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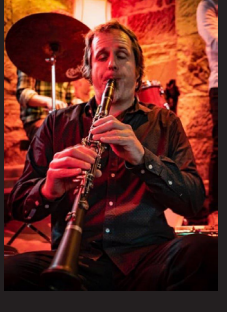

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157 Mark Whitecage's Other 4tet
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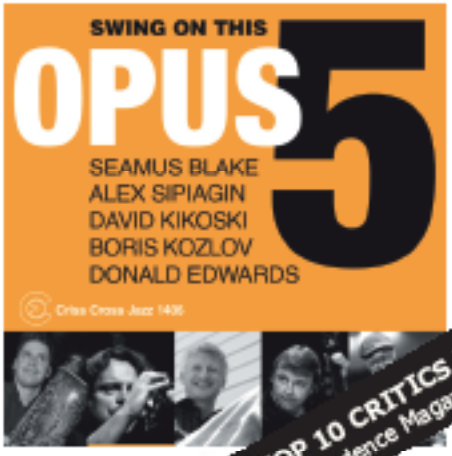

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Contributors

JAMES BENNINGTON (Feature, Jazz Stories / Interviews) *has collected oral histories and photographs of several artists, mainly published by Cadence Magazine and Modern Drummer Magazine. Bennington is also a drummer/ bandleader recording for SLAM (UK), Cadence Jazz Records/ CIMP/ CIMPoL (NY), Unseen Rain (NY), OA2 (Seattle), and his own ThatSwan! label (Chicago). Once mentored by Elvin Jones, Bennington celebrates nearly 30 years in the music field. He is a Dream Cymbals and Gongs Artist and is based in Chicago.*

PATRICK HINELY (Features, Jazz Stories, a Photo History) *makes his living as a photographer and is based in Lexington, Virginia. He has been photographing and writing about musicians since 1971.*

LARRY HOLLIS (Album Reviews) *is a devout zen baptist, retired saxophonist & militant apathist. His work has appeared in mostly indie publications, liner annotation and Cadence for over three decades. Flanked by his books, records and videos, he lives an insular life in his hometown of Oklahoma City.*

ROBERT IANNAPOLLO (Album Reviews) *has been writing for Cadence for over 25 years. He also writes for New York City Jazz Record and ARSC Journal. He works as the circulation manager at the Sibley Music Library at the Eastman School of Music and considers himself lucky to be around all that music.*

BERNIE KOENIG (Album Reviews) *is a professor of music and philosophy at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario, Canada. He had two books published includinig Art Matters (Academica Press 2009). He is a drummer/vibist currently performing in a free jazz group and in an experimental group with electronics and acoustic percussion.*

FRANK KOHL (Album and Concert Reviews) *was born and raised in NY and is a professional guitarist living in Seattle. He is a graduate of Berklee College Of Music and has six CDs as a leader. Some of his recordings include Bassists Steve LaSpina, Michael Moore and guitarist John Stowell. Frank has performed at many notable jazz clubs and festivals from NY to Seattle.*

JEFFREY D. TODD *is Associate Professor of German and French at Texas Christian University. He plays saxophone locally in the Dallas / Fort Worth area, and is a lifelong jazz fanatic.*

SHEILA THISTLETHWAITE (Short Takes) *is a journalist and music publicist based in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her articles on the arts have appeared in publications in Canada and the U.S. She has been a board member, and has worked as a publicist and as executive director for jazz festivals in Calgary, AB and Kelowna, BC.*

KEN WEISS (Interviews, Photos, Short Takes) *has been documenting the Philadelphia jazz and experimental music scene with photography since 1992 and has written the Cadence Short Takes column since 2003 as an attempt to defeat the conventional adage that, once played, the music is "lost to the air." He has also completed numerous interviews for Cadence and Jazz Inside Magazine.*

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CADENCE

acc: accordion
as: alto sax
bari s : baritone sax
b: bass
b cl: bass clarinet
bs: bass sax
bsn: bassoon
cel: cello
cl: clarinet
cga: conga
cnt: cornet
d: drums
el: electric
elec: electronics
Eng hn: English horn
euph: euphonium
flgh: flugelhorn
flt: flute
Fr hn: French horn
g: guitar
hca: harmonica
kybd: keyboards
ldr: leader
ob: oboe
org: organ
perc: percussion
p: piano
pic: piccolo
rds: reeds
ss: soprano sax
sop: sopranino sax
synth: synthesizer
ts: tenor sax
tbn: trombone
tpt: trumpet
tba: tuba
v tbn: valve trombone
vib: vibraphone
vla: viola
vln: violin
vcl: vocal
xyl: xylophone

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FRONT COVER
Clockwise from upper left
Konrad Bauer
Mary Halvorson
Tomas Fujiwara
Jamaaladeen Tacuma
Ursula Rucker
Tim Motzer
Tomas Svoboda
Dan Healy
Roy Ayers
Keiko Jones
Elvin Jones

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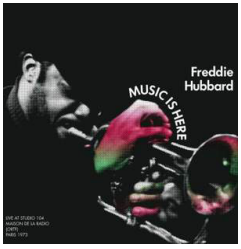
CADENCE MAGAZINE EDITORIAL POLICY

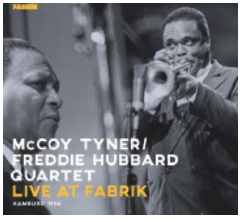
Established in January 1976, Cadence Magazine was a monthly publication through its first 381 issues (until September 2007). Beginning with the October 2007 issue, Cadence increased in number of pages, changed to perfect binding, and became a quarterly publication. On January 1, 2012 Cadence Magazine was transferred to Cadence Media L.L.C. Cadence Magazine continues as an online publication and one print issue per year. Cadence Media, LLC, is proud to continue the policies that have distinguished Cadence as an important independent resource.

From its very first issue, Cadence has had a very open and inclusive editorial policy. This has allowed Cadence to publish extended feature interviews in which musicians, well known or otherwise, speak frankly about their experiences and perspectives on the music world; and to cover and review all genres of improvised music. We are reader supported.

Cadence essentially always has been and remains "the best independent magazine of Jazz, Blues, and Creative Improvised Music that money can't buy."

Top Ten Recordings 2022





NEW RELEASES - LARRY HOLLIS

GADD/CUBER/GOMEZ+WDR BIG BAND-CENTER STAGE-LEOPARD
GOLDINGS/BERNSTEIN/STEWART-PERPETUAL PENDULUM-SMOKE SESSIONS
BURTON/MCPHERSON-SUMMIT ROCK SESSION-GIANT STEPS ART
VARIOUS ARTISTS-HONORING PAT MARTINO-HIGHNOTE
MICHAEL WEISS-PERSISTANCE-CELLAR LIVE
OPUS 5-SWING ON THIS-CRISS CROSS
T.S. MONK-TWO CONTINENTS ONE GROOVE-STORYVILLE
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GRANT STEWART-LIGHTING OF THE LAMPS-CELLAR MUSIC
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WES MONTGOMERY-NDR HAMBURG STUDIO RECORDINGS-NDR KULTUR
CHARLES MINGUS-LOST ALBUM FROM RONNIE SCOTT'S-RESONANCE
FREDDUE HUBBARD-MUSIC IS HERE-WEWANTSOINDS
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DEXTER GORDON-SOUL SISTER-STEEPLECHASE
MCCOY TYNER/FREDDIE HUBBARD-LIVE AT FABRIK-NDR KULTUR
ROLAND KIRK-LIVE AT RONNIE SCOTT'S-GEARBOX
BILL EVANS-MORNING GLORY-RESONANCE

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CLASSIC BLACK AND WHITE SESSIONS
MCCOY TYNER & FREDDIE HUBBARD: LIVE AT FABRIK
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GIACOMO GATES: YOU
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ANAT COHEN & MARCELLO GONCALVES: RECONVIXO
JOEL ROSS: PARABLE OF THE POET
KURT ROSENWINKEL AND JEAN-PAUL BRODBECK: THE CHOPIN PROJECT

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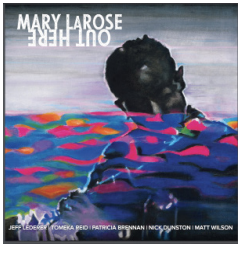
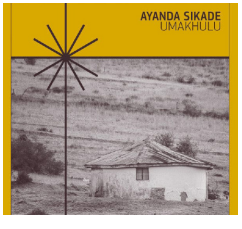
CHARLES LLOYD - TRIO OF TRIOS – BLUE NOTE
BILL EVANS – MORNING GLORY AND INNER SPIRIT – RESONANCE RECORDS
KIRK KNUFFKE TRIO – GRAVITY WITHOUT AIRS – TAO FORMS
TIGRAN HAMASYAN – STANDART – NONESUCH RECORDS
HONORING PAT MARTINO, VOL. 1: ALTERNATIVE GUITAR SUMMIT – HIGHNOTE RECORDS
ENRICO RAVA & FRED HERSCH – THE SONG IS YOU – ECM
SOMI – ZENZILE: THE REIMAGINATION OF MIRIAM MAKEBA – SALON AFRICANA

