

BERMAN MUSIC FOUNDATION

New-Trad Octet mixes brass bands and jazz

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—More than 30 years have passed since jazz saxophonist Jeff Newell left Nebraska for more fruitful career opportunities—first in Chicago, then in New York City—but he has never forgotten the places and people who so influenced his formative years in the Cornhusker State.

He soon will return to Lincoln for the first time in four years, leading his New-Trad Octet for a June 22 performance at this year's Jazz in June series. In addition to Newell's alto sax, the octet also features trumpet, bass trumpet, tuba, keyboards, bass and drums, a modern brass band lineup that should be perfect for the outdoor venue, a grassy sculpture garden just west of Sheldon Museum of Art on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's city campus.

Newell last performed here in January 2006, when he appeared as a guest artist with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra, along with fellow NJO alumnus and saxophonist Frank Basile. On the following night, they performed at the now-defunct P.O. Pears, fronting a quintet that also consisted of guitarist Peter Bouffard, bassist Rusty White and drummer Joey Gulizia.

Newell joined the NJO in the late 1970s, when it was known as the Neo-



Courtesy Photo

Jeff Newell brings his New-Trad Octet to Lincoln for June 22 performance.

classic Jazz Orchestra, and even toured Europe with the big band. In addition to the 2006 concert, he returned as guest soloist in 1991 and 1994.

The New-Trad Octet has never made the trip to Nebraska, though Newell formed the group some 16 years ago as a vehicle for his arranging skills. Initially, it blended the traditional "second line" New Orleans brass band with a modern rhythm section and a fresh approach to harmony and improvisation. Gradually, Newell's interest in early brass bands began to influence the octet's repertoire, a shift best exemplified on the band's 2007 CD "Brownstone," which occasionally marries Sousa marches with the exotic rhythms of the Caribbean.

New-Trad Octet continued on page 2



File Photo

Singer Angela Hagenbach will front a KC sextet June 15 in Lincoln.

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In this issue

- Five concerts in Jazz in June.....3
- Clawfoot House brings arts to hood....4
- King Sunny Ade set to rock Lincoln.....6
- Tomfoolery: Heading to festivals.....7
- Mary Pipher pays tribute to Jarvis.....8
- Jane Jarvis leaves legacy of music.....9
- Essay on "Invisible Man".....10
- 2nd Berman Ping Pong tourney.....11
- Matt Wilson Quartet review.....12
- NET's "Jazz Cabaret".....14
- BMF adds "Jazz Icons" DVDs.....15
- Charlie Hunter Trio review.....16
- "In the Mood" review.....17
- Bela Fleck and the Africa Project.....18
- Amy Denio celebrates Women's Week....19
- Brewsky's site for jazz exploration.....20
- NJO/Paul Haar review.....20
- Jazz on Disc reviews.....21
- Jazz Essentials, Part 3.....25
- From the Photo Archives.....28

Sunny Ade continued from page 1

Newell continues to mine those disparate influences for traces of musical gold.

“I’m still working around the same sort of things. I’m trying to dig a little deeper into things that are maybe not as close to the surface,” he said in a recent interview from his Brooklyn home. “I’m getting really interested in a lot of the music of early brass bands that weren’t famous. I’m trying to figure out the connection between the early brass band movement—which, of course, was a huge movement across the country—and the evolution of jazz.”

Making that connection is an ambitious undertaking, especially considering that brass bands have a history of more than two centuries and jazz is more than 100 years old. Both styles began in small, unassuming ways, often played by uneducated musicians, an aesthetic that Newell strives to retain.

“A lot of people in these small towns and little out-of-the-way places couldn’t read music and they were just learning it by ear, which is sort of what I tried to incorporate with what I did with the Sousa marches. I could very easily have gone to the music library and copied all the stuff out, but instead I got a hold of some CDs of the original Victrola recordings of Sousa’s band, which were done in the late 1890s. Then, I transcribed from that.”

But that wasn’t all. As he began to fit the music into the new harmonic and rhythmic contexts he envisioned, Newell intentionally altered the tunes, much as the first musicians must have altered them to conform to their specific ethnic backgrounds.

“We all fit it into our own cultural context,” he said. “It’s like a game of telephone. We all hear something different, and then we pull it together. I’m really interested in how those bands evolved within that tradition and how that came across in early jazz.”

Newell’s interest in the history of



Courtesy Photo

The New-Trad Octet combines the musical styles of the classic brass bands with the improvisation of modern jazz.

brass bands began in relatively recent years. Born in Bennington, Neb., a Douglas County town now largely absorbed in the Omaha metropolitan region, he received a music degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and pursued graduate studies for a year before heading to Chicago in 1978 to continue his education in classic jazz fashion, playing at clubs and festivals.

“When I was in school back in Nebraska, I just wanted to be a really cool, hip urban sophisticate, since I came from this small town,” he recalled, laughing. “But, I was always interested in history and the Civil War and 19th century life and the westward expansion.” That interest was rekindled in 1994, when he made the leap to New York to study privately with saxophonists Bunky Green, Joe Daley and, with a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, David Liebman. He took up residence in a classic Brooklyn brownstone, which inspired the CD title.

“Our apartment is one floor of a building that was built in 1877, with all this beautiful craftsmanship. When I first moved to Brooklyn, I jokingly say, I felt like I’d moved into the ruins of a once-great society. When it was being

built, Bennington, Nebraska, was a collection of tents with a mud street, and here was this ancient civilization that I’d moved into.” That immersion in the 19th century started him on a path that led to his current fascination with the evolution of American music among the working class.

“People who were not trained musicians still had the need inside of them to make music.”

Newell recently has been sharing the fruit of his research into America’s musical evolution with students in the Brooklyn school system, through residencies funded by Chamber Music America and the Doris Duke Foundation. With an additional grant from a local organization, he is visiting four different schools.

“I’m going in once a week for six weeks. I’m bringing small groups of musicians, doing a ragtime trio thing and then I do some blues, and then I bring in the New-Trad Quartet and we play brass band music. It all culminates with a concert by the full octet.”

So that he’s able to offer flexible booking arrangements for the large ensemble, Newell maintains contacts in Chicago as well as New York. The octet that will appear in Lincoln June 22 also features young Chicago fire-brand Victor Garcia on trumpet, Ryan Shultz on bass trumpet, Mike Hogg on tuba, Steve Million on keyboards, Neal Alger on guitar, Tim Fox on bass and Rick Vitek on drums.

The Lincoln audience can expect to hear Sousa compositions performed in a manner not usually associated with the military march genre. The concert also will include some Crescent City sounds and Newell’s take on 19th century hymns, another historical interest.

No family members remain in Nebraska, but Newell still feels a kinship to his home state, perhaps most importantly for the early musical bonds he forged here. Many of those friends will be on hand for his return visit.

Five concerts in 2010 Jazz in June

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—For the second consecutive year, the popular Jazz in June concert series will feature five Tuesday evening performances. Considering the hit-an-miss nature of live jazz in Lincoln during the rest of the year, that is a very good thing for fans.

As in recent years, the **Berman Music Foundation** will play a major role in sponsoring the series, now in its 19th year. Each 7 p.m. concert routinely draws thousands to the sculpture garden outside Sheldon Museum of Art at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Four of the five artists in the 2010 lineup have performed in Lincoln and have ties to the BMF.

Trumpeter **Darryl White** returns to the stage June 1 with a group resembling the one he fronted two years ago. Featured again are pianist Jeff Jenkins of Denver, bassist Craig Akin of New York and drummer Brandon Draper of Kansas City, Mo. The new addition is veteran saxophonist Dick Oatts, who over the last 30 years has performed and recorded with such greats as Lou Rawls, the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Joe Henderson, Red Rodney, Joe Lovano, Eddie Gomez, and Jack McDuff. He also has seven recordings under his own name on the Steeplechase label.

In conjunction with a celebration of Cuban culture at Sheldon, the San Diego-based combo **Otro Mundo** will perform June 8. Blending the sounds of Brazil, Spain, the United States, Cuba, Africa, and the Middle East, Otro Mundo is a five-piece outfit consisting of founders Dusty Brough on guitar, Kevin Freeby on bass, and Steve Haney on percussion. Flutist and vocalist Rebecca Kleinmann and drummer Julien Cantelm recently joined the band.

Their debut, self-titled recording was released in February.

Singer **Angela Hagenbach** of Kansas City will front a sextet June 15. A longtime favorite in Lincoln, she has appeared here many times over the last 15 years, most recently as a guest artist with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra at the 2007 Jazz in June. The BMF has followed her career with enthusiasm, covering performances in Lincoln and in her hometown, as well as reviewing her recordings. Backing her sultry vocals will be saxophonist Matt Otto, guitarist Danny Embrey, pianist Roger Wilder, bassist Steve Rigazzi and drummer Doug Auwarter.

Jeff Newell's New-Trad Octet will bring their unique blend of jazz innovation and brass band tradition to the Jazz in June stage June 22. The saxophonist last performed here in January 2006 with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra and the following night with a small group at P.O. Pears. The octet also will feature Victor Garcia on trumpet, Ryan Shultz on bass trumpet, Mike Hogg on tuba, Steve Million on keyboards, Neal Alger on guitar, Tim Fox on bass and Rick Vitek on drums.

After five years, jazz and jazz fusion guitar great **Jerry Hahn** returns to Lincoln June 29 with a quartet also featuring Kansas City stalwarts Joe Cartwright on piano, Tyrone Clarke on bass and Mike Warren on drums. Born in Alma, Neb., the fretmaster grew up in Wichita, Kan., before moving away for a few decades. He returned to the Wichita area in 2004 and now lives in Lenexa, Kan. The BMF and Dietze Music House brought Hahn to Lincoln in February 2005 for guitar workshops and a trio performance at P.O. Pears.



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Feature Story

Clawfoot House brings lively arts to the hood

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Ember Schrag is living, lively and music-loving proof that one inspired person with a passion can make a difference.

In Schrag's case, that passion is for making music and sharing the music of others with the Lincoln community. For seven years, she had been guiding her own music career and—like many other local artists—struggling to find venues, booking gigs, traveling and recording. A North Platte native and UNL graduate who majored in English and music, Schrag considered a move to the Pacific Northwest to immerse herself in Portland's music scene, but she decided to stay in Lincoln to await the arrival of daughter Lillian.

Her inspiration was to create a venue out of her own home, a rental duplex in Lincoln's Everett neighborhood that she christened Clawfoot House. She began working with Bryan Day, an improviser, inventor and "sound sculptor" who also runs Public Eyesore Records. Day had extensive experience in the music business worldwide. That led to a series of house concerts featuring experimental music, which eventually morphed into other genres.

With Day's connections and experience gained by promoting her own shows over the years, Schrag turned 1042 F St. into a house concert stage for other musicians. She opened the doors to the public in January 2009, promising and delivering a homey space with low admissions and high-quality acts. In its first year, Schrag booked some 45 acts there, a notable accomplishment considering that she still performs, works full-time at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is raising an infant daughter.

"I'm really busy," she said in a



Courtesy Photos

Chiara String Quartet performs at Clawfoot House.



Ember Schrag performs her own music.

recent phone interview conducted while Lillian napped. "But Clawfoot House is so much fun, and Lincoln really had a need for this, or it wouldn't have come out of nowhere and suddenly become this big thing."

Clawfoot House quickly established a reputation for adventurous booking, ranging from avant-garde improvisation, indie-folk and traditional old-timey artists to a classical quartet, poetry readings, theater, workshops, lectures, puppet shows, jugglers and visual artists. Nothing is out of the question, as long as it gives voice to artistic ex-

pression, a philosophy summed up in the Clawfoot mission statement: "We strive to provide hospitality and fair pay for talented artists—locals and those on tour—who perform at Clawfoot House, as we believe these individuals deserve support for the risks they take to make their art and bring it to us."

It is a mission not unlike that of the **Berman Music Foundation**, established 15 years ago: "The foundation realizes the difficulties involved in maintaining a career as an artist and will assist those individuals who yearn to create according to their own hearts and not simply to become a commercial success."

