sept. 2,  
1 9 2 7 .  
Growing  
up on  
Chicago's  
North Side,  
J a k e  
s t a r t e d  
p l a y i n g  
d r u m s  
when he  
was only 7  
years old.  
His first  
t e a c h e r  
was a job-  
b i n g  
d r u m m e r  
n a m e d

Jimmy Russell. Russell gave lessons at Jake's house for \$1.50 a lesson in 1934. He worked through the Edward B. Straight System Book. Jake still has his copy today. After 1 1/2 years of lessons, Russell suggested to Jake's father that Jake should have "the best teacher in town".

That teacher was to be Roy Knapp. Jake auditioned for Roy Knapp, who was the drummer on staff with radio station WLS studios. Knapp's school took up a whole floor at the Kimball building and had a staff of about 6 teachers along with himself. Jake was 9 years old at the time. The price per lesson was now up to \$4.00. Jake's father, who owned a garage across from Rosehill Cemetery, agreed to maintain Knapp's car in exchange for the lessons. Among some of Roy's students were Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, and Louie Bellson.

Jake's reading became excellent because of Knapp's teaching. In the 50's, 60's, and 70's, seventy-five percent of Roy Knapp's former students who had turned professional were working in all the studios in New York and Hollywood doing most of the playing and recording because they were all so well schooled. Jake studied with Knapp, including arranging and composition, for 9 years until he was 18 years old. It was now 1945. Two years earlier, in 1943, Jake had joined the Musician's Union at only 16 years old. Jake also studied with all of Roy Knapp's teachers, one of them being Rick Marx, father of Richard Marx, the pop singer.

Jake joined the U.S. Navy for 4 years and was sent to the Navy School of Music in Washington D.C. He was quickly given a spot on a hand picked 38 piece band that would be shipping out to Europe. The group was to replace Artie Shaw's band. Jake was then assigned to Great Lakes Music Camp to get ready for a 29 country tour. There he met Maurice Purtill, who was the drummer for the Glenn Miller band. Jake and Maurice became close friends and Jake played many of Maurice's gigs while at the Great Lakes Camp.



*Jake Jerger & Louie Bellson*

Having earned his masters degree in music at the Navy School of Music, Jake got out of the Navy in 1949 and returned to the Roy Knapp School of Percussion, doing 4 years of school in only 3 years. By now, Roy Knapp had an AAA School of Percussion with arrangers, composition, and piano. Jake was in Downbeat magazine for outstanding player and student of Roy Knapp.

Jake was told by Knapp that there was an opening at the Winnetka School System for an instructor. He began teaching at Newtrier High School in April 1951. Jake's teaching inspired him to begin writing. It took Jake 8 years to write his first book, "Complete Instruction in Dance Drumming". The cover showed Jake standing on a pile of Slingerland Drums.

*Jake's endorsement with Slingerland began in 1951. Here's the story!*

**When** Jake got out of the service, he bought a new set of Ludwig Drums with a Buddy Rich

snare drum. Jake was not very fond of the snare drum. At that time, Jake was playing with Wayne King on NBC live television each week. One of Jake's bandmates recommended that Jake go to the Slingerland factory to order a kit. While at the factory, he met Bud Slingerland. Bud lived in the area of the Winnetka school system and found out that Jake was teaching at his school and playing in town. Immediately Jake became a consultant, endorsee, and clinician for Slingerland. This association of Jake Jerger and Bud Slingerland is how the long history of Jake and Slingerland began.

**The** set of Slingerland drums that Jake bought that day in 1951 was the first and last set of Slingerland drums that he ever bought. Jake was consulted on all new products that Slingerland made, from drums to pedals. He was handy and available and lived nearby. Jake worked many teacher's band conventions and conducted drum clinics, along with his teaching and playing. Jake was always a freelance show drummer, while never having a steady drum gig in clubs.

Inspired by Gene Krupa, Jake placed fifth in Slingerland's National Gene Krupa Contest; the same year that Louie Bellson won

In the early 70's, Slingerland sold the company. Jake was still an endorsee. With the new owner of Slingerland Drum Company, Jake was not as active as with Bud Slingerland. He was featured in the Slingerland catalogs from 1952 to 1976, his last year with Slingerland until his return in 1995.