Top Ten Recordings 2022





STEVEN BERNSTEIN'S MILLENNIAL TERRITORY ORCHESTRA'S COMMUNITY MUSIC SERIES. (VOL. 2) GOOD TIME MUSIC WITH CATHERINE RUSSELL. (VOL. 3) MANIFESTO OF HENRY-ISMS. (VOL. 4) POPULAR CULTURE – ROYAL POTATO FAMILY

NEW RELEASES - BERNIE KOENIG

SAL MOSCA - FOR LENNIE TRISTANO - FRESH SOUND
HMC - HIGH AND OUTSIDE - CADENCE
WADADA LEO SMITH - SACRED CEREMONIES - TUM
RENE LUSSIER, ERICK D,ORION, ROBBIE KUSTER, MARTIN TETREAULT - PRTNTEMPS 2021 - VICTO
RICH HALLEY, DAN CLUCAS, CLYDE REED, CARSON HALLEY - BOOMSLANG - PINE EAGLE
MARY LAROSE - OUT THERE - LITTLE MUSIC
CHARLES MINGUS LOST ALBUM FROM RONNIE SCOTT'S RESONANCE
CHARLES MINGUS AT CARNEGIE HALL - ATLANTIC - ROGV 134

NEW RELEASES - LUDWIG VAN TRIKT

ASSEMBLY - JACOB GARCHIK - YESTEREVE RECORDS
ANATOMY - BILLY MOHLER - CONTAGIOUS MUSIC
RYAN KEBERLE'S COLLECTIVE - DO BRASIL SONHOS DA ESQUINA - SELF PRODUCED
AYANDA SIKADE - UMAKHULU - AFRO SYNTH
SWISS JAZZ ORCHESTRA &AMP - CHRISTOPH IRNIGER, "THE MUSIC OF PILGRIM" - STADT ZURICH KULTUR/ NWOG
JOHN ESCRET - SEISMIC SHIFT - WHIRLWIND RECORDINGS
BURTON/MCPHERSON TRIO FEATURING DEZRON DOUGLAS - THE SUMMIT ROCK SESSION AT SENECA VILLAGE - GIANT STEP ARTS
JASON PALMER - LIVE FROM SUMMIT ROCK IN SENECA VILLAGE - GIANT STEP ARTS
TYSHAWN SOREY TRIO + 1 WITH GREG OSBY - THE OFF-OFF BROADWAY GUIDE TO SYNERGISM - PI RECORDINGS
JOHN YAO'S TRICERATOPS - OFF-KILTER - TAO RECORDINGS

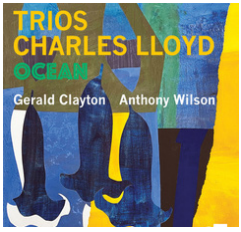
NEW RELEASES - JEROME WILSON

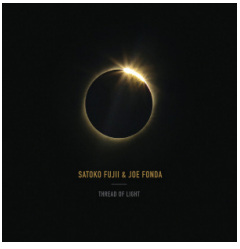
COLUMBIA ICEFIELD, ANCIENT SONGS OF BURLAP HEROES - PYROCLASTIC
CHARLES LLOYD TRIO - CHAPEL - BLUE NOTE
ZOH AMBA - O, SUN - TZADIK
TYSHAWN SOREY TRIO - MESMERISM - YEROS
JANEL LEPPINENSEMBLE - VOLCANIC ASH - CUNEIFORM
MILES OKAZAKI - THISNESS - PI
WAYNE SHORTER/TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON/LEO GENOVESE/ESPERANZA SPALDING - LIVE AT THE DETROIT JAZZ FESTIVAL - CANDID
NATALIE CRESSMAN & IAN FAQUINI - AUBURN WHISPER CRESSMAN MUSIC
MARY HALVORSON - AMARYLLIS - NONESUCH
RANDAL DESPOMMIER - A MIDSUMMER ODYSSEY SUNNYSIDE

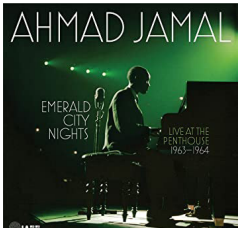
NEW RELEASES - KEN WEISS

GÜNTER BABY SOMMER & THE LUCACIU 3 – KARAWANE – INTAKT
TREVOR DUNN'S TRIO-CONVULSANT AVEC FOLIE A QUATRE – SÉANCES – PYROCLASTIC
JAMES BRANDON LEWIS QUARTET – MOLECULAR SYSTEMATIC MUSIC LIVE – INTAKT
SATOKO FUJI & JOE FONDA – THREAD OF LIGHT – FSR

Top Ten Recordings 2022







DAVID MURRAY-BRAD JONES-HAMID DRAKE BRAVE NEW WORLD TRIO – SERIANA – INTAKT
AHMAD JAMAL – EMERALD CITY NIGHTS LIVE AT THE PENTHOUSE (1963-1964) – JAZZ DETECTIVE
WADADA LEO SMITH – THE EMERALD DUETS – TUM
MILES OKAZAKI – THISNESS – PI
FRANK KIMBROUGH - 2003-2006 VOLUME ONE LULLABLUEBYE VOLUME TWO PLAY – PALMETTO
TONY MALABY'S SABINO – THE CAVE OF WINDS - PYROCLASTICS

NEW RELEASES - SCOTT YANNOW

LAKECIA BENJAMIN – PURSUANCE: THE COLTRANES – ROPEADOPE
EVAN CHRISTOPHER – BLUES IN THE AIR – CAMILLE PRODUCTIONS
BRENT FISCHER ORCHESTRA – PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION – CLAVO
CONNIE HAN - SECRETS OF INANNA - MACK AVENUE
SAMARA JOY – LINGER AWHILE – VERVE
CHARLES LLOYD – CHAPEL – BLUE NOTE
ROBERTA MAGRIS – MATCH POINT – J MOOD
HAL SMITH'S NEW ORLEANS OWLS - EARLY HOURS - SELF-RELEASED
BOBBY WATSON – BACK HOME IN KANSAS CITY – SMOKE SESSIONS
JEREMY WONG – HEY THERE – CELLAR MUSIC GROUP

REISSUES, HISTORICAL - SCOTT YANNOW

GEORGE AVAKIAN – ONE STEP TO HEAVEN –RIVERMONT
CHRIS BARBER - JUST ONCE MORE FOR ALL TIME - LAKE
DAVE BRUBECK TRIO – LIVE FROM VIENNA 1967 – BRUBECK EDITIONS
CHICK COREA – THE MONTREUX YEARS – BMG
MILES DAVIS – THE BOOTLEG SERIES, VOL. 7 – COLUMBIA/LEGACY
HERB GELLER – EUROPEAN REBIRTH – FRESH SOUND
FREDDIE HUBBARD – THE COMPLETE BLUE NOTE & IMPULSE'60S STUDIO SESSIONS – MOSAIC
AHMAD JAMAL – THE COMPLETE OKEH, PARROT & EPIC SESSIONS 1951-1955 – FRESH SOUND
CHARLES MINGUS – THE LOST ALBUM FROM RONNIE SCOTT'S – RESONANCE
VARIOUS ARTISTS - CLASSIC BLACK & WHITE JAZZ SESSIONS - MOSAIC

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BEE BOP - PASQUALE GRASSO
AS WE ARE - DAVE STRYKER
SIDE EYE - PAT METHENY
CONVERSATIONS #6&7 - FLORIAN ARBENZ
PERPETUAL PENDULUM - GOLDING, BERNSTEIN, STEWART
VARIABLE CLOUDS - SCENES
TRIO OF TRIOS - CHARLES LLOYD
MORE MUSIC - JOEY DEFRANCESCO
THE CHOPIN PROJECT - KURT ROSENWINKEL
QUIETUDE - ELIANE ELIAS

Top Ten Concerts 2022

1/27/22 Immanuel Wilkins Quartet (Wilkins (as), Micah Thomas (p), Daryl Johns (b), Kweku Sumbry (d) at PhilaMOCA (Ars Nova Workshop). *The leading Jazz alto saxophonist of his generation, with his own band, in his own town, coming out of the pandemic shutdown - made for quite the night.*

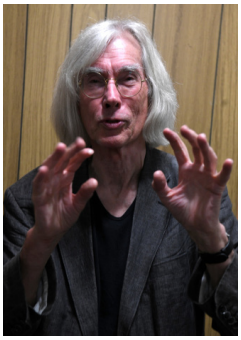
3/31/22 Immanuel Wilkins/Odean Pope (ts)/ Kresten Osgood (d) at RUBA Club Philadelphia (Ars Nova Workshop). *Osgood, the Danish-American drummer, was in town to promote a Danish-funded radio series and jelled well on stage with two of Philly's finest.*

4/9/22 Bobby Watson/Curtis Lundy Quartet (Allyn Johnson, p; Eric Kennedy, d) at Jacob's Northwest (Producer's Guild). A rousing two sets of original music performed by a tight group. Watson's "Love Remains" was a standout. Well worth the very delayed start.