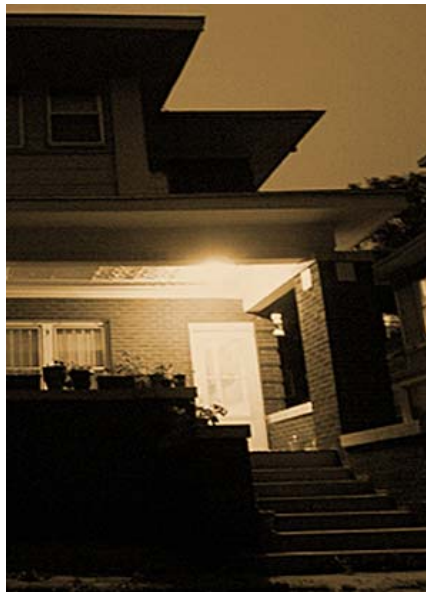
That common goal recently resulted in a \$2,200 BMF grant to Schrag for a series of presentations by Seattle-based singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Amy Denio, in collaboration with the UNL Women's Center. Denio's Lincoln stay included a luncheon presentation on "Music and Social Change" at the UNL Student Union, an evening performance at Clawfoot House and a special edition of the

monthly Clawfoot Salon, featuring Denio in a lecture and performance. Grace Sankey Berman attended Denio's appearance at the salon and offers her account elsewhere in this newsletter.

The salon, another Schrag inspiration, is a gathering of female musicians and artists who share knowledge, exchange views, receive feedback on new work and jam. A lecture series offers aspects of the history of women in the arts and skills useful to artists.

"It seems there aren't as many opportunities for female musicians to learn from other women about technical stuff and other things. I just thought that would be really cool to create a situation where they can learn from each other and also play music, all together. The jam, with women, is very different, very organic. It's very communal."

Schrag added an occasional Front Porch Potluck Grill that brings together musicians, friends and neighbors for a common purpose. Recently, she has been shepherding Clawfoot House through the arduous process of incorporating as a non-profit organization. Perhaps most important in directing an intimate, low-budget, live music venue with little hope of ever turning a profit, Schrag loves her work.



"I really like doing it. I really like curating the series. I like picking stuff out and bringing good music together to share it with other people. And the performers appreciate it. That's a big part of the reason why things have gone so well. Performers really want to have that kind of experience. Increasingly, even big-name performers want to do house shows because you connect with people better."

Lincoln's location, midway between Denver and Chicago, makes it a logical stop for artists on the road, a fact that Schrag and others have capitalized on. In fact, she now gets at least one e-

mail message every day from musicians seeking a gig in Lincoln.

"People want to play here," she said. "This town can definitely support more house venues like this." Last August alone, Schrag booked eight shows, often providing lodging and meals for musicians.

"There was one morning where I was making breakfast for a dozen men. I used two dozen eggs and four or five pots of coffee, and I was having such a good time! I know what it's like to be on the road. We know that people appreciate a salad and some orange juice because it's hard to get good food on the road."

Once Clawfoot House has 501c3 status, it will be able to accept tax-deductible donations to offset some of those expenses and even expand the series of house concerts. Schrag and Day already are studying the possibility of bringing in experimental, avant-garde music artists from New York, Mexico City, China, Chicago and Philadelphia.

Clawfoot House audiences, she said, tend to be a little younger than the average LAFTA crowd, alluding to the Lincoln Association for Traditional Arts, the city's longtime folk-music series of concerts. While some regulars are in their 50s, most are in their 20s.

"We have a little of the LAFTA atmosphere, but not the same kind of music. For the trouble that we're taking to open up our home, we want to do something that's really unique." Schrag has an understanding with her landlord that allows the live music venue's adventurous spirit to flourish.

"Since we have this community aspect, our landlord has decided that we're actually doing the city a favor, we're cleaning up the neighborhood and creating more positive vibes in the Everett neighborhood. He said he thinks the city owes us a thank-you, and he's very supportive of what we're trying to do."

For more on Clawfoot House, visit www.clawfoothouse.com.



Clawfoot House features summer front porch potluck grills and performances.

Concert Preview

King Sunny Adé and His African Beats set to rock the Bourbon

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—King Sunny Adé and His African Beats should be thoroughly warmed up and well settled into their 2010 North American tour by the time they arrive at the Bourbon Theatre for an April 18 performance, a benefit for KZUM Radio.

The tour begins exactly one week earlier, with an April 11 concert in Montreal. Additional shows in Toronto, Ann Arbor, Milwaukee, Chicago, and Minneapolis will prepare the 16-piece band for its Lincoln appearance at the Bourbon, 1415 O St., where the 6 p.m. concert promises to be the music event of the year. Doors open at 5 p.m.

The **Berman Music Foundation** is a principal sponsor of the concert. Local Cuban and salsa band Son Del Llano will open.

The undisputed king of “juju music,” Adé has been honored with titles like “Chairman of the Board” and “Minister of Enjoyment” in his home country of Nigeria, and his crossover popularity has earned him billing as “the African Bob Marley.” Juju music is a dance-inspiring hybrid of western pop and traditional African music with roots in the guitar tradition of Nigeria. A hypnotic blend of electric guitars, pedal-steel guitar, synthesizers and multi-layered percussion, it found wide favor in the 1970s when Adé combined Yoruba drumming with elements of West African highlife music, calypso, and jazz. Adé also brought many other innovations to the traditional sound and presentation.

“When I met juju music musicians were still sitting down, with instruments arranged in front,” Adé says in his official biography. “I found it hard because I knew people were not getting full value for their money. So I started standing



King Sunny Adé on stage

and dancing. I moved the instruments backwards to allow them enjoy their money and gave my boys a microphone each to dance and sing. At that time too, they were playing only one guitar. I increased to two, three, four, five and the present six. I dropped the use of the accordion and introduced keyboards, the manual jazz drum and now the electronic jazz drum. I introduced the use of pedal steel otherwise known as Hawaiian guitar, increased the percussion aspect of the music, added more talking drums, introduced computer into juju music and de-emphasized the use of high tone in the vocals.”

Adé and His African Beats created a worldwide sensation in the early 1980s with three recordings on Mango Records—“Juju Music” (1982), “Synchro System” (1983), and “Aura”



King Sunny Adé and His African Beats will perform April 18 in Lincoln.

(1984). He was the first African to be nominated twice for a Grammy Award, first for “Synchro System” and most recently for “Odu,” a 1998 collection of traditional Yoruba songs. In July 2009 he was inducted into the Afropop Hall of Fame.

After their Lincoln performance, the African Beats will continue with scheduled stops in St. Louis, Houston and New Orleans, where they will perform April 25 at the popular New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Lincoln is one of the smallest cities on the six-week tour, which includes Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Washington, D.C., Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and Atlanta.

The April 18 Lincoln concert is made possible by Star City Blog with additional support from Southeast Community College, Dietze Music, U.S. Bank, The Holiday Inn Downtown, and the Parthenon Greek Taverna and Grill. Net proceeds go to KZUM.

Tickets are \$25 for general admission, \$50 for reserved seats. To purchase tickets, visit Star City Blog at www.starcityblog.com.

Courtesy Photos

Tomfoolery

Soon heading south and west for festivals

By Tom Ineck

As live music goes, 2010 is looking like an embarrassment of riches. And I'm not as easily embarrassed as I used to be. If plans pan out, I will attend the second weekend of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, April 29-May 2, and also cover the second week of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival, June 7-13 in Northern California, where I had such a memorable visit last year. The 16-piece band of King Sunny Adé and his African Beats will perform April 18 right here in Lincoln, Nebraska, and in June, five Tuesday night concerts will continue the grand tradition of Jazz in June, the 19th year for the free series.

After that, who cares?

The Crescent City Jazz Fest, now in its 41st year, celebrates a range of musical styles far beyond jazz and those other ethnic sounds native to New Orleans—Cajun and zydeco music. The city also has a unique take on the blues, rock 'n' roll, r&b, soul and gospel music, and all are represented on stage. But even though its emphasis remains on the area's considerable musical heritage, Jazz Fest has grown in scope to include hugely popular artists of many traditions.

For example, this year's festival features Simon and Garfunkel, B.B. King, The Allman Brothers, Pearl Jam, King Sunny Ade and His African Beats, Gipsy Kings, Widespread Panic, the Four Freshmen, the Levon Helm Band, Anita Baker, Keely Smith, The Black Crowes, Irma Thomas, Lionel Richie, George Clinton and Parliament/Funkadelic, Jose Feliciano, Richie Havens and Shawn Colvin.

Among the artists I hope to hear in my four-day visit are Van Morrison, Aretha Franklin, Jeff Beck, comedian Steve Martin doing his bluegrass thing,



Brian Blade and the Fellowship Band, Dee Dee Bridgewater celebrating the music of Billie Holiday, Allen Toussaint, Elvis Costello, the Wayne Shorter Quartet, the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, the subdudes, Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk, and Astral Project.

The problem with planning your day at Jazz Fest is that it requires maneuvering among 11 different stages simultaneously. Conflicts are inevitable,



Courtesy Photo

Esperanza Spaulding is scheduled to perform at Healdsburg jazz fest.

but that's part of the fun, not to mention the great ethnic food, and the arts and crafts on display and for sale at the festival, which is located at the 145-acre county fairgrounds.

Festival hours are from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m., so much of the morning and evening hours are free to explore the French Quarter, dine at one of the many fine restaurants, go on a riverboat cruise or take in some more live music at one of the city's clubs, which are open to the wee hours.

While at the 12th Annual Healdsburg Jazz Festival in early June, I hope to enjoy the music of pianist George Cables, bassist Charlie Haden with Ravi Coltrane and Geri Allen, bassist and singer Esperanza Spaulding, and pianist Jason Moran and the Bandwagon, featuring guitarist Bill Frisell. Making the experience even more significant is that I will share it with old friends, some of whom live near Healdsburg and others who will travel from San Diego.

The brainchild of founder and indefatigable director Jessica Felix, the Healdsburg event is a more mainstream jazz affair, true to its mission to present high-quality music that still challenges and intrigues the listener. Billed as "the best jazz festival north of San Francisco," it brings world-class jazz to a non-urban environment where it is presented in a variety of imaginative venues, from wine-tasting rooms and open-air greens to cafes, hotel lobbies and historic theaters. The year's festival runs June 4-13.

Expect a full report from New Orleans and Healdsburg—as well as reviews of local performances by King Sunny Ade and the Jazz in June concerts—in our July online news!

*Memorial***Lincoln writer pays tribute to friend Jarvis**By *Mary Pipher*

In 1997 Jane Jarvis came to Lincoln with Benny Waters. I first heard her play with a trio at the Zoo Bar. Jane was bedecked in satin and pearls and she played piano with great skill and heart. In their first set, the group brought down the house. At the break, Jane shook hands, signed CDs and connected easily with her fans. But, after a short while, she hunted down Benny's manager and said, "Let's get going." He said, "You get a half hour break." Jane said firmly, "I don't want a long break. I came to play."

While Jane was in town, I interviewed her for my book, "Another Country: Navigating the Emotional Terrain of Our Elders." She had lived a remarkable life in her 81 years. She was the only child of loving parents. The family lived a cultured life of art galleries, classical music and Shakespeare. However, when Jane was 13 years old, her parents were killed in a train accident. After that, she was alone in the world. She found her peace and happiness in music.

Jane told me, "Music was a natural part of me, like my nose. My core identity was as a musician. My musicality was a gift and all I had to do was push it along." All of Jane's life, when she needed sanctuary, music offered her a safe and cherished place. She said, "I feel bad for people who have no art in their lives. I don't know how they cope."

When she was in high school Jane played piano for a radio station. It was there that she heard jazz musicians for the first time. After she listened to them rehearse, she asked if she could join them in a song. They were bemused, but agreed. She said, "Let's play what you last played." She

*Mary Pipher*

kept up with them. Later she played organ for baseball games in Shea Stadium. She was a vice president and production manager for Muzak and traveled all over the world to record music. Her greatest musical honor was to be included in the illustrious group of old players called The Statesmen of Jazz.