In 1972, while still with the Slingerland Drum Company, Jake Jerger was asked to perform with his percussion ensemble for the Day of Percussion, which five percussionist were to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. Jake "opened" up the event at the Sherman Hotel in Chicago! There were people from all

In 1981 Jake was asked how many lessons he had given since he began teaching. Thirty years of teaching, fifty students a week over an average of forty weeks a year, he had already given 60,000 lessons! This was in 1981

over the country, along with college and professional players. This was one of the greatest thing that had ever happened to Jake. The five percussionist to be put in the Hall of Fame that day were Roy Knapp, William Ludwig, Sr., Saul

Goodman, Haskell Harr, and Johnny Noonan.

Jake's endorsement was now over with Slingerland. He was convinced to go to William Ludwig, Jr., the president of

*continued on page 21*

Ludwig Drum Company. He ended up with an endorsement and stayed with Ludwig for four years. At the Enid, Oklahoma Tri-State Convention, Jake performed with the air force blues band following in Jack Sperlings spot the year before. Other great drummers have played this convention such as Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, and Louie Bellson. Jake was invited to return the following year but told Ludwig he couldn't do it

because he could not top himself. Jake stayed with the Ludwig Drum Company until Ludwig was sold to Selmer in 1981. He was treated very well by everyone at Ludwig and they supplied him with several drum sets and provided all the drums necessary for his clinics.



Jake went back to Slingerland until they went out of business in 1995. Gretsch bought Slingerland Drum Company and put everything in a warehouse and took it off the market. Sonor picked up the Slingerland franchise from Gretsch until Gibson bought Slingerland and relocated to Nashville. Once this move took place, Jake was no longer a Slingerland endorsee. This was in 1996 or 1997.

## ALL ABOUT JAKE

Jake currently endorses *Balter Mallets, PureCussion, and Silver Fox Drumsticks*

Jake has recorded for Universal and RCA Studios

Acts and Performers that Jake has worked with include

Sammy Davis, Jr., Tony Bennet, Louie Bellson, Boots Randolph, Victor Borge, Frankie Avalon, Gordon Macrea, Anita Bryant, Totie Fields, Joey Bishop, Bill Cosby, Heny Youngman Red Skelton, Flip Wilson, Barbara Mandrell, Mary Kay Trio and many more

The Slingerland kit that Jake ordered that famous day at the Slingerland Drum Company was a Black Diamond Pearl kit. Jake's last kit was also Slingerland Black Diamond Pearl. In between these two kits, Jake has played just about every other color.

Jake's two favorite snare drums are Slingerlands, one with a Krupa strainer, the other with a Slapshot strainer. He states that strainers really make the drum.

In 1991 Jake was elected Man of the Year and awarded the Roy C. Knapp Memorial Citation for Excellence in Percussion Education. Jerger was the third career percussionist to receive the honor, preceded by Bobby Christian and Al Payson.

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**Jake** is still an active player and clinician. In addition to his professional playing experiences, Jake has over 40 years of teaching behind him. He has spent 21 years building the instrumental program at Oakton Community College, giving private percussion lessons, conducting jazz study classes, and directing percussion ensembles and jazz bands. While teaching at Oakton Community College, Jake has had many guest artist perform with his Ensemble, such as Dave Samuels (a former student) in 1981, Les DeMerle in 1986, Dick Schory in 1988, Louie Bellson in 1991 and 1995, and Frank Donalds (also a former student) in 1985.



Meeting Jake Jerger several years ago in Chicago, he displayed a very high level of enthusiasm. He has always been very nice and very generous with his time. Other elements of his personality that I noticed immediately is his very relaxed manner and a leader of the conversation. Three very important aspects of being a great drummer. Enthusiasm, relaxation, and a leader.

Playing drums in Chicago has always been a love of Jake's. He feels most fortunate that he has been able to make a living doing what he loves. He has proven that "Drummers are Musicians too!"