4/12/22 Gwen Laster's 4Tet (Laster, vln; Melanie Dyer, vla; Alex Waterman, cel; Dara Blumenthal-Bloom) at The Rotunda (Fire Museum Presents). *Impressive, beautiful music that elevated the listener.*

4/23/22 Johnathan Blake & Pentad (Immanuel Wilkins, as; David Virelles, p, synth; Steve Nelson, vib; Ben Street, b) at the Philadelphia Clef Club. *A homecoming gig for Blake and Wilkins. An inspired night of intricate compositions with solid melodies yet maintained each members' original voice.*

Top Ten Concerts 2022



5/21/22 Sun Ra Arkestra Under the Direction of Marshall Allen at the Philadelphia Clef Club. *This was an especially inspired appearance with the focus on creative improvisation over the abundance of vocals that have dominated many of the most recent presentations. Allen, who was celebrating his 98 th year on the planet remains a force on stage and off.*

6/16/22 Craig Taborn/Mette Rasmussen/ Ches Smith at the MAAS Building (Ars Nova Workshop) *featured the Danish saxophonist holding her own with two of New York's finest. Their set was exciting and constantly evolving.*

10/7/22 Jaap Blonk at 2223 Fish (Fire Museum Presents). *The Dutch sound artist/Avant-Garde composer/performance artist was mesmerizing with his unique and unworldly vocalizations and use of the language he created. Hard to take your eyes of his expressive facial contortions.*

10/25/22 Zoh Amba with Luke Stewart (b) and Ryan Sawyer (d) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop. *The 22-year-old resident-of-the-world impressed with her sheets of angst tenor blasting as well as her more subtle playing- all of which rang true and human.*

10/27/22 Simone Weissenfels and Dave Burrell performing piano solos at the Philadelphia Argentine Tango School (Fire Museum Presents). *Two under the radar, roiling pianist veterans who play from the heart.*

The 8th Annual Outsiders Improvised & Creative Music Festival – December 2, 2022

By Amy Gordon and Ken Weiss

Esteemed Philadelphia bassist, composer and fashion icon, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, has worked with a stellar array of scene makers throughout his long career, including Ornette Coleman, Grover Washington Jr., Jeff Beck, Carlos Santana, Pharoah Sanders, The Roots, Vernon Reid, G. Calvin Weston, Marc Ribot, Derek Bailey, Peter Murphy and Anthony Davis, while still continuing to tour, produce and record worldwide. Since 2015, Tacuma has presented his annual Outsiders Improvised & Creative Music Festival in Philadelphia with a mission to showcase diverse styles of risk-taking, progressive music and groundbreaking artists. After a short hiatus of in person events due to the pandemic, the 2022 festival took place on four nights with the first two shows taking place at South. The first night on 11/11 was titled Coltrane Configurations with Tacuma, Odean Pope (ts), Marlon Mosez Merritt (g), Nazir Ebo (d), June Lopez (elec), and then 11/12 with the Tacuma Quartet - Tacuma, James Carter (sax), Calvin Weston (d), Jake Morelli (el g). The 11/19 festival event at the Painted Bride Art Center's new West Philly home, the Outsiders Improvised & Creative Music Festival Explores the Metaverse, was hosted by record company/ media company Ropadope. Starting with a film screening of Battle of Images: a tribute To Paul Robeson featuring Tacuma, the Ebony Strings Quartet, Marshall Allen, and Nazir Ebo, a live performance followed with Strings & Things - Tacuma, Mary Halvorson (g) and Tomas Fujiwara (d). The live performance and film screening were broadcast into virtual reality as avatars for viewers around the world watched via The Ropeadope Lounge to create a unique presentation joining the realm of live music with the VR world. The avatar world may be a bit unsettling for some but the trio was a surefire winner with novel music. Halvorson consistently conjured up her distinctive sound, and it was fascinating to watch her rub up against Tacuma, who is arguably the funkiest (and hippest dressed) man in Jazz. Halvorson wasn't shy in doing her thing and giving Tacuma a path to follow or diverge from, and the segments where she approximated his funky basslines were pure gold while shining a light on her musicianship. The freely improvised set drilled down into a few head-bobbing, pure funk sections – to the delight of a grinning Tacuma- but they were short-lived – quickly returning to new musical areas. Fujiwara was a revelation, responding to and supporting the varied sounds – not an easy assignment. Tacuma has recorded with Halvorson but this was his first encounter with Fujiwara. Late set, local tenor sax terror, Terry Lawson, best known for his involvement in The Forerunners, The Odean Pope Saxophone Choir, and the Sun Ra Arkestra, was brought up to complete a quartet, altering the direction of the band with his demonstrative blowing. Tacuma concluded the festival at the venue it first started at in 2015 - the Community Educations Center. The 12/2 program, Power to The Poet, was conceived as a tribute to poet and activist Jayne Cortez – who was married to Ornette Coleman and in whose Firespitters' band Tacuma had membership in. Tacuma further explained his connec-

tion to poets being that he's played behind many of them and that attention to detail is required because, "It's all about the poem." He also produced the first album by the Last Poets. Four talented poets took the stage separately, championing pure variations on themes of struggle and opening up to LOVE. Each artist made their case that words were their sustenance, their oxygen, as if without them, they couldn't breathe, wouldn't survive. The words poured out like lullabies at times but with strong messages and wisdom serving to raise listeners' spiritual levels. Jamaaladeen Tacuma's Band of Resistance (Tacuma, drummer Daryl Burgee, keyboardist Kayla Childs and guitarist PM Eaton) backed the first two poets - Pheralyn Dove, who attested that "words can heal, words can give you grace," and spoke of "back in the day," of hearing Coltrane for the first time, and about "when your mom served Kool-Aid, before we ever realized the time we were in, before we ever realized the world would stretch out before us…back when we knew it all, we had all the answers," and then came riveting wordsmith Patrick Rosal, a Rutgers University-Camden professor, who took the stage and declared Jayne Cortez and Ornette Coleman to be big influences in his life. His "Ode to the Machete' was done in tribute to his late friend – Puerto Rican poet Willie Perdomo. The machete has held purpose as a tool for the yard as well as for revolution in the Caribbean and in Rosal's Philippines – a commonality that Rosal noted bound the two friends together. Rosal's rap-style delivery infused danger into his piece on an illicit union of wartime opposing forces, "enemies" merging / "falling in love" (the most powerful peace-pipe) in the Philippines, expressed through story, frenetic arms, legs, head pumping us along into a fine poetic pulp, sharing the beautiful story in verse of how the result of a forbidden love affair generations ago in the Philippines, how that creative spark led to his very existence. Visionary the Poet followed, a young law student called on to fill the spot that Raphael Xavier was to have held, until he caught ill. She performed solo with her own powerful "simp" affirmations, touching on giving one's self totally to another and wanting "to love past the poison ivy of my upbringing." She also delivered a piece inspired by the killing of Philadelphian rapper PnB Rock and the rise of gun violence in this country. After touchingly filtering throughout the audience, offering red roses as a gesture of gratitude, connection, beauty and giving back, she engaged the audience in a group affirmation session by asking all to recite "I refuse the urge to recycle my traumas because I know I am worthy of a new narrative…" After a short segment featuring veteran funky electric bassist Mama Marcy, who had a very fun face-off with Tacuma (a man never to be out-funked), the event's headliner made her appearance - Philly's beloved native spoken word legend – Ursula Rucker – who made her name with years of powerful and emotionally charged presentations on top of well-crafted pieces that speak of truth and positive declarations. History has it that Tacuma was the first one to take her to Europe when she was barely out of her teens– after convincing her mother that he would look after her – and she quickly found her fame as a result of that exposure. Rucker took the stage under a cloud of despair – her mother died in April and she's been in deep mourning ever since. Her attire was an eye-striking mix and match array – "If you're going to come to a Jamaaladeen show to perform, you raid your closet!," she explained. Commencing with Jayne Cortez's "Find Your Own Voice," Rucker ended the set with her well circu-

lated "L.O.V.E." piece which is typically done as a mystical ode to a special love but on this night a tearful rendition was what she was able to offer in tribute to her lost mother. Driven by her never severed Mama - Baby Love Cord / heart-chord in Rucker's (only speak of) LOVE, spoken at this event through tears that pierced listeners' hearts, releasing collective and individual wounds while basking in the energy augmented by Tim Motzer's guitar accompaniment. Rucker gazed heavenward while releasing what were originally composed as sweet lyrics but now were delivered with the force of a sledgehammer, revealing a soul struck down, hitting the hearts of those in attendance and leaving a mark…

SHORT TAKES

PHILADELPHIA, PA:

The Godfather of Neo-Soul/Jazz and R&B legend Roy Ayers at City Winery on 11/22 was sold out with an audience dressed to the nines and excited to see one of their favorites in the flesh. Sadly, Ayers at 82, at least this night, was frail and played very sparingly. The band had plenty of great tunes to cover – beginning with " Red, Black & Green," "Searching," and "Everybody Loves The Sunshine." Ayers was animated at times – such as on "Don't Stop The Feeling"- and played to the audience. It was nice at the end when a beaming Ayers received a standing ovation from the house…Danish saxophonist Lotte Anker and American drummer Chris Corsano at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 12/8 marked the first time Anker had played before a live audience in the States since the pandemic. It wasn't her first time back in the country, she was flown to New York last year as part of a three-day Ivo Perelman large project recording session. Anker brought two of her three axes with her for six planned gigs on this current American tour – soprano and alto saxes - and demonstrated remarkable command of both of them with exceptional tonguing technique to form a full complement of sounds from overblowing to growls, done with an acidic tone. At times it sounded as if she was releasing a flock of birds from her alto. She also pleasingly used that horn after taking a sip of water, which she kept in her mouth, to irritate the reed and produce gurgling, bubbling sounds. Corsano, ever inventive on his small kit, used a full arsenal of small items on his set to format his own unusual sounds. Together, the two struck a balance while exploring their chosen instruments in uncommon ways. Post-set, Anker said, "I love to play with Chris. He's so inventive, I don't want to just play pitches, I want to play more expansively."