After our first meeting, Jane and I remained friends until her death. When I gave a reading from "Another Country" in New York, my publisher rented a grand piano and Jane played at the event. Once a month, Jane called me from her small apartment. We would talk for a few minutes about how happy she was and what a good life she had lived. During these calls she laughed a lot and said that she was at age when "externals don't matter. The joy is all inside my head."

After our talks, she would ask me, "What do you want to hear today?" I usually asked for a sad song, such as "Autumn Leaves" or "Return to Sorrento." She'd improvise a long version of whatever I wanted. Then she'd say, "Now, I am going to play

*Courtesy Photos**Jane Jarvis*

you a happy song. That's what I like to play and you need to cheer up."

I last saw Jane when I was working in the city. I visited her at her apartment on East 50th Street. On my way up, I passed a flower vendor and I debated whether to buy her red roses or white. Finally, I decided to buy a dozen of each. When Jane's assistant opened the door for me, I was hidden behind all the roses. I told Jane the white roses were for purity and the red for passion. She laughed and said she had more of one virtue than the other.

Jane lay on her small bed in a lovely silk dressing gown. Her luxuriant silver hair was brushed down over her shoulders. She had a window that looked out on the street. Well-worn biographies of jazz greats filled her bookcases. We talked about her happiness and her acceptance of old age and death as part of "the great song cycle." Then she asked her assistant to help her to the piano. She treated

me to an hour-long concert of passionate, effervescent music. Her fingers had forgotten nothing.

Jane believed in God. "Otherwise," she asked, "how do you understand a life like mine?" She told me, "I embrace all religions. The prayers of Muslims are good prayers, and so are those of the Presbyterians. I can drop into any place of worship anywhere in the world and feel at home." But, Jane did not anticipate

an afterlife. Life on this earth was miracle enough for her.

Still, it comforts me to imagine her in heaven. Jane's heaven would look like a nightclub in Midtown Manhattan. She and her favorite musicians would be on a cramped stage, playing to a packed house. Jane would be wearing high heels, a showy velvet dress, and pearls. Her long blond hair would stream behind her as she played. Poets, bankers, publishers, and

other jazz musicians would be in the crowd, dancing or sitting at little tables with their gin gimlets and black Russians. The crowd would be sophisticated enough to applaud in the right places, to ooh and aah at the really hot riffs and to hush and listen when something magic was happening. By the end of the night, Jane's music would soar across the galaxies and nobody would want to take a break.

Memorial

BMF friend Jane Jarvis leaves a legacy of music

By Tom Ineck

Jane Jarvis, a longtime friend of the Berman Music Foundation, died Jan. 25 at the Lillian Booth Actors' Home in Englewood, N.J. She was 94.

The Berman foundation first brought Jarvis to the attention of jazz fans in Lincoln, Neb., in 1997, when she appeared on March 9 at the Zoo Bar, sharing the billing with saxophonist Benny Waters, who was 95 at the time. Jane was a relatively young and sprightly 81. Indeed, she boasted of being a month younger than my mom when they were introduced during intermission.

During their stay, Jarvis also conducted master classes with students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and at Park Middle School in Lincoln. In October 1999, she returned to the city with trombonist Benny Powell and bassist Earl May for a benefit performance at the Cornhusker Hotel, funded in part by the BMF.

In a 1997 interview, she told me enthusiastically about her lifelong love of jazz.

"I'm not sure when I heard the first jazz recording. It could have been at an uncle's home. He had a



Butch Berman and Jane Jarvis in 1997

phonograph. I didn't have a phonograph when I was a child. In fact, when I was young, not every family had a radio. But I did, for reasons I'm not able to explain, pick up immediately on everything I heard that was jazz, and studied it without knowing I was studying it, and cataloged it in my mind without being aware that I was putting it in my musical computer. I took advantage of everything I heard, and it influenced my playing."

Born Jane Nossett Jarvis on Oct. 31, 1915, Jane formed a jazz band in her native Indiana as a teenager, and continued to work as a jazz pianist from her mid-60s into her 90s. But for more than two decades she

was best known as a ballpark organizer, first with the Braves at County Stadium in Milwaukee, then at Shea Stadium from 1964 to 1979, mixing jazz tunes like "Scapple from the Apple" with more conventional fare like "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." She also worked for Muzak, eventually becoming vice president of programming and recording and hiring jazz musicians like Lionel Hampton and Clark Terry to record sessions that produced some swinging "elevator music."

After leaving Muzak and the New York Mets in the late 1970s, she began finding gigs as a jazz pianist, eventually becoming a regular at Zinno, a West Village nightclub and restaurant, where she worked with Milt Hinton and other jazz bassists. She recorded her first album as a leader the year she turned 70.

Jarvis had lived at the Lillian Booth Actors' Home since she was forced out of her East Side apartment in 2008 after an adjacent building was destroyed in a crane collapse. Butch Berman had continued to stay in touch with Jane through the years, right up until his own death in January 2008.

File Photo

Essay

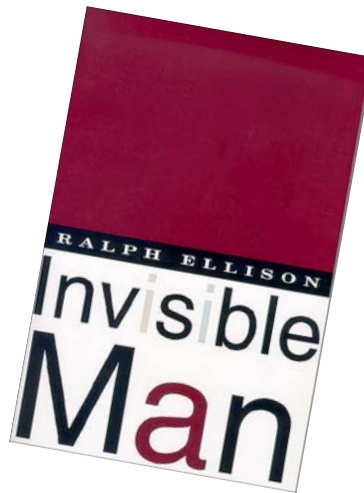
Hearing the music, seeing the truth

By Tom Ineck

The following essay was written for a class in African-American literature that I'm taking at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I wrote it after reading Ralph Ellison's masterful and highly acclaimed novel "Invisible Man," published in 1952. It was one of four short papers required by course instructor Megan Peabody. Since it deals with the use of music as a symbol throughout the book, I thought it appropriate for BMF readers. I also liked the idea of recycling the essay for a broader audience. I have altered the scholarly formatting and page citations for a more journalistic approach.

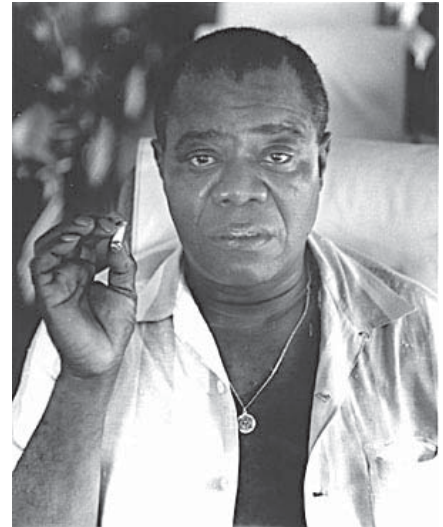
"Invisible Man" deals largely in symbolic imagery, the perceptions of others, self-observance and self-identity, but one way in which Ralph Ellison examines these visual concepts is through music, its multi-faceted influence throughout our lives and its impact on our emotions, our spiritual growth, the way we define ourselves, and our social and political consciousness. In the course of the novel, he cues important scenes with references to the melody, harmony, lyrics and rhythms of song, from such diverse sources as jazz recordings, a Christmas carol heard from a college chapel, a spontaneous expression of the blues and a funeral march in Harlem.

Attempting to describe his protagonist's feelings of invisibility as he "hibernates" in his underground refuge from the real world, Ellison invokes the power of jazz as trumpeter Louis Armstrong sings and plays Fats Waller's bluesy lament "What



Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue," writing, "Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because he's made poetry out of being invisible. I think it must be because he's unaware that he *is* invisible. And my own grasp of invisibility aids me to understand his music." Like Armstrong's syncopated rhythm, being invisible, he notes, "gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat." He equates the visual with the aural when he writes, "...You hear this music simply because music is heard and seldom seen, except by musicians. Could this compulsion to put invisibility down in black and white be thus an urge to make music of invisibility?" Even in the quandary of his invisibility, he defines the dilemma in terms of the racial colors of black and white.

A choir of trombones performing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" inside a college chapel inspires sadness in the passing listener. You can almost see the waves of music when Ellison writes, "The sound floats over all, clear like the night, liquid, serene,



Courtesy Photo

Louis Armstrong

and lonely." Less refined are the primitive spirituals sung in the chapel by a country quartet: "We were embarrassed by the earthy harmonies they sang, but since the visitors were awed we dared not laugh at the crude, high, plaintively animal sounds Jim Trueblood made as he led the quartet." In psychic agony after he rapes his daughter, Trueblood spontaneously raises his voice in song, beginning with a spiritual. "I don't know what it was, some kinda church song, I guess. All I know is I ends up singin' the blues. I sings me blues that night ain't never been sang before, and while I'm singin' them blues I makes up my mind that I ain't nobody but myself and ain't nothin' I can do but let whatever is gonna happen, happen." In the act of singing this primal music, he acknowledges the baseness of his nature and its ultimate consequences.

Ellison likens the delivery of a college debater to a brass ensemble, as he voices his argument in resonating tones, writing "...listen to me, the

bungling bugler of words, imitating the trumpet and the trombone's timbre, playing thematic variations like a baritone horn." During a choir performance, a girl rises to sing a cappella, "standing high against the organ pipes, herself become before our eyes a pipe of contained, controlled and sublimated anguish, a thin plain face transformed by music." The loyal followers of a fallen black leader mourn his passing, "bugles weeping like a family of tender women lamenting their loved one. And the people came to sing the old songs and to express their unspeakable sorrow." Failing to find words to describe their misery, music becomes the medium through which they articulate the fullness of their hearts.

The quest to find himself and his place in the world takes the protagonist to Harlem, where a funeral procession for a black leader is emblematic of the profound power of music in the lives of black Americans, and of all people. A lone, elderly male voice and a euphonium render an impromptu version of "There's Many a Thousand Gone," like "two black pigeons rising above a skull-white barn to tumble and rise through still, blue air." Others take up the song, following the old man, "...as though the song had been there all the time and he knew it and aroused it; and I knew that I had known it too and had failed to release it out of a vague, nameless shame or fear. ...I looked at the coffin and the marchers, listening to them, and yet realizing that I was listening to something within myself." The old man's song and its message seem to emanate from the listeners, as they respond to something beyond religion or politics. "It was not the words, for they were all the same old slave-borne words; it was as though he'd changed the emotion beneath the words while yet the old longing, resigned, transcendent emotion still sounded above, now deepened by that something for which

the theory of Brotherhood had given me no name."

Ellison's protagonist eventually resigns himself to the diversity and absurdity of life, as in the contradictions inherent in the blues and its myriad variations or in Louis Armstrong's evocations of palpable good and evil when he sings, "Open the window and let the foul air out..."

Of course Louis was kidding, *he* wouldn't have thrown old Bad Air out, because it would have broken up the music and the dance, when it was the good music that came from the bell of old Bad Air's horn that counted." In other words, music tempered by the fires of hell may be the most heavenly sound of all.



Brad Krieger, Dylan Nelson, Bob Doris, Daniel Nelson and Miles Kildare

Friends celebrate 2nd annual Berman Ping Pong tournament

By Brad Krieger

The Second Annual Butch Berman Memorial Ping Pong tournament was hosted by Daniel Nelson, a long-time friend of the Berman Music Foundation.

Present at the gathering were Daniel Nelson, Dylan Nelson, Elizabeth Nelson, Ruth Ann Nahorny, Brad Krieger, Catherine Patterson, Bob Doris, and Miles Kildare.

For the past 30-plus years, we would gather at Butch's house

on Saturday or Sunday for a full-out assault on the Ping Pong table. Butch was always the gracious host, providing fine wine—and food, if it happened to be a football Saturday. We kept a running total on who won, and would have a final tally at the end of the year to see who wound up on top.

In the end, wins and losses were not important, but added to the excitement of the competition.

