

BUTCH THOMPSON SHORT BIOGRAPHY

In a career spanning over 40 years, pianist and clarinetist Butch Thompson has earned a world-wide reputation as a traditional jazz and ragtime master. He tours widely as a soloist or at the helm of any of his several ensembles, including his well-known trio, his eight-piece *Jazz Originals* band, the *Butch Thompson Big Three*, or his unique chamber music duo with cellist **Laura Sewell**. He has performed with many symphony orchestras, including the Hartford Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony, the Erie Philharmonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the Cairo (Egypt) Symphony. Widely know for his 12-year stint as house pianist on public radio's *A Prairie Home Companion*, he continues on the show as a frequent guest.

Born and raise in Marine-on-St. Croix, a small Minnesota river town, Thompson was playing Christmas carols on his mother's upright piano by age three, and began formal lessons at six. He studied clarinet in high school and led his first professional jazz group as a teenager. After high school, he joined the Hall Brothers New Orleans Jazz Band of Minneapolis, and t 18 made his first visit to New Orleans, where he became one of the few non-New Orleanians to perform at Preservation Hall during the 1960s and '70s.

In 1974, Thompson played on a number of the first Prairie Home Companion broadcasts. By 1980, the show was being nationally syndicated, and the **Butch Thompson Trio** was the house band, a position the group held for the next six years.

During the '70s and '80s, Thompson's travels widened as he became a regular as he toured extensively and often in Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, including several tours with New Orleans-based bands.

By the late '90s, Thompson was known as a leading authority on early jazz, and he served as a consultant on the 1992 Broadway hit *Jelly's Last Jam*. He also joined the touring company of the off-Broadway hit *Jelly Roll! The Music and the Man*, playing several runs with that show in New York and with its touring company through 1997.

Among Thompson's many recordings is his acclaimed 10-volume solo series on Daring/Rounder and the 1997 Grammy-winning Verve release *Doc Cheatham and Nicholas Payton*.