Jamaaladeen Tacuma

1/19 Jamaaladeen Tacuma Mary Halvorson Tomas Fujiwara

12/8 Lotte Anker Chris Corsano

12/2 Tim Motzer Ursula Rucker

11/22 Roy Ayers

Short Takes - Philadelphia

9/23 Heart Trio - William Parker -Cooper-Moore - Hamid Drake

9/21 Ambrose Akinmusire

Short Takes - Philadelphia

The big news in town is that Ars Nova Workshop and Fire Museum Presents, the city's two most active presenters of improvised music, both took major steps to secure their futures. It took over two decades but Ars Nova Workshop has settled into a permanent home at Solar Myth, the former Rock club Boat & Saddle on South Broad Street. In response to having to track down and use venues all over the city for the past 20 years, founder Mark Christman was quoted in the local paper as saying lightheartedly that he had pursued, "The business of presenting unpopular music" in nomadic fashion. Now things have changed. The organization is in control of the performance space of the all-day café and Jazz bar.

The plan is not to schedule music every night of the week – it will be three nights at the most along with one-of-a-kind residencies and collaborations in the tin-ceilinged back room with an avant-Jazz and experimental focus. Jazz albums and books are available for sale as a bonus, although proceeds of those do not go to the organization unless they are their own releases. Fire Museum Presents has always operated on a much smaller budget than Ars Nova, and that budget at times has too often come out of the pocket of founder Steven Tobin. After 21 years, Tobin determined that Fire Museum had to transition into a nonprofit organization in order to survive. Thankfully, after setting a humble goal to raise $5,000, that amount was rapidly far exceeded and the future was set for Fire Museum to continue presenting a mixed bag of experimental and World music at sites across the city…Chris' Jazz Café proudly celebrated its 33rd anniversary with hometown ace guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel's all-star quartet with Aaron Parks (kybd, p), Eric Revis (b) and Gregory Hutchinson (d) on 9/16-17. The first night's second set began with Parks on Rhoads for "Undercover" but he stuck primarily to piano after that. The set's highlights came with the soaring "Solé," which included a winding piano intro, followed by Rosenwinkel's classic tune "Star of Jupiter" that allowed the leader to flash on guitar. His fingers blurred up and down the fretboard while his head tilted down and then backwards, his eyes tightly closed and twitching, and his lips twisted into a pleased smirk. The band let loose, led by Hutchinson's machine gun drumming attack at points. At tune's end, Hutchinson blurted out, "That's what I like – badass!" FYI- for those of you planning to talk during a Gregory Hutchinson performance – you're in for a rude awakening. Watch out – he will call you out! Also of note- Rosenwinkel played with no hat on for the first time ever that I've seen. The club looked fabulous with wonderful new stage lighting and safely distanced table groupings while continuing to professionally stream most performances around the globe. Here's hoping Chris' runs another 33 years…Ambrose Akinmusire's quartet (Sam Harris, p; Russell Hall, b; Tim Angulo, d) at the City Winery on 9/21 took the audience on a journey that traveled from sublime intimacy to atmospheric soundscapes to a late boisterous section. Akinmusire presented a unique set that often utilized droning bass and skittering drums setting a dreamlike backdrop to episodic bright trumpet passages and thorny piano. Content to sit out long portions of the set, the leader hung in the back of the stage and let his well-disciplined band create on their own. About two thirds into the night, the attitude changed and Akinmusire played through "A Moment in Between a Rest," demonstrating his mastery of the trumpet by lightly blowing and controlling sound. He concluded the performance with "Roy," which he

explained was, "One of my mentors [Roy Hargrove]. This is just a thank you to him." After a pause and a deep breath/sigh, he played mournful and spacey lines alone before the band joined him one-by-one for a very short piece. During the set, Akinmusire had invited audience member Anthony Tidd to join him on stage to no avail. A smiling Tidd told him post-set, "You know, I was never getting up on that stage like that!" Akinmusire said he was 19 the last time the two had played together …William Parker (b) can be excused for announcing he was in Chicago on 9/23, as a busy touring musician, one town, one venue, can start to look like the last. Furthermore, it had been a rough day – his Heart Trio [Cooper-Moore, assorted homemade instruments; Hamid Drake, d, frame d] played the Painted Bride (Ars Nova Workshop) but he didn't realize the Bride finally sold their old building in Old City after much legal battle and moved to a temporary West Philly storefront space [in a historic Black and Jazz neighborhood]. The band went to the old location then to the new spot and then back to the old location thinking they had been mistaken. Needless to say, the trio was a bit gassed by time they got it right - delaying the Nate Chinen (who has moved to Philadelphia from Beacon, New York) interview of Parker. Chinen, at the urging of Cooper-Moore began with, "What is your issue with Jazz writers?" Parker answered with, "You know the phrase innocent until proven guilty?...Every writer is innocent until they write something." When asked why his trio is now called the Heart Trio, Parker said it was the name picked for him when they played the latest Vision Festival and that it was appropriate in that their music is not pre-thought – "It's all coming from the heart." Once the band hit, the music spoke for itself. Parker and Drake are widely considered to be the tightest bass-drum combo in Jazz and that title expands in this band with Parker playing his numerous World instruments including gralla, donso ngoni, and bamboo flute, along with his bass (for a short segment). Cooper-Moore, always the entertainer, played a wild patch of piano along with his ample array of homemade instruments including the ever popular diddly-bow and lovely horizontal hoe-handle harp. Each musician came from a very spiritual place and the music often reflected elegance and mysticism. Near set's end, they rendered a minimalistic piece that was highlighted by Hamid's frame drumming and recitation of a Tibetan Buddhism prayer learned from his many years of studying the religion...Los Angeles based Italian percussion/gong master Andrea Centazzo returned to town on 10/5 (co-presented by Fire Museum Presents and Clavius Productions) at The Rotunda as the first leg of a short (rare) tour that was to include Brooklyn and Chicago. Centazzo is no longer traveling with 300 lbs of equipment – he's down to 40 lbs. at this time. His setup included a MalletKAT, frame drums, an array of tambourines and a wall of no longer manufactured chromatic octave Paiste gongs. He presented his "Cycles of Life" project, a solo multimedia concert bringing to light several aspects of his 50 years of musical research. As he has been doing since the '80s, the performance blended his percussion with electronics, computer sequencing, digital sampling and original videos, "Giving to the listener the emotion of a new sonic adventure in Jazz, World and Contemporary avant-garde music." The program is a remake of some of his most significant works from the last few years. Opening with a segment from his Tides of Gravity, a project produced in association with NASA, and then moving through Mandala, a piece that shows his love for Indonesian

music and video he shot at Java's largest temple, followed by Ancient Rain, based on Buddhist philosophy and Balinese patterns, and then a segment celebrating the life of Leonardo Da Vinci, and concluding with a musical cautionary tale expounding how we are ruining this precious world we live in. After completing the solo performance, he demonstratively dropped his mallets in a drop the mic moment and announced the night was over - "Does anyone have an oxygen mask? End of show!" He was to have also played with the trio that opened for him - Noa Even (bari s), Matt Engle (b) and Scott Verrastro (perc). The trio had their first performance this night and played a long droning improvisation that featured Even mining high register bari – bird call like at times – while Verrastro percussed away on beads, tiny bells, bowed brass and drums, before concluding with a short, more aggressive number…Noted Dutch performance artist/ vocal magician Jaap Blonk finely made his way to Philadelphia on 10/7 as the first stop in a 4-week US tour, his first return to the States in over 9 years. He was to appear in March of 2020 but his performance was one of the first to be canceled by Fire Museum Presents due to the pandemic. Steven Tobin of Fire Museum Presents was especially pleased to bring in Blonk to 2223 Fish as Tobin had been storing boxes of Blonk's merch that were sent to him over two years ago ahead of the canceled 2020 performance. It was worth the wait. Blonk is a charismatic performer – oddly very quiet off stage but dynamic once he starts his performance. Strikingly tall, thin and with long blond hair, he is a master at changing his voice, face and body gestures to impose his will on language and sound. He covered a number of his pieces including some historical poems, as well as fun pieces such as one that found him stumbling in front of the audience, jerking his body and making bizarre sounds. Upon its completion he said, "As you may know, this was called the 'Ambulance Drinking Song!'" He did a piece of his invented language – a language parallel to Dutch. He explained it as - "Only a few people in the world can understand Dutch so I have made up my own language that sounds of the Dutch language but it has no meaning so you are missing nothing!" Blonk also covered his famed rendition of Kurt Schwitters' phonetic poem "Ursonate," a piece he's been performing since 1982. Unable to get permission from Schwitters' family to perform it, he dodges copyright laws by only doing half of the poem and then saying the same portion backwards, so in effect, taking it all back to keep things legal. Of course, this is a stunning feat of intellectual prowess to observe and hear. Blonk later appeared with a local trio of top musicians – Veronica Jurkiewicz (vln), Salina Kuo (perc) and Julius Masri (perc) - for a largely electronics'-based session. Kyle Press opened the night with an impressive dive into multiphonics and overtone soundscapes using amplified alto sax and vocalizations...Ars Nova Workshop's first show at its new home -Solar Myth - was 22-year-old tenor saxophonist Zoh Amba and her trio with bassist Luke Stewart and drummer Ryan Sawyer on 10/25. Originally from Tennessee, mentored by pianist Michael Jefry Stevens in North Carolina, and based for the past few years amongst New York City's creative music community where she mentored with David Murray and others. The petite, pixie haired Amba is a force to be reckoned with. Comparisons to Albert Ayler are difficult to avoid as Amba blows fierce and ecstatic with lengthy questing's out of an instrument that appears oversized in her hands. Her first piece started