Concert Review

Matt Wilson Quartet brings skill and wit to jazz

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Who says that jazz can't be fun? Who says it has to be dry, academic, loftily cerebral and utterly humorless? Well, whoever says it, the Matt Wilson Quartet is out to prove them wrong.

With eight recordings under his own name—all on Palmetto Records—and dozens of guest appearances with other jazz artists (with Lee Konitz, Dewey Redman, Jane Ira Bloom, Larry Goldings, Charlie Haden and many others) Wilson, 45, has earned the respect of adventurous listeners and fellow musicians alike for his technical skills, his fearless forays into the wonderful world of free-bop, his improvisational instincts and his incessant sense of whimsy.

Wilson and his sidemen—reedman Jeff Lederer, cornetist Kirk Knuffke, and young bassist Paul Sikivie—brought all of those performance elements into their work and play the evening of March 26 at Westbrook Music Building on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus, where the quartet also conducted workshops with area high school students during the Honor Jazz Weekend, funded in part by the **Berman Music Foundation**. Predictably, the small concert audience consisted largely of those students, their teachers and UNL music school faculty. A publicity snafu that misidentified the concert time—by two days!—sadly prevented a wider segment of the general public from attending or even knowing about this brilliant performance.

“Gathering Call” was also a wakeup call for the uninitiated, with Lederer leading the charge on wail-



Photos by Tom Ineck

Matt Wilson Quartet at Westbrook Music Building*Matt Wilson at play*

ing tenor sax. The opening medley also included “Some Assembly Required” and “Arts and Crafts,” the title track of Wilson’s 2001 release and the name of one of the drummer’s other

bands. A different version also appears on the quartet’s most recent release, 2009’s “That’s Gonna Leave a Mark.” It’s jaunty, loping tempo and simple chord changes make it a versatile vehicle for rhythmic and harmonic improvisation.

Lederer switched to clarinet for “Rear Control,” a tune written by saxophonist Andrew D’Angelo, a former member of the quartet who is recovering from cancer. It began with an ominously funky backbeat, and then accelerated to a harrowing swing tempo that took the listener on a wild ride, with occasional rumbling flourishes from Wilson on toms. As the music veered sharply into the avant-garde, Lederer reached the outer limits of his instrument. Throughout the 90-minute performance, Wilson expressed his rhythmic impulses with assorted rim shots, cymbal crashes, hand slaps on the snare drum, and all sorts of percussive devices, including the clever use of a Chinese gong

Courtesy Photo

placed on the head of a tom-tom and scraping a drumstick across the snare drum to simulate the turntable technique of a demented hip-hop deejay.

Wilson took up the brushes for the odd, but lovely “Lucky,” a chamber-like tune composed by Lederer and his young daughter, who “gave him the notes and he put them in the right order,” according to Wilson. “Chirp” was the title given a brand-new composition “work-shopped” that afternoon. It featured Lederer on soprano sax. One of the highlights of the show was a rendition of “Choose,” based on a poem by Carl Sandburg, from a grant-funded project that Wilson did a few years ago. Described by the composer as “socialist march free-bop,” it did, indeed, march along with righteous moral fervor, eventually provoking Wilson into a recitation of the poem’s central question—“The single, clenched fist lifted and ready, or the open, asking hand held out and waiting?”—and answering, with fist raised as the rest of the band and audience members joined in the chant, “Choose!” In the grand tradition of political oratory, the drummer left his drum kit and strode to the front of the band, stilling shouting the one-word demand.



Matt Wilson Quartet leads the chant, “Choose!” inspired by Carl Sandburg.

From this lofty rhetorical peak, the band then descended to tongue-in-cheek banality with a simple but catchy tune by Beyonce, America’s current pop diva. The quartet somehow carried it off with a degree of panache as Knuffke played the melody with sensitivity on the cornet, Lederer accompanied on tenor sax and the rest of the band and audience members punctuated with ultra-hip finger-snapping.

Any doubts about the fun factor in Wilson’s band-leading style fell by the wayside from the start of the nine-minute “Schoolboy Thug,” a hilarious send-up of heavy metal pretense, with Wilson donning a black wig, spinning his drumsticks, hammering the drums and cymbals with wild abandon,

and generally taking the cave-man approach to rock rhythm. Lederer joined in the spree by kicking over the music stands as he honked and squealed on the tenor sax, inserting a quote from Black Sabbath. In classic rock style, the rest of the band then left the stage to Wilson for an extended solo shtick, which involved tossing his sticks in the air with each cymbal crash and catching them (sometimes), finally pretending to be impaled by one in the eye and pulling it out. The finale act in this farce was the “birth of a rock star,” in which Wilson removed his glasses and stretched his drumsticks along either side of his face in a simulated entry from the birth canal, a routine so outrageous it had the audience nearly rolling in the aisles.

After leaving the hall, the quartet returned to a standing ovation for a wonderful rendition of “Mopti,” a Latin tune by trumpeter Don Cherry from a 1980 recording of the group Old and New Dreams, a quartet of four Ornette Coleman alumni, also including saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Ed Blackwell. It began with Wilson on mbira, or thumb piano, an instrument that he had purchased while in Lincoln, and ended with the band, still playing, slowly exiting the room to applause, then reentering from the opposite door to finish the tune.

The BMF awarded a \$7,000 grant for the second annual UNL Honor Jazz Weekend, which gathered high school musicians from Nebraska and surrounding states for a comprehensive playing and learning experience, including master classes with UNL faculty and guests. Among other things, the grant covered expenses for five Berman Music Foundation Jazz Fellows—high school educators who participated in the entire weekend of activities.



Drummer Matt Wilson dons wig for rock-star turn on “Schoolboy Thug.”

Concert Review

NET's Studio One becomes "Jazz Cabaret"

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—A modest plan to tape a 30-minute performance by the UNL Faculty Jazz Ensemble for later broadcast on NET Television expanded into a more ambitious and educational "Jazz Cabaret," at a performance March 21 at NET's Studio One.

The fruitful Sunday afternoon collaboration between NET and the UNL School of Music yielded an hour-long performance and a subsequent question-and-answer session with musicians that will be posted on the NET website. The broadened scope of the project was made possible by a \$10,000 grant from the **Berman Music Foundation**.

Studio One was decked out with small, round café tables, colored mood lighting and large potted plants to give it the right cabaret ambience. Several dozen invited "patrons" provided the enthusiasm and give-and-take response essential to a live jazz performance. Six studio cameras—including one on a movable boom above the audience—would capture every movement, and a high-definition mobile recording studio would ensure high-quality sound.

Of course, the most important contribution to this project came from the Faculty Jazz Ensemble, an eight-piece group featuring several veterans of the Lincoln jazz community, including trumpeter Darryl White, bassist Rusty White, pianist Tom Larson and guitarist Peter Bouffard, and more recent additions to the UNL faculty, such as saxophonist Paul Haar and trombonist Eric Richards. Added to the mix were drummer Steve Helfand and saxophonist Brandon Holloman, an outstanding graduate teaching assistant at UNL.

Once the cabaret atmosphere was established, the septet (minus Holloman) took the stage for the opener, "The Third

NET Television collaborated with UNL School of Music with funding from BMF.

Degree," a composition by New York-based trombonist and Big Band leader John Fedchock. The tune was difficult and contained some minor fluffs as the players got their bearings, which can be problematic when considering the constant distraction of lights and cameras. They quickly resolved the problems and launched into a gorgeous rendition of Gershwin's "A Foggy Day," with Holloman added on alto sax. Bouffard had imaginatively arranged the old chestnut in a manner that made it brand new and allowed for nice contributions by Darryl White on flugelhorn and Tom Larson on piano.

The ensemble was reduced to a six-piece group and White remained on flugelhorn for "Ancient Memories," the title track from his 1999 debut recording. Written by Fred Hamilton, it was a showcase for Holloman's stirring alto sax work, plus solos by White and Larson. With a slightly different lineup, Paul Haar introduced Hank Mobley's 1957 classic "Funk in Deep Freeze," a

suitably soulful number with Haar excelling on tenor, Richards soloing warmly on trombone, Bouffard turning in a Wes Montgomery-style guitar solo, and Rusty White maintaining the groove with a stunning walking bass line and a thumping solo. The sextet also delivered a mournful rendition of J.J. Johnson's ballad standard "Lament," as arranged by Richards, who stated the familiar melody with call-and-response counterpoint by Haar on tenor and Bouffard on guitar.

The band returned to its octet formation for Nat Adderley's celebrative "Fun," with Holloman back on alto sax, admirably taking the part that Cannonball Adderley played on the live 1966 recording "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy." Adding to the fun were Darryl White on trumpet and Bouffard comping solidly on guitar. A couple of the musicians had a chance to showcase their own composition, beginning with Tom Larson on his beautiful "Luke." The composer stated the theme on electronic

keys before turning to the piano, assisted by Haar on soprano sax, White on flugelhorn, and Richards on muted trombone. The rhythm section accompanied with aplomb, and Bouffard delivered a lovely solo. The guitarist's "Petite Pas (Little Steps)," is the composer's answer to Coltrane's notoriously difficult "Giant Steps." Recorded a few years ago as a duet by Bouffard and Rusty White, here it was performed by a quartet adding Haar on tenor sax and

Helfand on drums.

Bringing the taping to a close was "Sweet Georgia Brown," with the full eight-piece ensemble gathering on stage for the familiar, foot-stomping, feel-good finale. After a short break, the musicians returned to take questions from the audience. Emphasizing the educational aspects of music and performance, they related their own experiences as young students who were first introduced to jazz, rock and classi-

cal music. They talked about how they chose their respective instruments and shared advice for today's young music students.

After considerable post-production work, "Jazz Cabaret" will have its premiere screening at 7 p.m. May 25 at the Sheldon Museum of Art auditorium and will be broadcast on the statewide public television network sometime in June.

New Acquisitions

"Jazz Icons" an important addition to BMF library

By Tom Ineck

The most recent addition to the **Berman Music Foundation** library may also be its most important acquisition ever. It is the first four boxed sets of DVDs in the ongoing "Jazz Icons" series, featuring full-length concerts and studio sessions with the legends of jazz history. Now totaling more than 30 individual DVDs, the series is a goldmine of rare recordings of superior quality, many of them filmed during the artists' peak years—the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

Reelin' in the Years Productions has been seeking out and licensing live recordings from all over the world, releasing annual sets since 2006. Many of the performances had never been released on DVD and, in some cases, were never even broadcast. Many were created for TV programs in Scandinavia, Western Europe and England, places where jazz has traditionally found more public support than the music does in the very country in which it was born.

Each DVD is nicely packaged with a 20-page booklet containing an

essay by a jazz historian, photographs and details on personnel and session highlights. They are produced with the full support and cooperation of the artists' families or estates and, in many cases, family members contribute photographs and write illuminating forewords. Takashi Blakey writes about father Art, T.S. Monk writes about father Thelonious, Paul Baker writes about father Chet, Cathy Rich writes about father Buddy, and Lisa Simone Kelly writes about mother Nina Simone.

Unlike the flawed approach of Ken Burns' "Jazz" series, the beauty of these recordings—and their historical and educational value—is that they eschew critical narration and lecture for simple, straightforward performance. They allow the viewer to draw his or her own conclusions by simply listening and watching these great artists at work.

The boxed sets generally run from about \$100 to \$150 each. DVDs may also be purchased separately for about \$18.

As jazz critic Nat Hentoff commented, "This is like the discovery of a bonanza of previously unknown manuscripts of plays by William Shakespeare." I couldn't agree more.

The first four boxed sets:

Jazz Icons, Vol. 1 (2006): Louis Armstrong, Chet Baker, Count Basie, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Quincy Jones, Thelonious Monk, and Buddy Rich.

Jazz Icons, Vol. 2 (2007): Dave Brubeck, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Dexter Gordon, Charles Mingus, Wes Montgomery, and Sarah Vaughan, plus a bonus disc of Brubeck, Coltrane, Gordon and Vaughan.

Jazz Icons, Vol. 3 (2008): Cannonball Adderley, Bill Evans, Lionel Hampton, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Oscar Peterson, Sonny Rollins, and Nina Simone, plus a bonus disc of Kirk, Rollins and Simone.