deceptively introspectively until suddenly the gates of Hell opened and her unrelenting, thrashing approach to tenor warfare began along with muscular support from her rhythm section. Late in the tune, she sat down on the stage with her back angled towards the audience to strike colors from her black electric guitar. The second offering was surprisingly mellow, mournful and smoldering, showing a different side of her musicianship, later followed by more caustic tenor work. She doesn't resonate with her music being termed as based off of spirituals – she is quick to point out that it all emanates from her heart and that she has worked on her music. "I don't look at it as Free improvisation, even the stuff that's Free is not Free. I've worked on concepts, and the music morphs. Every melody means a lot to me." Yes, indeed, and it's palpable, it's deeply human, it's coming from a broken past. Amba was set to go on tour with English singer/songwriter Beth Orton and then relocate to California…Every opportunity to hear Dave Burrell is time well spent. Although Philly-based, the 82-year-old pianist, who credits drummer Sunny Murray for his hearing loss, doesn't play often enough on his home front. Fire Museum Presents drew up a piano double header with Burrell and German veteran pianist Simone Weissenfels on 10/27 at the comfortable Philadelphia Argentine Tango School in Fishtown. Weissenfels, who has been active in Experimental, Jazz, and Classical music circles since the '80s, led off with a set rich in knotty notes, and intrigue. Playing with eyes closed, her storytelling music included stormy patches but for the most part, it was slow to mid-tempo pieces. She stood for one section, playing the inside of the instrument with a mallet and beads. Burrell followed with a set dominated by standards, shockingly, never quite getting to the hyperactive and deadly striking hands to keys that we've come to expect and savor. Instead, he took listeners on a journey that traveled from sublime intimacy to jaunty swing moments. It turns out he had just returned from a European tour with significant time spent in Italy where his acclaimed 1979 Jazz-Opera Windward Passages, Burrell's first collaboration with his wife, Swedish writer and librettist Monika Larsson, was performed by Burrell, Larsson and an Italian Jazz orchestra. He said, "Just getting back from Italy loosened me up. The Italian gig was looming large for a long time with the opera coming up and I had all this pent-up anxiety that didn't need to be. I was worried about if the musicians could do the project and [how it would be perceived]. But that didn't need to be – it went really well." While in Italy, someone mentioned to him that nobody played standards anymore and that struck a chord, so he's been digging deep into the Great American Songbook ever since. "I feel indebted to Irving Berlin," he said. At the Tango School, he began with a couple tunes attributed to his wife – the airy, melodic "For How Little We Know," and the more choppy "Just Me and the Moon." He did his "Melancholy Rag" that's based on "My Melancholy Baby," followed by other chestnuts including "Come Rain or Come Shine," which morphed into an ending Samba run, as well as "They Say that Falling in Love is Wonderful" and "Autumn Leaves," highlighted by a late forceful twinkling of the high notes representing falling leaves, and then some cacophony to simulate the arrival of winter…

Photos and text by Ken Weiss

Charles Lloyd Ocean Trio at Seattle Town Hall - Earshot Jazz Festival

by Frank Kohl

Historically spanning over seventy years of musicianship Charles Lloyd has pretty much attained legendary status when it comes to the evolution of Jazz. With his wide range of experience like playing with everyone from Ornette Coleman to The Beach Boys to studying with composer Bela Bartok, he has lived an impressive life. As a leader I lost track of his own recordings after fifty. So here's a man who most clearly has a lot to say and his wisdom, passion and clarity of mind are the tools he uses to tell his story. Seeing him perform makes me realize once again that the person and the life that person has lived is what brings depth to the notes they play. Charles Lloyd is without a doubt a person that draws from that well. His notes are long, deep and mystical, not rushed, nothing to prove. He plays in the moment as he absorbs his surroundings, speaking with his bandmates and to his audience as he brings us to a place of peace and reflection.

I'm excited to be at Seattle's Town Hall-Great Hall for The Earshot Jazz Festival. Charles Lloyd will be performing with his Ocean Trio, the third part of his Trio Of Trios project. This installment features guitarist Anthony Wilson and bassist Harish Raghavan (replacing pianist Gerald Clayton). The Trio Of Trios is a series of three CD's featuring three different Trio's. The first CD was with guitarist Bill Frisell and bassist Thomas Morgan and the second featured guitarist Julian Lage and percussionist Zakir Hussain. Seattle's Town Hall venue is quite an experience in itself with a seating capacity of eight hundred and fifty seven, outstanding acoustics and an almost spiritual presence. The Earshot Jazz Festival audience is respectful and attentive to every note and to the significance of who Charles Lloyd is. Mr. Lloyd and his trio have come to the right place. We open with a free and spacious original featuring Charles on tenor saxophone. I'm immediately struck by how much the players listen to one another. Shaping and coloring the sound, waiting to feel the pulse of each other's phrasing. Charles gives memorable performances on tenor, flute and alto flute as we travel through nine mostly original pieces. The one standard I did recognize was the Ellington ballad "Come Sunday" done at a slothful pace in all its melancholy splendor.

Anthony Wilson is a guitarist that I'm becoming more and more familiar with, enjoying his work with Diana Krall, he is surely one to watch. The tone from his archtop and his inventiveness to make things happen allows the trio to travel to destinations unknown. Wilson can really deliver as a solo guitarist too, playing some amazing intros and unaccompanied improv that demonstrates his broad and spontaneous facilities. Bassist Harish Raghavan gives a stellar performance as his intuitive senses are fully realized. His solos are open and free allowing lots of space for his phrases to impact the trios interplay.

Overall I felt an opulent sense of privilege to be in the presence of Charles Lloyd, a musician who has traveled so far. The message his music conveyed to me was a message of peace and a demonstration that the life of a musician is worth the struggle and will someday bring one to a place of calm. There are not many of his generation left and to witness his vibrancy and keen sense of all that is musical is something I will never forget.

Dave Weckl Tom Kennedy Project at Jazz Alley

by Frank Kohl

I'm here at Seattles Jazz Alley, the club is sold out and I'm feeling a great sense of anticipation. I've always loved Dave Weckl and Tom Kennedy as I've seen them many times with guitarist Mike Stern. As for saxophonist Eric Marienthal and electric keyboardist Stu Mindeman I know very little about them but I'm guessing that to be playing with this group they surely must be something special. Most of the music that will be played tonight is original material written by Tom Kennedy. He does mention that they're in the process of mixing what will be their new release and we will be hearing some of those tunes tonight.

The group opens with "Hurry Up" a Tom Kennedy original. Within seconds I'm transported to Jazz fusion heaven. The melody alone on this tune is worth noting with its long intricate motion and drama spaced out so nicely. This all leaves lots of room for drum fills and development of the group's rhythmic mantra. My curiosity about Eric Marienthal is realized as soon as he starts playing. His sharp and vibrant tone, technique and his nimble reactions to his surroundings is simply stunning. Stu Mindeman on keys is also quite impressive, anchoring the group in harmony, rhythmic energy and some exquisite solos. Throughout all ten pieces performed I'm really enjoying Tom's compositional skills. Each song has an extensive melody that travels so nicely through different sections of the tune as it allows lots of space for Dave to do his thing so beautifully. "Don't Forget Your Jacket" delivers some exceptional funk and insight into how closely connected Dave and Tom are. We get more of this high octane funk with "Bb's Blues" where Eric Marienthal delivers an incredible soprano sax solo followed by Stu Mindeman's powerful electric piano work. Tom is one with Dave as they solo together with soulful percussion. I especially enjoyed a piece of free improv with Dave and Tom. Dave describes how he and Tom grew up together in St. Louis and the way the two of them would practice as a duo when they were young. "Stories" from Tom's last cd offers more melody writing skills and outstanding solos by everyone. "Espiritu del Songo" another Tom Kennedy original that takes on the Samba in all its magnificences. Demonstrating again the compositional excellence and everyone's musicality in this powerful musical form. Dave Weckl delivers some blistering percussive energy and technique to this fine piece. The energy, writing and the musicianship all come together at this show and my brain is on fire with astonishment.

I first remember meeting Dave Weckl way back when I graduated Berklee and moved back to NY. A group of my friends from high school started a band called "Night Sprite".
They were very successful in the NY clubs. When their original drummer left they hired a young drummer from St. Louis and that was Dave Weckl. Back then Dave was a real showstopper and it's amazing to see the path he has traveled to become one of the worlds finest drummers. Tom Kennedy is on a similar path both with his playing and his skills as a writer.

Fusion has come a long way. From its beginnings (arguably) with Miles "Bitches Brew" to present day it is a large part of our Jazz landscape. The players are different, the level of musicianship is for you to decide but the one thing that's constant throughout is the drive to push the music to the next level.

JOHN OVERTON WILLIAMS (1905-1996)
Of the T. Holder, Andy Kirk and Earl Hines Bands

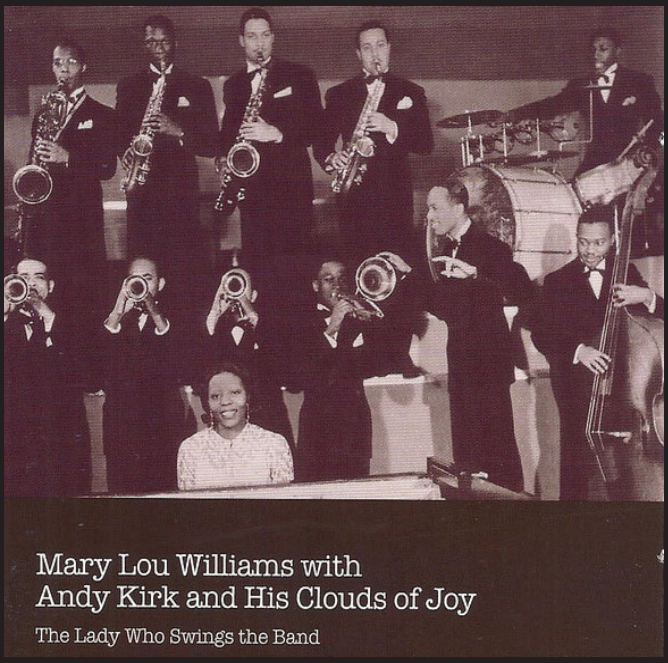
By Bill Donaldson

In 1996, a newspaper published an article about John O. Williams after a reporter visited him in his room at Grant Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. I thought that Mr. Williams may have had more to say.
And he did.

CADENCE: Did you grow up in Memphis?
WILLIAMS: Yes.
CADENCE: Did you learn to play the saxophone in Memphis?
WILLIAMS: No. I moved to Kansas City in eighth grade. It hurt my mother so. I played hooky from school, but there wasn't any way to play any music there. They didn't let any Blacks do anything there.
CADENCE: Was your mother upset that you moved?
WILLIAMS: She was upset that I failed eighth grade. I asked her, "Could I go to Kansas City" and stay with my favorite aunt, who was her sister? It was highly suggested that I go to Kansas City to get out of the environment I was in. It was because of a couple of boys; we just liked to play hooky. We didn't get into mischief. We'd just go down on Beale Street to the movies every day instead of being in class. So I failed. I wasn't in school enough to pass. There weren't any gangs or nothing. But we liked each other, these boys I hung around with. So I figured if I got away from them and moved, that would save me.
CADENCE: What was your aunt's name?
WILLIAMS: Everybody called her Babe. Aunt Babe.
CADENCE: What was her last name?
WILLIAMS: Marshall. Babe Marshall. [John and Mary Lou Williams rented a room in his aunt's house during the 1930's.]
CADENCE: What was your mother's name?
WILLIAMS: Her name was Polly and my father's was Tom.
CADENCE: Did you learn to play music in Memphis?
WILLIAMS: When I was around about eight years old, I started playing piano. I took about seven or eight or nine piano lessons. All the guys I was playing with, baseball and all, said I was a sissy. I quit, but I could read music. I had no idea that I'd ever be playing music until I got to Kansas City.
CADENCE: How did you get your first saxophone?
WILLIAMS: Ah, I was out on the street with—do you know the name of Ben Webster?
CADENCE: Yes. Did you know him then?
WILLIAMS: We were classmates. Yeah. He and Jack Washington were with Basie. We were all in the same class. Jack played baritone sax in Basie's band. In school, we were thinking about being professional musicians.

CADENCE: What was the name of the school you attended?
WILLIAMS: Sumner…Sumner High. Ben Webster and I were playing ball in the street, and I went in to use the bathroom in a friend's house after school was out, and his brother was practicing on a baritone saxophone.
CADENCE: What was his name?
WILLIAMS: James Thatcher. After I came out of the bathroom, I told him, "Jim, this seems hard," and he said, "No, this is easy!" He said, "Can you read music?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You place your finger here. You place your finger there, and so forth. This is B, this is A and C." It seemed real simple, and he helped me out. So I quit playing ball and went home and wrote a letter to my mother and I asked her, Would she get me a saxophone for Christmas? That was in the fall of 1921. So just before Christmas, she bought it. My saxophone arrived in Kansas City on January the second, 1922.
CADENCE: So your mother bought it even though she was in Memphis?
WILLIAMS: Yes. That's right. She had it shipped from Memphis to Kansas City.
CADENCE: Did she ever come to visit you in Kansas City?
WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. She had relatives there. She visited me in several places when I was playing after I was traveling.
CADENCE: Did you like the school in Kansas City?
WILLIAMS: I liked the school and all, but I found out I had a lot of talent. I was self-taught. I had to teach myself. Of course, I would ask Jack Washington—he was a good alto player—I'd ask him questions. Then I had a close friend who lived a block or so from me and I would ask questions. He was a professional. He liked me a lot, and I'd ask him and he would help me. So he saw I was getting along so well and he said, "You ought to be playing professionally." He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do." He had a job working in a ballroom three nights a week. He said, "Tomorrow night's my night to go to work. We're supposed to start at nine. Ten minutes to nine, you walk in." [Laughs] So I walked in on the job. And the guys never saw me before and I never saw them. They asked me, "Where's Godfrey?" That was his name. I said, "He's sick." They said, "Well, it's too late to get somebody else. Can you play that thing, boy?" I said, "I think so." It was too late for them to get anybody, and I was there. They started and were so satisfied with me that they had me as a regular in their band and put me in the union the next day. So that's how it happened.
CADENCE: Who was the person who helped you play there?
WILLIAMS: Godfrey. Godfrey Pleasant. Pleasant was his last name. That's how I got into the big time. Through him telling that lie and saying that he was sick and sending me in his place. And then after the pros heard me, well, I was hired into the union. That's how I got started.
CADENCE: Was Ben Webster in that band?
WILLIAMS: [Laughs] No. We were still in high school.
CADENCE: Did you quit school in the twelfth grade?

John O. Williams



SERIAL NUMBER 4339 — ORDER NUMBER 3966

1. NAME (Print): John (First) Overton (Middle) Williams (Last)

2. ADDRESS (Print): 202 W. 119th St. (Number and street or R. F. D. number) New York City (Town) N. Y. (State)

3. TELEPHONE: 47801 (Exchange) University (Number) 47801

4. AGE IN YEARS: 35 — DATE OF BIRTH: April 13 1905 (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)

5. PLACE OF BIRTH: Memphis (Town or county) Tenn. (State or country)

6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP: U.S.A.

7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS: Mrs. (Mr., Mrs., Miss) Polly (First) Williams (Middle) (Last)

8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON: Mother

9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON: 700 Saxon (Number and street or R. F. D. number) Memphis (Town) Shelby (County) Tenn. (State)

10. EMPLOYER'S NAME: James Wright

11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS: 36 W. 135 st. (Number and street or R. F. D. number) New York City (Town) (County) N.Y. (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

REGISTRATION CARD
D. S. S. Form 1
(over)
16—17105

John Williams
(Registrant's signature)


ANDY KIRK
and his 12 CLOUDS of JOY


BLACK PATTI
Electrically Recorded
8009-B
Fox Trot
NOW CUT LOOSE
(Williams)
John Williams & His
Memphis Stompers
THE CHICAGO RECORD CO.
CHICAGO, ILL.