Jazz Icons, Vol. 4 (2009): Art Blakey, Art Farmer, Erroll Garner, Coleman Hawkins, Woody Herman, Anita O'Day and Jimmy Smith, plus a bonus disc of Garner, Hawkins and Smith.



Concert Review

Blue Room reverberates with Charlie Hunter Trio

By Jesse Starita

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—Near the corner of 13th and Main streets, I rolled down my window. What’s going on tonight?” The determined pedestrians and animated conversations suggested an event of some significance. Over the commotion, a ticket hawker elevated his voice: “Billy Joel and Elton John.” He said this as though I’d asked if the sun would come up tomorrow. Kansas City has just over two million residents and tonight it looked like all of them were taking the Yellow Brick Road for a communion with the piano men. But my business was elsewhere, east, along a less gilded path towards 18th and Vine.

Driving down the Paseo—a lush boulevard with broad, elegant medians—I wondered if Kansas City had enough left to populate a jazz concert. The line snaking out the Blue Room quickly answered that. Jazz in Kansas City reached its zenith in the 1930s and ’40s, when saxophone icons Lester Young, Ben Webster and Charlie Parker transformed The Blue Room into a temple for musical worship. In the 1990s, city council members moved to preserve that heritage, rescuing the area and its history from decades of decay. Perched underneath the neon glow and moonlight, I thought about that history. Seventy years later, I was here to see a different Charlie.

My two previous trips were straightforward affairs. Easy-going female vocalists. Surplus chairs. A one-to-one waitress-to-table ratio. The Charlie Hunter Trio would have none of that. A packed house forced staff to borrow chairs from the neighboring American Jazz Museum. Eventually, I nestled into a corner table, surrounded by the eclectic audience that Hunter courts—tidy, middle-aged management



Photos by Jesse Starita

Curtis Fowlkes, trombone; Charlie Hunter, guitar; Eric Kalb, drums*The Blue Room at the corner of 18th and Vine streets in Kansas City**Blue Room is packed for Hunter Trio.*

types and shaggy-haired jam band devotees.

Last August, Hunter released his 20th studio album, cheekily titled “Gentlemen, I Neglected To Inform You You Will Not Be Getting Paid.” The magnificence of Hunter’s guitar playing is not entirely revealed on iTunes or compact disc. I spent the first few songs trying to figure out who was playing bass. Hunter was—while playing guitar. He’s the jazz equivalent of a football player who throws a touchdown

pass to himself. How does he do this? It’s an amalgam of immeasurable hours of practice and superior dexterity channeled through a custom-built seven-string that simultaneously churns out bass lines, rhythm and solos.

Striking the evening’s first note, he immediately drove the trio in a funky direction. Through myriad effects pedals, Hunter’s guitar took on the sound of a Hammond B3 organ. Drummer Eric Kalb clutched a thick backbeat, melting his snare and crash cymbal into a separate instrument. Kalb and Hunter worked this terrain for a few minutes, ironing over the groove, removing

Blue Room continued on page 17

Concert Review

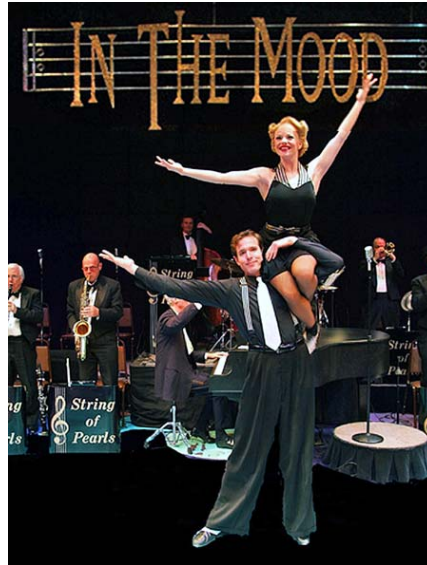
“In the Mood” revue appeals to crowd of 1,900

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Sometimes adventurous patrons of the arts crave the visceral stimulation of avant-garde jazz, the metaphorical gymnastics of modern dance or the cerebral drama of cutting-edge theater productions. Other times we are simply in the mood for the warm blanket of nostalgia and those comfy pillows of the familiar.

Such was the case March 9 when 1,900 people turned out for “In the Mood,” a 1940s musical revue at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. An unabashedly sentimental journey through the Big Band era, the retrospective combined the 13-piece String of Pearls orchestra with a group of six singers and dancers to document the evolution of the swing decade from the mid-1930s to the end of World War II. In classic revue fashion, it delivered the goods in rapid-fire succession, squeezing some four dozen tunes into two hours.

The entire brass section entered the hall from the audience, marching



Popular “In the Mood” revue appeals to “the greatest generation.”

up to the stage to the tune of “St. Louis Blues.” A brief tribute to early big bands went from Glenn Miller’s signature “In the Mood” to Ellington’s “C Jam Blues,” Goodman’s “Jersey Bounce,” Les Brown’s “I’ve Got My Love to Keep Me Warm,” Shaw’s

uity and my jazz sentimentality, surely the latter one more, missed the reassurance that emanates from those four strings.

In any case, two hours into the set, Hunter kept churning. As the trio reached their final number, Hunter flashed a mischievous grin. He looked like a train conductor ready to call everyone on board. In fact, few had departed all night. And, on the heels of a 12-minute blues jam, 18th and Vine reverberated with the notes of jazz past and present.

“Moonglow,” and Basie’s “Jumpin’ at the Woodside.”

A “class of 1940” vignette was a clever device to introduce “Jukebox Saturday Night,” “Saturday Night is the Loneliest Night of the Week,” “Taking a Chance on Love,” “Don’t Get Around Much Anymore,” the rumba “Green Eyes,” “Accentuate the Positive,” and a jitterbug dance segment with some lively rug-cutters.

With a dramatic change of costumes, the singers returned for a set of romantic favorites, including “Moonlight Serenade,” “Laura,” “Blue Moon,” and a very effective rendition of “At Last,” introduced by a solo trumpet cadenza and sung by a lone woman in dramatic spotlight. The whole chorus joined in on “I’ll Never Smile Again,” “Sentimental Journey,” and “Tuxedo Junction,” which also feature a nice trumpet exchange.

The first half of the show ended with “The House I Live In”—a patriotic song first introduced by Frank Sinatra—which extols the American virtues of equality and community, followed by an announcement of the 1939 invasion of Poland. That set the stage for a second-half nod to wartime songs like “Over There,” “What Do You Do in the Infantry?” “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy,” and “He’s 1-A in the Army and A-1 in My Heart,” eventually leading to the hopefulness of “I’ll Be Seeing You,” “We’ll Meet Again” and “When the Lights Go on Again (All Over the World).”

After moving performances of “America” and the memorial “Danny Boy,” active duty and veteran members of the military were asked to stand and be recognized, a fitting salute to “the greatest generation.”

Blue Room continued from page 16

coarseness. The trio’s lanky trombonist, Curtis Fowlkes, finally balanced the equation, jabbing and slicing over the beat the way an air horn does over a the hum of an auditorium.

After a lengthy intermission, the group opened set two with a slower, deliberate tone. Kalb’s drumming traded punch for polish. Fowlkes, utilizing his elastic wingspan, extended slurs an extra step. And although Hunter’s attempt at late-night serenade was sincere and melodious, even his superb talent could not mask what they lacked—a big, rich acoustic bass. The Blue Room’s antiq-

Concert Review

Fleck's Africa Project is "girls' night out"

By Grace Sankey-Berman

OMAHA, Neb.—It has been the worst winter in many years, and the snow and cold did not seem to be letting up but, undeterred by the weather, my girl friends and I were eager to do something fun. On Feb. 20, a concert by Bela Fleck and The Africa Project at the Holland Performing Arts Center provided a great opportunity for such a night out.

A night out wouldn't be complete without a good meal and some libation. We agreed to check out The Twisted Cork, which The Food Network says serves the best-tasting burgers in Nebraska. It has convenient parking and it's just a few minutes from the concert hall. None of us had been there before so we were eager to see what the hype was about. It was a small space, but cozy, and a couple tables were already seated. The wine list was decent and the menu had a variety of other staples, but we all ordered the hamburger. Ruthann said it was the best burger she ever had. However, the hamburger was served with only a taster's portion of delicious coleslaw and some potato chips, which was disappointing, and the bun could have been more wholesome. Overall, it was a decent meal because the hamburger was delicious.

The Africa Project was born out of a trip Fleck took to Africa to learn about the roots of the banjo, an instrument introduced to America by slaves who brought the prototype from their homeland. While in Africa, Fleck collaborated with some incredible musicians from Gambia, Mali, Uganda, and Tanzania, some of whom performed with Fleck at the Holland Center.

The concert hall was almost sold out, and at 8 p.m. Bela Fleck walked onto the stage with his banjo and im-



Bela Fleck and the Africa Project

Courtesy Photo

mediately lightened the mood when he playfully performed his rendition of "The Beverly Hillbillies" theme song. The appreciative audience erupted into giggles, laughter and applause.

I have never been to a banjo concert before and was not sure what to expect. We were in for a real treat when the Tanzanian musicians came on stage—the incredible, blind thumb piano player and singer Anania Ngoliga and his very talented accompanist, guitarist and vocalist John Kitime. Ngoliga's pure voice was rhythmic and soothing. He sang about the Ngorogo "cradle," which has the highest concentration of wildlife in Tanzania, and about Mount Kilimanjaro. His voice, ringing through the hall, almost painted a picture of how wild and free that part of the world is.

The next song was "Home is Best." Even though he sang in his native language, the emotions clearly conveyed how much he loved and missed his homeland. Fleck teased that Ngoliga was in a bad mood because of the cold weather. Ngoliga was serious, yet very playful, in his delivery, punctuating his songs with chicken-like quakes. John Kitime, the guitar player, and Fleck on banjo played along with him, trying to

mimic Ngoliga's sounds. It certainly was not your everyday concert, but it was great and unique improvisation. They performed most of the songs in their native language, but the emotions were raw, real, and soulful. It felt like I was on a journey to an exotic land, without the passport and plane ride.

Next was the Malian band of the great Bassekou Kouate and N'goni Ba. N'goni is the Malian banjo master. The band consisted of four banjo players and the bigger the banjo, the bigger the sound. His instrument is rectangular and looked like it was carved out of wood. There was also a calabash player and a beaded gourd player. The big sound of the calabash was a cross between a Japanese taiko drum and a bass guitar, yet uniquely different.

On vocals was Ami Sacko, bandleader Kouate's wife. The chemistry between them was undeniable when they sang together. Ami's vocal range was showcased in a traditional Malian song that was a tribute to an ancient King. Starting out almost quietly, her voice slowly soared with a sound that had a vibe that beautifully blended Middle Eastern and African influences. The band was tight, playing just enough to compliment and showcase this unique art form.

Some of the music was up-tempo dance tunes that built up to almost-hypnotic crescendo. The African tamas, a shoulder drum that fits under the arm, was a crowd-pleaser. The crowd may

have been unfamiliar with the style of the drum and its unique sound, but it is arguably the most widely used drum in West Africa. I particularly enjoyed it because it took me back to my homeland. The beautiful purple and yellow costumes and elegant dance also brought some color to a cold winter night.

After the intermission, Fleck played a banjo solo, seducing the audience with deep, yet sparse and gentle notes. Again, the Tanzanian musicians Ngoliga and Kitime joined him on stage to play some bluegrass and Tanzanian music, which they called “Blackgrass and Bluegrass,” also featuring American fiddler Cassey Driessen. The fiddle and hand-held piano proved to be a great combination in the song “I Wanna Go Home.” Cassey slowed the traditional tempo of bluegrass to blend with the



Bela Fleck (upper left) and African musicians visit with fans.

Photo by Grace Sankey-Berman

slow, melodic African singer, creating a perfect harmony of music from opposite spectrums.