JOHN C. WILLIAMS
1905
1986


MARY LOU
WILLIAMS
1910 —— 1981
"PIANIST-COMPOSER"

WILLIAMS: Yes.
CADENCE: Was that because you thought you could make more money playing music?
WILLIAMS: That was one reason. We won't go through all this about how it happened. You wouldn't be interested. [Laughs] You would need ten pages. But I did find out that the principal was only making $200 a month. I had been offered that much, and I'd always wanted to travel anyway. So I begged my mother to let me quit school. She didn't want me to, but I finally won. That's how I began to really play professionally. Then I went back to Memphis for a while.
CADENCE: Were you in a band in Memphis?
WILLIAMS: No. I did gigs around there. But they didn't have no organized bands for Blacks In Memphis. There was no union or nothing like that.
CADENCE: But Kansas City had a union.
WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. But not Memphis. Blacks are not in the union there today. I was there just two years ago. I was on a panel at the Peabody Hotel for the jazz collectors [International Association of Jazz Record Collectors]. They have a convention every year. That question [about the musicians' union] came up from one of the guys in the city. There's still no Blacks there [in the musicians' union]. See, a lot of the cities like St. Louis and Kansas City, they had two unions, you know: the Black union and a White union. In Memphis, it was just the White union. No Blacks at all. So that's one of the reasons I left there in '28 and joined T. Holder's band.
CADENCE: Didn't you travel before you joined T. Holder's band?
WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I did a lot of traveling.
CADENCE: You were in the Syncho Jazzers?
WILLIAMS: Ah, yes. That's right. But before that, though, I was with a show—a traveling show—for a whole year in all of '25. 1925.
CADENCE: What kind of show was that?
WILLIAMS: Well, there was—you'd have comedians, dancing girls. A regular review like, you know. We had Black theaters all over the United States for those Black shows.
CADENCE: Were the theaters mostly in the cities?
WILLIAMS: Yes, in the larger cities that could afford to have enough people to talk to. They'd have to pay the band and the performers.
CADENCE: What was the name of the group you were in before the Syncho Jazzers?
WILLIAMS: It was called [Buzzin'] Harris's Hits 'n Bits—kind of a funny name. Somebody had recommended me for the job with this show. They contacted me, and I met the show in Cincinnati, Ohio a week or two before Christmas in 1924. That's when I first met Mary. She was already with the show.
Then on to Cleveland, where I met John Williams, later to become my

husband…. Acknowledged to be one of the finest baritone [saxophone] players, he was much in demand.1

CADENCE: Did Mary Lou come to Ohio to join Hits 'n Bits?

WILLIAMS: No no, she was already in the show when they sent for me. I was in Memphis, like I told you, after I quit school, and some musicians had been traveling through there with a show or something. They needed a saxophone player with the show. He recommended me.

CADENCE: Who was that?

WILLIAMS: I have no idea. Well, I take that back. I can't think of who it was. It was a tenor saxophone player from St. Joe. His first name was Harry. I can't remember his last name.

CADENCE: So you met Mary Lou when she was sixteen?

WILLIAMS: No, I met her when she was fourteen.

CADENCE: But you married her when she was sixteen?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

CADENCE: How long had she been with Hits 'n Bits then, if she was only fourteen?

WILLIAMS: Not too long. I couldn't tell you exactly. I would say some months anyway. That's just a guess. Of course, I wasn't even interested. I was very disgusted when I walked into the theater that night and [the boss] wanted to see what I could do and I saw a female piano p1ayer. I was ready to go back to Memphis. [Laughs] Because all the female piano players I played with didn't play much piano that I would like. I wanted Earl Hines stuff, you know. But when she sat down, she played Earl Hines stuff and everything note for note for note. I was just blown out of my head. I just couldn't believe what 1 was hearing. She was the best piano player I'd ever played with.

…When Mary Lou was only sixteen, she was already an amazingly precocious pianistic talent, as evidenced by recordings she made with her husband, John Williams's band. Her solo on "Midnight Stomp" [1927, Paramount, 1927] and "Now Cut Loose" [1927, Gennett]…are notable for both their advanced conceptions and virtuosic execution, second only to Hines and Johnson. Both solos…use broken "walking" tenths, right-hand octaves and tremolos (á la Hines), stomping shifted rhythmic accents, fleet hand-crossing over-hand cascade features, and other surprises…2

Hines's conception of the piano unified the striding left-hand of ragtime pianists and their successors (James P. Johnson, Luckey Roberts, etc.) with a new melodic-linear conception in the right hand. 3

CADENCE: She played some Fats Waller music too, didn't she?

WILLIAMS: …Anybody she wanted to listen to. She didn't read music, though; this was at the age of fourteen. Jelly Roll Morton—every number he recorded—all of those she could play note for note. …James P. Johnson…

CADENCE: Did she learn how to play piano from her mother [Virginia Burley]?

WILLIAMS: You really learn to play all that by yourself by ear. So it's up to the individual.

My mother married a man named Fletcher Burley…. Fletcher taught me the first blues I ever knew by singing them over to me…. [My step father]…was a professional gambler, and sometimes he took me with him—to bring him luck, he said…. I used to play a few things on the piano. Often I received as much as twenty dollars in tips…. I was kind of smuggled in….Of all the musicians I met in my childhood, one who stands out: Jack Howard. 4

CADENCE: She played in the church before that, didn't she?

It was at that home on Hamilton Avenue that Mary Lou learned to play the piano. Her mother played organ at her church, and one day set Williams in her lap and allowed her to fiddle with the keys. Her mother found out very soon that Mary Lou was a natural talent. 5

WILLIAMS: One of the churches gave lessons. Her mother said [that taking lessons] would take her talent away, but her mother was thinking wrong. So I taught her to read music when we were together at night with the show [Hits 'n Bits] in 1925.

"In fact, she never took any formal piano lessons," said Helen Floyd, Williams's niece. 6

She never took a formal music lesson in her life. 7

CADENCE: Did she read music before that?

WILLIAMS: No. With those shows, you really didn't have to read a lot of music to be professional. We were in a different town each week. We played show music, you know, for dancers that came on and for singers and all. And you do the same thing over and over. [We didn't] need music.

CADENCE: She must have learned quickly.

WILLIAMS: A genius! She not only arranged. When she died, you know, she was a professor teaching jazz [laughs] at Duke University. She played a concert at Carnegie Hall and all.

"Ha, ha, ha—look at me! A high school dropout. Now I'm a college professor," [Mary Lou] wrote gleefully to John Williams.8

The Hines tradition, in the person of Mary Lou Williams, and the avant-garde, in the person of Cecil Taylor, collided in Carnegie Hall tonight. [April 17, 1977]9

CADENCE: She arranged for Andy Kirk, though, didn't she?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, she did some for Andy. That's how she learned to write: The guys in the band taught her how to write. I taught her how to read. The guy that was leader of [Hits 'n Bits] wasn't satisfied where the money was coming from. None of us got hardly any money at that time. So he had put in his word that he would quit.

CADENCE: Who was he?

WILLIAMS: A guy named Shirley Clay—a trumpet player out of Chicago. So one week after I was there, the boss made me boss of the band. So I was leading a band for the first time. I worked with them throughout 1925.

CADENCE: What kind of music did you play with Hits 'n Bits?
WILLIAMS: We'd play a show…a review like vaudeville. It's hard to explain to people at a young age who haven't seen any of that stuff. There were a lot of chorus girls. And the next act might be dancers. The next act might be someone who does some kind of tumbling. That's just an example. There were lots of things people did at that time.
CADENCE: Did you play through the whole show?
WILLIAMS: Yeah, that was our job. That's what they paid us for. They had to have music. See, you had two tap dancers, you got a vocalist.
Mary Lou Williams: My stepfather fell sick, and it meant I had to support the family…. John Williams still had the band, which by now included trumpet player Doc Cheatham.[10]
CADENCE: Were the theaters located only in the cities?
WILLIAMS: Yeah. So right after I played Cincinnati one week, I played here Christmas week…in Columbus. I don't remember what the name of the place was. So anyway, we worked between layoffs and what-not. No work. I stayed with them for one year. Then we were stranded again in Kansas City, which was okay with me because I was home. Do you know about vaudeville? The Pantages circuit and all? Well, they were playing in a theater downtown with a Black cast. Back at that time, it was popular to try to have a five- or six-piece jazz band with dancers. So they had me come down and had me audition. They hired me right away. But they said, "We'll send for you next month in Chicago." I said, "Good." I didn't think they would hire me, but they did. They purchased uniforms and rehearsed a new act. And then we were booked for forty-two weeks on the Pantages circuit in 1926. But the main dancer [Seymour of the act called Seymour & Jeanette] died [of a heart attack at the age of twenty-seven].[11] So after this guy died, [Jeanette] tried to carry on, but it didn't work. So we were stranded in New York. While we were there playing with Mamie Smith and her husband, Burt Goldberg, they decided to try to put out a nice show around her. They've given credit to Bessie, but Mamie Smith was the first woman to hit on blues on Race Records, and the record was called "A Crazy Blues" [1920, OK/Phenola 4169]. She was a big gal. That was in 1920.
Actually, Bessie Smith was far from the first to record vocal blues. That distinction belongs to Mamie Smith (no relation). …Mamie recorded "Crazy Blues"… in November, 1920, and to everyone's surprise the record was a great success…. Within months the jazz craze, initiated by the ODJB, was replaced by the blues craze. [12]
In 1927, after we were stranded in New York, Mary Lou went home to Pittsburgh. I sent her home. After the show broke up, I went to Pittsburgh and stayed. We were there about three weeks. And I decided I wanted to go back home to see my parents. So we both left Pittsburgh and went to Memphis. That was around Christmastime just before '28, so you could say 1927. That was our first Christmas with my parents. So I decided to get a band together

there, which I did. I played on the plantations in Mississippi, like in Roots and all. That was after I became professional. I would play with anybody that wanted to pay me.