The Malian musicians also joined in for more blue- and blackgrass music. The musicians got down to business, producing a robust and sophisticated blend of bluegrass and exotic African music. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, and their energy was

infectious. They concluded with a sort of anthem called “Africa,” again featuring Ngoliga on vocals, making for a thrilling night of jazzy music unlike any I have heard.

Bela Fleck’s Africa Project is compiled in a three-volume CD called “Throw Down Your Heart” and in a documentary movie of the same name, which earned him Grammy Awards in February for best contemporary world music and best pop instrumental performance. His ability to explore new forms of music and to integrate great music, regardless of genre or origin, into brilliant compositions makes it hard to box him into a strict category. His discerning taste keeps his music fresh and sets him apart. This explains why he is the artist with the most diverse Grammy nomination in history, including jazz, pop, bluegrass, country and classical.

Concert Review

Amy Denio celebrates Women’s Week at UNL

By Grace Sankey-Berman

LINCOLN, Neb.—Seattle-based musician, composer and producer Amy Denio was on hand to perform at a special edition of the Clawfoot Salon March 10 at the Nebraska Union, during the UNL Women’s Week celebration. The annual event celebrates and reflects on the progress of women’s rights. Ember Schrag of Lincoln’s Clawfoot House, in collaboration with the Berman Music Foundation, brought this accomplished musician to town for the event.

Denio, a self-taught accordion player and guitarist, was flanked by young female musicians and one or two men who played a variety of instruments, including congas, guitars and accordions. She played the accordion while directing the group in a sing-along of a variety of songs. The jam session was relaxed and interactive and included folk, tango, Scottish music, and what Denio described as an Algerian

waltz, all done with a twist. And that is her musical style. She does not restrict her music to a particular genre, but will let the instrument bring out different aspects of her musicality. For example, she said the saxophone brings out her jazzy side and the accordion brings out the folk side.



Amy Denio

Photo by Grace Sankey-Berman

Denio spoke about her experience as a musician, how she started in the business by organizing concerts. While performing, she traveled to Japan, South America, Hong Kong and throughout

Europe. Along the way, she met a network of independently thinking people who along with her life experiences help shape her mission of using music as a tool for social change.

Denio said she wants musicians to be more interactive. She and others employ very creative and unconventional ways to engage people. In Seattle she plays with a band that sits in the middle of the audience in order to promote interaction. They play live in public buses, or even audition the bus drivers to sing opera while driving or to use the horn or brakes as musical instruments. She said, “The buses came alive like cartoon characters, it became a musical experience to ride the bus.”

Amy concluded her lecture by singing a few solos while playing the accordion. She encouraged women to pursue their dreams and not worry about potential setbacks.

Brewsky's is setting for jazz experimentation

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Of late, the Capital Jazz Society has been presenting some very provocative and interesting music Thursday nights at Brewsky's Jazz Underground, also the venue for a big band gathering every Monday eve.

The lower level room at 201 N. Eighth St. in the Haymarket District was the setting for the March 31 reunion of trumpeter **Bryan McCune** with old bandmates Tom Larson on keys, John Scofield on drums, Dana Wheary on guitar, and Bill Wimmer on saxophones, with Mark Luebbe added on bass. Also joining in the fun was Bryan's dad, trumpeter Mac McCune,



Bryan McCune Combo (from left) Scofield, Bryan McCune, Luebbe, Wimmer, Wheary and Mac McCune

and Larson's son, guitarist Will Larson.

The performance—which was recorded in both audio and video formats—alternated straight-ahead standards such as the Bobby Timmons'



Group Sax (from left) Haar, Benson, Love and Vicroy

"Moanin'," "Caravan," "All the Things You Are" and "What Now My Love," with the younger McCune's edgy fusion compositions and arrangements, aided by his adept use of electronics. It was especially instructive to hear the Miles Davis and Harry James schools of trumpeting bridge the McCunes' generational gap.

Group Sax brought its formidable brand of brash brass attack to bear in a sparsely attended April 7 performance. The saxophone quartet's founder and baritone saxophonist Scott "The Beast" Vicroy has pursued this difficult music for nearly 20 years, much of that time with veterans Ed Love and Mark Benson. With newcomer Paul Haar, director of jazz studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, they continue to yield exciting results performing the music of such legendary sax foursomes as Itchy Fingers and Bobby Watson's 29th Street Saxophone Quartet.

Yes, it is often challenging music, for both performer and listener, but the joy of discovery is latent in every tune, whether it's Gershwin's "Love is Here to Stay," Monk's "Round Midnight," or Mingus' "Jelly Roll." Benson's notable contributions included imaginative arrangements of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" and George Harrison's "Taxman."

Concert Review

Saxman Haar shines in limelight

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—With so much talent in its ranks, the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra is featuring some of the band's stellar soloists this season. Saxophonist Paul Haar took honors Feb. 5 at The Cornhusker hotel with a program called "Sax and the City." Director of jazz studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Haar is a regular member of the NJO sax section, but this was his first night in the limelight.

"Perdido," a favorite from the Duke Ellington songbook, warmed up the band and the audience of 320, which were relegated to the rather inferior lower-level Lancaster Room for the concert due to a conflicting event.

The guest soloist first took the stage for a lilting version of the standard "There Will Never be Another You," arranged by former Haar mentor Don Galley. On alto sax, Haar demonstrated the self-assurance of a veteran, stating the melody and soloing with

ease and inspiration. Guitarist Peter Bouffard also contributed a tasteful solo.

A Dirk Fischer arrangement of Cole Porter's "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To" followed in a lightly swinging tempo. Tom Harrell's lovely "Sail Away" was a pleasant surprise as arranged by UNL composer-in-residence Eric Richards for tenor saxophone, flutes, bass clarinet and muted trumpets. True to its title, the tune was breezy, wind-driven and warm.

By way of dedication, Haar introduced his wife before launching into the romantic ballad "Hey There." On alto sax, Haar's beautiful melody was aided by Bouffard on guitar. "Friends Again" was a modern take by Lanny Morgan on the old standard "Just Friends." Haar, Ed Love and Andrew Janak stated the melody on tenors before turning it over to Haar, Tom Harvill on piano and Bob Krueger on flugelhorn.

Photos by Tom Ineck

Jazz on Disc

For talent, no one keeps up with the Joneses

By Tom Ineck



OLIVER JONES/HANK JONES
Pleased to Meet You
 Justin Time Records

For poise, sophistication, technique and taste, no one can keep up with the Joneses. That is, Oliver Jones and Hank Jones, who join their talents here for a momentous collaboration that is as much memorial homage to Oscar Peterson as it is testimonial to their own, enduring reputations.

“Pleased to Meet You” was in the planning stages when Peterson died in December 2007. It was recorded in June 2008 in Montreal, the hometown of both Peterson and Oliver Jones and—aptly—appears on the Justin Time label, a Montreal-based company with which Oliver Jones has been associated for more than 25 years. The result is a relaxed, genial atmosphere that comes across on the recording, the first featuring these two keyboard giants.

Hank Jones, almost 90 at the time of this recording, is Oliver’s senior by about 17 years, but their styles are eminently compatible. That is especially apparent on the opener, the stately Ellington tune “What Am I Here For?” where they build the melody line at a gentle, strolling gait. The soulful Jerome Richardson stan-

dard “Groove Merchant” fully exploits the blues influence in both pianists, capably abetted by bassist Brandi Disterheft and drummer Jim Doxas, who are aboard on the first three tracks only. The last of these is “Ripples,” a delightful Hank Jones romp that features Disterheft and Doxas trading solo breaks.

The rhythm section steps down as the pianists go head-to-head on “Makin’ Whoopee.” The Joneses illustrate the rare ability to listen and respond appropriately, never getting in each other’s way as they “converse.” On the uptempo “I’ll Remember April,” one delineates the theme while the other provides a rubato introduction, then they each go on dazzling solo flights before returning to the melody. Another tune that suits the duo well is “Star Eyes,” with its intriguing changes and lush chords.

The elder Jones has two brief solo features, including “Monk’s Mood,” and the closer, “Lonely Woman,” a moody piece by William Stegmeier that clocks in at less than two minutes.

The spotlight turns squarely on Peterson with his “Blues for Big Scotia,” a broad, two-fisted blues composition that allows both of the Joneses to show their chops as they trade solos and keep the powerful groove churning. Peterson’s “Cakewalk” is a more light-hearted affair, bouncing along and keeping both pianists on their toes. But it is Oliver Jones’ “I Remember OP” that most intimately pays the duo’s respects to their late friend and fellow piano legend.



MATT WILSON QUARTET
That’s Gonna Leave a Mark
 Palmetto Records

As the title so cleverly implies, the latest release from the Matt Wilson Quartet definitely leaves an impression on the listener. Whether you’re new to the Wilson esthetic or a long-time fan, “That’s Gonna Leave a Mark” is a tantalizingly unique experience. For those in the know, its blend of catchy melodies, free-bop improvisations, rhythms that alternately swing and rock with a backbeat, and an overall sense of whimsy are typically unconventional—or is that unconventionally typical?

Over the course of his 14-year relationship with Palmetto Records, the wily drummer has consistently maintained a quartet format, sometimes with saxophone, keyboards and bass, sometimes with trumpet and keys, and sometimes with two saxophones and bass, which is the case here, with Andrew D’Angelo and Jeff Lederer on assorted reeds and Chris Lightcap on bass. His current touring foursome, which performed March 26 in Lincoln, changes that equation yet again by pairing saxophone and trumpet.

D’Angelo on alto sax and Lederer on tenor sax manage to sound like a

Jazz on Disc continued on page 22

Jazz on CD continued from page 21

whole brass section while setting up the opening romp, “Shooshabuster,” before engaging in solo excursions, with shouted encouragement from Wilson. “Arts and Crafts,” the stop-and-start title track of Wilson’s 2001 release, is given a new lease on life as the two saxophones harmonize then merge with Wilson’s insistent snare-drum pulse for a three-way dialogue. This recording is dedicated to bassist Dennis Irwin, a former Wilson bandmate who died a couple of years ago.

D’Angelo’s “Rear Control” features Lederer soaring on clarinet, as the tempo escalates. The time signature shifts again, and the composer joins the fray on bass clarinet. “Getting Friendly” is a sweetly melodic love song penned by Wilson. The quartet has a ball interpreting the bebop classic “Two Bass Hit” by the MJQ’s John Lewis. Lederer growls on tenor, Lightcap prowls on bass and Wilson drives the tempo and skips lightly over the changes in a bravura percussion performance.

A heavy backbeat moves Wilson’s “Area Man,” while saxophones combine in raucous abandon. Lederer’s daughter, Maya, choose 12 notes that her dad then fashioned into the beautiful chamber piece for clarinets called “Lucky.” As Wilson writes in the liner notes, it is a song that “resounds of honesty, hope and optimism.” The brief title track has Wilson roving over the drum kit like a man possessed as Lederer and D’Angelo make their impression with a vengeance. Lightcap contributed the lilting free-bopper “Celibate Oriole” to the quartet’s songbook.

The traditional 19th century hymn “Come and Find the Quiet Center” and the 1974 song by War called “Why Can’t We Be Friends?” close the recording on a note of contemplation and world unity, with “The Swayettes” and the entire Wilson family joining in on the final tune’s vocal chorus.



GENE HARRIS QUARTET
Another Night in London
Resonance Records

With “Another Night in London,” Resonance Records continues to pay homage to the lasting legacy of piano great Gene Harris, whose career was revived in the 1980s and 1990s with nearly 20 releases on the Concord label, extending right up to his death in early 2000. Always an exciting keyboard stylist with roots deep in the blues, Harris is at his most riveting in concert with a quartet. Such is the case here, another set from his 1996 club date at Pizza Express. Resonance released the first volume, “Live in London,” in 2008.

Like that previous CD, “Another Night” showcases six extended performances with a solid band consisting of Scottish guitarist Jim Mullen (of Brian Auger’s Oblivion Express and Average White Band) and two Brits, bassist Andrew Clyendert and drummer Martin Drew, who worked extensively with Oscar Peterson. In tracks ranging from eight minutes to more than 13 minutes, they delve intensely into such soul classics as “Sweet Georgia Brown” and “Georgia on My Mind,” plus a soulful rendition of the ballad “That’s All” and stunningly original versions of Jobim’s “Meditation,” Gershwin’s “Lady Be Good,” and Leon Russell’s “This Masquerade.”

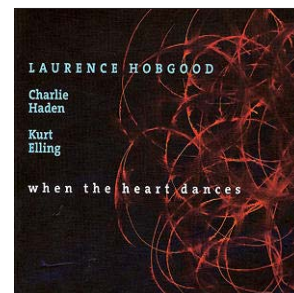
Mullen ignites “Georgia” with a subtle string-bending introduction, with Harris taking up the challenge, first with easy-swinging poise then increasing pyrotechnics and blues power, as the rhythm section intensifies the groove. “Meditation” gets an especially excit-

ing reading, with Mullen storming out of the gate and Harris pushing the tempo as he builds momentum with an inspired flurry of notes. Mullen returns for an equally outstanding solo.

Harris deftly teases all the bluesy possibilities from the ballad “That’s All,” again building to a soul-stirring finish. Perhaps “Lady Be Good” takes the prize for its raucous and rollicking interpretation, placing Harris squarely in the pantheon of great jazz keyboard stylists—such as Peterson and Ray Bryant—who swing with a titanic, two-fisted passion. Mullen again sets the soulful tone for an exquisitely beautiful take on “This Masquerade,” with Harris slowly building intensity in less-is-more style. Mullen’s solo takes off into the stratosphere while maintaining the tune’s melodic essence.

“Georgia on My Mind” is just a plain old flag-waver for Harris, incorporating all the trademark slash-and-burn soul piano technique for which Harris is known. In the set’s longest performance, he takes chorus after inspired chorus, never lacking for ideas and never lagging in swinging energy.

The question now is: Are there any more “Nights” yet to be discovered and released? If so, Resonance Records is sure to find them.



LAURENCE HOBGOOD
When the Heart Dances
Naim Records

Released in late 2008, this CD pairs idiosyncratic bassist Charlie Haden with Laurence Hobgood, a pianist best known for his work as accompanist and arranger for Chicago song

stylist Kurt Elling. The piano-bass duo is favorite setting for Haden, who has recorded similar projects with Hank Jones, Kenny Barron, Gonzalo Rubalcaba and Chris Anderson. “When the Heart Dances” joins that elite company as another sterling example of a jazz “dialogue.”

“Que Sera Sera” makes for an interesting opener, a promise of more good things to come. After all, “whatever will be, will be” is a very jazz-friendly philosophy. Rather than the bright, waltz tempo usually deployed on this chestnut, Hobgood and Haden give it an introspective treatment. By contrast, the pianist’s title track is a waltz variation that beautifully showcases the composer’s keyboard skills.

Elling joins the duo on three of the 11 tracks here, including the ubiquitous “First Song,” without a doubt the most frequently recorded Haden composition. With a haunting melody and lyrics that recount that time when “love is new,” it is worthy of repeated recordings and a range of interpretations.

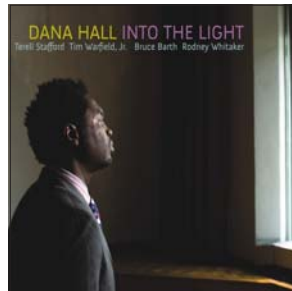
Hobgood goes solo on two originals. “Sanctuary” is a stately, lyrical piece, delivered with great emotional impact in a style reminiscent of the best Keith Jarrett. Haden and Hobgood collaborated on “Chickoree,” a probable reference to pianist Chick Corea, especially when considering its leaping, crab-like keyboard meanderings.

Elling returns for a bold reading of the ballad “Stairway to the Stars,” with sustained passages where he stretches or repeats words, as though slowly climbing those stairs, eventually rising to a final falsetto note. Next, Hobgood dusts off the old Hoagy Carmichael tune “New Orleans” with an imaginative solo introduction before being joined by Haden for the ever-so-slow theme.

“Why Did I Choose You?” is a yearning ballad that gets just the right emotion-laden treatment from Hobgood and Haden. Hobgood takes a masterful solo turn on his sprightly composi-

tion “Leatherwood.” The tempo slows and Elling returns for a resonant and resourceful reinterpretation of the Ellington/Strayhorn classic “Daydream.” Hobgood deftly inserts dark harmonies as though suggesting an omen of sadness.

The concluding track is the exquisitely beautiful “The Cost of Living,” by pianist-composer Don Grolnick. Recorded by saxophonist Michael Brecker on his 1987 self-named release (with Haden on bass), it was also included on Grolnick’s 1992 masterpiece, “Nighthtown.” Sadly, those artists have died—the composer at age 48 in 1996 and Brecker at age 57 in 2007. This is a fitting memorial tribute to both.



DANA HALL Into the Light Origin Records

My introduction to drummer Dana Hall was his March 2009 appearance as guest soloist with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra. The concert’s advance publicity touted his degree in aerospace engineering, music composition and music arranging, an impressive resume that left me wondering if he was just another academic who dabbled in jazz.

His performance that night and his debut recording as a leader, “Into the Light,” leave no room for doubt. Hall has all the percussion chops, composing skills and soulfulness that you could ask for, and his heavyweight bandmates lend him additional credibility. They are trumpeter Terrell Stafford, saxophonist Tim Warfield Jr., keyboardist Bruce Barth and drummer Rodney Whitaker.

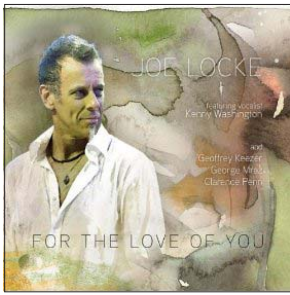
“Into the Light” begins with Herbie

Hancock’s “I Have a Dream,” the only tune not written by Hall or a colleague. Barth’s bright, harmonic punctuation on Fender Rhodes recall Hancock’s fusion projects of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Urged along by Hall’s powerful drumming, Warfield soars into the stratosphere on tenor sax, followed by an equally exciting solo by Stafford.

The quintet at times sounds like an updated edition of Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers, especially on Hall’s relaxed, swinging “Conversion Song,” where Warfield and Stafford solo with the hard-bop vigor of Wayne Shorter and Lee Morgan. “Orchids” is a lovely jazz waltz featuring Whitaker’s lyrical bass, a lilting soprano sax solo by Warfield and a penetrating piano statement from Barth.

Hall drives the title track with the insistence of a slightly mad metronome, reaching a euphoric high with Stafford adding electronic trumpet effects to Barth’s electric keys and some studio reverb and sequencing on the drums. Again, it harkens back to some of the more imaginative space-age ventures of late-’60s jazz. “Black Mountain” has a modal feel that allows much improvisation and rhythmic shifts as Hall keeps the steady pace and soloists Stafford, Barth and Warfield on soprano sax circle around it.

“The Path to Love,” named after a Deepak Chopra book, has an undeniably spiritual quality, further elevated by a lively, upbeat tempo. Hall’s “Jabali” is his loving tribute to mentor Billy Hart, drummer on those classic Hancock recordings of the early 1970s. It is, indeed, a workout for Hall. Whitaker contributes the rather solemn, moody “For Rochelle,” a tune written for his daughter. The closer is Warfield’s “Tin Soldier,” which begins with a thundering drum solo that sets the stage for an uplifting, rhythmic journey. Trumpet and soprano sax harmonize with the piano in tightly-locked synchronicity, all the while driven by Hall’s wide-ranging rhythmic barrage.



JOE LOCKE
For the Love of You
E1 Music

The prolific and prodigiously talented vibraphonist Joe Locke continues to stretch his wings on “For the Love of You,” where he appears chiefly as accompanist for singer Kenny Washington, though he gives himself plenty of solo space between lyric verses.

Locke, who has more than a dozen recordings under his own name in the last decade alone, has proven himself Milt Jackson’s heir apparent. He possesses a technical proficiency and bluesy authority equaled by few and surpassed by no one on. That makes him a perfect foil for Washington’s soul-inflected pop balladry, from the tender sentiment of Henry Mancini’s “Two for the Road” to the upbeat lilt of “Old Devil Moon.”

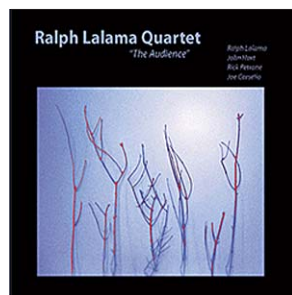
The title track, though nicely rendered by the band, remains a tepid Isley Brothers tune, another indication that this recording strives—with mixed success—to transcend the boundaries of jazz. On the other hand, Washington does great justice to Locke’s composition “Verrazano Moon,” a beautiful homage to late friend and bandmate saxophonist Bob Berg, who died in an auto accident in 2002 at age 51.

A harmonically rich arrangement, imaginative solo statements and a sensitive vocal lift Neil Young’s melodic “Birds” beyond its folk-rock pedigree to the level of jazz standard. Washington’s pure tenor voice seems ideally suited for the tune. The band returns to the Mancini songbook for “The Shadow of Your Smile,” with

Washington’s versatile and inspired vocal excursions resembling Stevie Wonder’s. Locke appreciates the beauty inherent in the theme from “Cinema Paradiso,” which has been covered by many jazz artists, including a vocal rendition by Karrin Allyson.

“Pure Imagination” proves a good choice for Washington’s soaring vocal and positive, uplifting approach. Locke’s “Bright Side Up” closes the affair on an upbeat affirmative note and has the listener yearning for more of the composer’s original material.

Along with Locke, the rest of the band is more than up to the task. Pianist Geoffrey Keezer, bassist George Mraz and drummer Clarence Penn create a powerful rhythm section that delivers its own memorable contributions. Keezer turns up the heat on “Old Devil Moon,” and Mraz states the theme of “Cinema Paradiso” with a gorgeous bowed bass intro and follows up with a solo later in the performance. The whole band cuts loose on Locke’s swinging instrumental “I Miss New York (When I Been Gone Too Long),” with Penn’s rhythmic flourishes and embellishments especially impressive. Keezer also contributes stunning solos on “The Shadow of Your Smile” and “Bright Side Up.”



RALPH LALAMA
The Audience
Mighty Quinn Productions

The follow-up to 2008’s excellent “Energy Fields,” the latest release by the largely unheralded tenor saxophonist Ralph Lalama is another authoritative collection of tunes turned every

which way but loose. It is Lalama’s second CD on the Mighty Quinn label.

Boasting the same rhythm section of its predecessor—guitarist John Hart, bassist Rick Petrone and drummer Joe Corsello—“The Audience” continues the quartet’s bluesy approach from the swaggering opener, Wayne Shorter’s “Marie Antoinette,” with Lalama and Hart doubling the melody. Stevie Wonder’s tale of urban strife, “Livin’ for the City,” gets an apt soul-jazz treatment, and the sly “Love Thy Neighbor” features some very hip, but subtle work from both Petrone and Hart.

In an interesting exercise in contrasts, Lalama pairs off with each sideman for a short improvised tune. He and Hart perform “Jonme,” which segues neatly into the standard “Portrait of Jennie.” The duo of Corsello and Lalama connect on “Jome” leading into the Latin bounce of “Kiss and Run.” Predictably, Petrone joins Lalama for “Ricme,” with Lalama laying out a bare-bones flurry of notes around which the bassist weaves his lines.

Another rarity, Duke Pearson’s “Minor League,” gets a swinging workout that shows off Lalama’s huge tone and effortless improvisation as he navigates through the changes. Hart and Petrone follow with equal aplomb before the whole outfit goes through a bracing round of four-bar breaks.

Lalama nods to mentor Sonny Rollins on a breezy rendition of Johnny Mercer’s “I’m an Old Cowhand,” done in classic fashion by Rollins on his 1957 release, “Way Out West.” In his playing, Lalama is more relaxed but similarly adventurous in his snaking lines and sudden surges in tempo.

After too many years in the shadows, the 59-year-old Lalama may finally be stepping into the limelight. Let’s hope he continues his fruitful collaboration with the folks at Mighty Quinn Productions.

*Jazz Essentials, Part 3***Here are six essentials of the jazz vocal art**

By Tom Ineck

In the second installment of “Jazz Essentials,” we recommended five recordings showcasing early architects of jazz. Among them, of course, was Louis Armstrong, who was influential not only for the bravura trumpet playing that set the standard for jazz improvisation in a group setting, but also for his impact on the jazz vocal art. He vocalized with the rhythmic swing and phrasing of an instrument and introduced the use of scat-singing, often employed when words failed to impart the proper lilt or wit to a given piece of music.

Using Armstrong as a springboard to the great jazz singers who followed, we turn our attention to six important vocalists of jazz history.

Bing Crosby is best known for his huge popularity as a singer of pop and novelty tunes, a star of radio and TV, and an actor of incredible range, from wacky comedy to heart-rending pathos. But he began as a jazz singer greatly inspired by Louis Armstrong. A contemporary of Armstrong, Crosby influenced countless crooners, including Frank Sinatra.

Despite her limited vocal range, **Billie Holiday** combined an appreciation for the blues, an innate sense of swing, unusual phrasing and a gift for conveying and evoking intense emotions. Unlike most singers who had come before her, she occupied a high, middle ground between the straight blues interpretations of singers like Bessie Smith and the dull, uninflected delivery of most Tin Pan Alley songsters.

There was no greater swinger among singers than **Ella Fitzgerald**. A near-contemporary of Billie Holiday—born two years later—

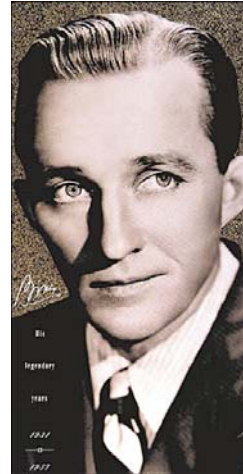
Fitzgerald raised the vocal art to a pinnacle with her unerring pitch, her wide range and her sense of irrepressible joy in every tune. Throughout a career spanning nearly 60 years, she introduced new material with a curious zest, even when it seemed inappropriate or beneath her talents.

Sarah Vaughan possessed pipes of operatic potential, capable of multi-octave leaps with a wonderfully controlled vibrato. A transitional jazz singer, Vaughan began her career in the swing era but adapted well to the new sounds and rhythms of bop.

Like Armstrong, **Nat King Cole** is equally important as an instrumentalist and a singer. His influential piano trio of the late 1930s and 1940s was one of the few to eschew a drummer in favor of a guitarist. Like Crosby, he became a singer of pop standards and occasional novelty songs and was a multi-media star of records, television and movies.

I was going to wait until a later edition of “Jazz Essentials” to feature **Frank Sinatra**. Like Crosby, his popularity is legendary, putting him in a class of his own. Crosby was in many ways the model for Sinatra, so we include him here. Influenced by the fluid trombone tone and phrasing of employer Tommy Dorsey, he soared beyond his early success as a teenage idol to become an immortal among song stylists of the 20th century.

As with other early artists we have recommended, we focus chiefly on multi-disc anthologies. Recordings of the 1930s and 1940s were available only on 78s, and even later LPs can be uneven and incomplete examples of the artist’s work, so we suggest more representative collections.



BING CROSBY
Bing! His Legendary Years,
1931-1957
MCA Records

This four-disc set from 1994 is the best package of Crosby’s best years. It documents the arc of his career from the early jazz years, through the crooning radio and film years of the 1940s and into the modern pop-song television era. In doing so, it accomplishes the monumental task of representing all styles with which he is most often associated—swing, ballads, novelties, cowboy songs, holiday tunes and even the travel trifles of Hawaii and Ireland.

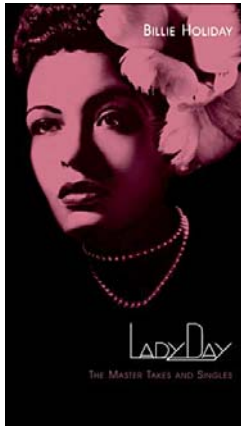
Among the early gems included are “I Found a Million Dollar Baby,” “Dancing in the Dark” and “Stardust.” From Crosby’s popular holiday songbook are “White Christmas,” “Silent Night,” “O Come All Ye Faithful,” and “Silver Bells.” But the lion’s share of this 101-song collection is devoted to the standards of the Great American Songbook as interpreted with that marvelous, unmatched Crosby baritone.

For listeners who want more of

Jazz Essentials continued on page 26

Jazz Essentials continued from page 25

Crosby from a particular period, we recommend additional jazz recordings from the late 1920s and early 1930s and—for that nostalgic sleigh ride down Santa Claus Lane—a whole album of Christmas music.



BILLIE HOLIDAY
Lady Day: The Master Takes and Singles
Columbia Legacy Records

When it comes to Billie Holiday's most fruitful years on Columbia records, fans have several formats from which to choose. Those on a limited budget can go with the single-disc "God Bless the Child" from 1996 or 2001's double-disc "Lady Day: The Best of Billie Holiday." For the completist, there is the 10-CD "The Complete Billie Holiday on Columbia (1933-1944)," also released in 2001.

We recommend the middle path, the wonderful four-disc 2007 entry entitled "Lady Day: The Master Takes and Singles," a collection of 80 superb recordings made between 1935 and 1942. The sound is great, the selections are unimpeachable, and the performances are flawless, reaffirming Holiday as likely the greatest jazz singer of all time.

Of course, it helps that she is accompanied by some of the great players of the era, including pianist Teddy

Wilson, saxophonists Lester Young, Ben Webster, Chu Berry and Johnny Hodges, clarinetists Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw and Jimmy Hamilton, trumpeters Harry "Sweets" Edison, Roy Eldridge, Buck Clayton and Charlie Shavers, guitarists Freddie Green, Dave Barbour and John Collins, bassists Milt Hinton, John Kirby and Walter Page, and drummers Jo Jones, Kenny Clarke, and Gene Krupa.



ELLA FITZGERALD
Something to Live For
Verve Records

Fitzgerald recorded from the early 1930s well into the 1980s—an incredible output—and much of it is first-rate. But we give the nod to this 1999 two-disc collection of 30 songs, ranging from 1935 to 1966. "Something to Live For" is a companion to the TV documentary of the same name, which appeared on the PBS series "American Masters."

Importantly, it contains eight selections from her early years with Decca, including the iconic "A-Tisket, A-Tasket." Among the other career highlights are "How High the Moon," "But Not for Me," "Ridin' High," "Angel Eyes," a live and swinging version of "Oh, Lady Be Good," "The Lady is a Tramp," "Body and Soul," the scat masterpiece "Airmail Special," "Mack the Knife," "Mr. Paganini," and one of her many excellent renditions of "Round Midnight."

Like Holiday, Fitzgerald got the sidemen she so richly deserved. Among those included here are pianist Oscar Peterson, saxophonists Colman

Hawkins, Lester Young, Ben Webster, Stan Getz, Illinois Jacquet, Flip Phillips and Sonny Stitt, trombonist J.J. Johnson, trumpeters Harry "Sweets" Edison and Roy Eldridge, guitarists Herb Ellis and Barney Kessel, and bassist (and former husband) Ray Brown.



SARAH VAUGHAN
Young Sassy
Proper Records

We can recommend 2001's "Young Sassy," without reservation, for a number of reasons. Whereas early recordings of Holiday and Fitzgerald were often inferior to their later work—usually due to weak material—Vaughan's beginnings were more auspicious. Her voice was always magical, and the tunes here are largely drawn from the standards. Also, this four-disc collection contains her entire output between 1944 and 1950, an amazing 94 songs, at the very reasonable cost of less than \$30.

Few can complain about a set list that includes "East of the Sun (and West of the Moon)," "Lover Man," "Mean to Me," "You Go to My Head," "It Might as Well Be Spring," "I've Got a Crush on You," "Body and Soul," "Time After Time," "I Cover the Waterfront," "Tenderly," "Love Me or Leave Me," "The Nearness of You," "Come Rain or Come Shine," and "Black Coffee."

Great thanks are due the folks at Proper Records, a UK label that has released dozens of modestly priced collections of jazz, blues, country and other great American music in recent years.



NAT KING COLE
Best of Nat King Cole: The Instrumental Classics/The Vocal Classics
 Blue Note Records

Since Nat Cole's later recordings often suffer from a poor choice of material and overproduction, it is wise to start at the beginning. The three discs included in "Best of Nat King Cole: The Instrumental Classics/The Vocal Classics" present 62 tracks from the trio's productive years of 1944 to 1950. The instrumental and vocal excellence presented here may come as a surprise to the unfortunate listener who knows only the Nat King Cole of "Ramblin' Rose," "Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer" and "Cat Ballou."

Among the most notable selections here are "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Honeysuckle Rose," "How High the Moon," "Straighten Up and Fly Right," "It's Only a Paper Moon," "Sweet Lorraine," "Frim Fram Sauce," "Route 66," "Meet Me at No Special Place," "When I Take My Sugar to Tea," "Too Marvelous for Words," and "For all We Know."

Cole's satiny voice, impeccable piano playing and warm delivery require no strings, horns or other production "values," which often weakened his later recordings. That is what makes these trio sides so important and so supremely listenable. By the way, we must pay our respects to the other players that make these recordings so timeless: Oscar Moore and Irving Ashby alternating on guitars, and Joe Comfort and Johnny Miller alternating on bass.



FRANK SINATRA
The Capitol Years
 Capitol Records

Few critics disagree that Sinatra's middle period, his Capitol years from 1953 to 1961, produced his finest hours of recorded music in a career that spanned six decades. You can't go wrong with any of the individual releases of the Capitol decade, so why not own them all? Either save up your money and purchase this 21-CD boxed set or buy the CDs individually, as I have over the last decade or so.

This 1998 EMI British import gets the nod for its purportedly superior sound over the individual domestic re-masters that were issued in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The box contains each of the original LPs packaged as a separate CD, with an additional disc compiling bonus tracks entitled "The Rare Sinatra."

The mammoth 272-track collection is also outrageously expensive, upwards of \$600. Proponents claim that Sinatra's voice is brighter, more alive, here than on the U.S. versions, but these esoteric arguments are subjective and fail to justify the cost, unless you happen to be independently wealthy.

For those of us who have to work for a living—and who have other music on our wish list—the way to go is to acquire the U.S. Capitol reissues as singles, for around \$12 each.

That way, you also get the bonus tracks that are added to each CD, expanding the length beyond the original 30 minutes or so. Most of Sinatra's Capitol recordings are classics, so you can't go wrong by either purchasing them chronologically or by going for your favorites first.

Eventually, you should own "Songs for Young Lovers/Swing Easy" (1954), "In the Wee Small Hours" (1955), "Songs for Swingin' Lovers" (1956), "A Swingin' Affair" (1957), "Where Are You?" (1957), "Come Fly With Me" (1958), "Only the Lonely" (1958), "Come Dance with Me" (1959), "No One Cares" (1959), and "Nice and Easy" (1960). These 10 recordings represent a seven-year string of brilliance unparalleled in popular song.

Once you have satisfied your appetite for Sinatra's greatest period, supplement your collection with something from his early years with Columbia Records and his later years on the Reprise label. Try to find the four-disc, 97-track "Best of Columbia Years 1943-52," released in 1998, and go with either 1990's, four-disc "The Reprise Collection" or "The Very Best of Frank Sinatra," an excellent double-disc, 40-track overview of the Reprise years released by Warner Bros. in 1997. Happy listening!



Sinatra's Capitol recordings



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From the Archives

Jerry Hahn returns for Jazz in June performance



File Photo

The Berman Music Foundation brought guitarist Jerry Hahn to Lincoln for workshops and a performance at P.O. Pears in February 1995. He returns June 29 for a Jazz in June concert also featuring pianist Joe Cartwright.

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