CADENCE: What did you see on the plantations?

WILLIAMS: That was really strictly for the…. I played twice—two summers. The master of the plantation, he came up—he picked me—to play for all the Blacks on the plantation. He was sent to Memphis to hire some music to entertain for a day. And that's when I was just…. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Barefoot people out there. See, I was born right in the city in a place like this. But they were enjoying themselves.

CADENCE: How many musicians went with you?

WILLIAMS: Most of the time it would be about seven. See, they would hire—I never knew how many. It would depend on the leader in Memphis. He'd call us and say, "I want a band." And we'd say, "How many pieces do you want?" So most of the time it was seven or eight pieces—which was not all the time. They would pick different guys that they liked. That's why we had to take music lessons…to get out of there.

CADENCE: Did you play in the open or under a tent?

WILLIAMS: [Laughs] Out in the open, man! No tent. I was just lucky that I played on beautiful days. Out in the fields. They would have the chicken and the fish fried and lemonade. Poker game in this corner, dice game over in that corner. And they would play baseball out on a baseball field…on a corn field. And they were barefooted. I'd flinch every time they would step on something.

CADENCE: Did you ever have any trouble getting paid?

WILLIAMS: No. The only trouble I ever had getting paid was when T. [Terrence] Holder ran off with our money.

CADENCE: Did anyone from Hits 'n Bits go on to the T. Holder band?

George Morrison: "I have trained a lot of outstanding musicians [in Denver] such as Andrew Kirk, who worked with me for many years until I encouraged him to go south and take over the T. Holder band. Another musician I trained was Jimmie Lunceford…. I encouraged him to go on to Tuskegee Institute to finish his musical education."[13]

WILLIAMS: Oh, no. No no. Frankly, no one went on to T. Holder but me. See, I had an eight-piece band in 1928 in Memphis for eight months. I told you how I left [Memphis] because there were no jobs for Blacks. You couldn't get a union job; there wasn't any union [for Blacks]. So when T. Holder out of Texas wanted to go on a tour, he needed an alto saxophone player. He called me up and sent me a wire. We finally got to terms on a price.

Mary Lou Williams: "One thing I have to say for John: He knew how to talk up salaries. Memphis musicians were getting a dollar and a half or two dollars a night when we went there…. By the time we left, they were making five and seven bucks, and I was making ten."[14]

John Williams: "Another band, led by Alphonse Trent, came through town, and his men recommended me for Fats Walls's job—he was lead alto—after Walls

had handed in his resignation to Holder. Then I bargained up my pay to $60 a week. I said to friends, 'That's more than me and Mary are making here in Memphis….' Andy Kirk…was the tuba player and he was earning $55; the rest of the guys, $40."[15]

So I left Memphis. Of course, me and my wife—I took her with me. We were married in 1926. She didn't have nothing to do with the band at that time.

CADENCE: Why did T. Holder take the band's money? Did he have family problems?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

CADENCE: A divorce?

WILLIAMS: He didn't want the divorce. He was crazy about his wife. She left him. He went to Dallas, Texas, to try to get her back. He took all our money with him! At Christmas!

CADENCE: Was that in 1928?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. So when he came back, some of the guys in the band said he pulled that stuff before. So they got together and voted him out. They took the band away from T. Holder. And the band voted and made Andy the leader. So that's how [the band] got to be Andy Kirk's. It was given to him.

Holder was one of the popular early trumpet stars of the Southwest, but, apparently because of domestic troubles, abandoned the orchestra in 1928.[16]

CADENCE: Was he a good leader?

WILLIAMS: He was a wonderful person, but that really wasn't his calling. We [the previous T. Holder band members] were in the band, but he had the name. See, Andy was a tuba player.

CADENCE: He played bass saxophone too, didn't he?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. But never in the band. He didn't play tuba in the whole eleven years that I was with him.

…In early 1936 Kirk had ceded his tuba position to the fine bass player Booker Collins, and after having Ben Webster and Buddy Tate successively in the tenor sax chair, Kirk acquired another major soloist, Dick Wilson. Another addition (in 1931) was the gifted drummer Ben Thigpen.[17]

So we got to decide in 1933. I took over as leader of the band. I called every song we played every night. I made up all the programs for the radio broadcasts.

CADENCE: Didn't the first Twelve Clouds of Joy record have your name on it instead of Andy Kirk's?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, that's the one I did in 1927. The first records I did were made before I even knew Andy. They were made in 1927, back with this act where the man died [Seymour]. The first records we made with the big band were in 1929 in Kansas City.

The Kirk orchestra's recording history began in [November] 1929 with two sides cut in Kansas City on the Vocalion label (under the name of John Williams and His Memphis Stompers)."[18]

CADENCE: What was it like in Kansas City in the 1930's?
WILLIAMS: Just a wild town. It was open twenty-four hours a day everywhere.
CADENCE: Did you play all night?
WILLIAMS: No. The union wouldn't let you. If you had a contract and worked in a nightclub, you had to work from nine to four every night. But if you played in a ballroom—we did mostly ballroom work—well, that was just from nine to one. But in Kansas City, the union had it so that we only had to work three hours a night, from nine to twelve. What I meant by "crazy" was that every place was wide open. I mean, they didn't close either. The wholesale liquor stores were open twenty-four hours a day. You could walk in and buy a bottle of something and get some cups and drink it in there. [Laughs] Pendergast, he…. Do you know about Pendergast? He was running everything—prostitution, gambling—twenty-four hours a day. He's the one that flaunted it. That's why people finally said, "I'm from Kansas City" if they wanted jobs. But he's the one that opened it up. That's why all those great musicians like Buddy Tate, Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins came to Kansas City: because of all this work. We didn't have to look hard in Kansas City.
While some likened Pendergast's town to Sodom and Gomarrah, musicians knew that they had it made when they arrived at 18th and Vine, or checked into Local 627….[19]
CADENCE: Did you travel by car?
WILLIAMS: We traveled by car and train. There were a lot of trains back in that time. [Traveling by] trains was as cheap as a car almost. [When we traveled by car,] sometimes there was no place to eat. We'd drive three hundred miles to a job, and I might have $300 in my pocket, and I'd end up ordering some baloney and crackers. A lot of the towns weren't big towns. After driving three hundred miles, I'd sleep in the car if I couldn't find a place to sleep. That's just the way Blacks were treated. Of course, the Blacks, you couldn't eat or sleep anywhere until the '60's. That's the way it was in the '20's and '30's. The big cities were altogether different. The big cities, they had Black hotels.
CADENCE: Did you stay in homes when you traveled too?
WILLIAMS: Mostly, I stayed in a lot of private homes. That's the way they had to take care of big bands. A Black doctor could take two [musicians]. And the undertaker, he could take two.
CADENCE: Did you ever have serious problems?
WILLIAMS: Not really. We had trouble in Kansas City once, but nobody in the band got hurt or nothing. In some of the bands, I do know some of the guys got hurt.
CADENCE: While they were in Kansas City?
WILLIAMS: I'm talking about the whole United States and the South. See, that's the trouble. People don't know what we went through. All this is new

stuff to [younger generations], and that's why the races can't get together. They don't know what a struggle we had to survive.

CADENCE: That's why I want to interview you—to let people know.

WILLIAMS: I don't think people care. This has been going on a long time. I think it's getting worse. The only difference is now we got the law behind us. Then there was no law. Any kind of trouble in a small town—the kids and the sheriff—they were all in the same family. [Laughs] So you just didn't have a chance. But we were lucky. That's life; that's the way it was. No use crying over spilt milk. You live with it; if you can't, you die with it.

Mary Lou Williams: "On our way to the club [in Memphis] in the car, we passed an old Negro man on a bridge and someone yelled, 'There's a nigger, run over him, he's too old to live anyway!.... I waited until I was back home and let loose on the White driver, who told me then, 'The South always holds neck parties when your kind gets out of line.'"[20]

But it's better than what it was, see, because it would have been impossible for me to be in the hospital here. Bessie Smith—she lost her life because they wouldn't take her to the hospital. She was in a wreck and they wouldn't take her there. The youngsters of today have no idea what the United States was like. You have to live with what's happening today, but it doesn't hurt to read books that describe what has happened to see how far the race has advanced. Who would have thought you would have had Blacks in the Senate and mayors and all of that? A person born fifteen or twenty years ago would think [the world] has always been like this, just like all the other things in life. You push a button, the light comes on. If you're born recently, you don't know I had to put out lamps every night. If Mama cooked three times a day, I had to build a fire three times a day. See, the people don't really really know what the difference is. We don't harp on it, I guess. Things are better. But if somebody wants to listen to it, I have to tell it like it is. What I went through! How long I was called names for no reason!

Mary Lou Williams: "Never in my life had I heard so many 'nigger, nigger, niggers.' No one had explained the conditions of the South to me."[21]

CADENCE: I wondered about Mary Lou's last name: Burley.

WILLIAMS: She had three last names.

[Mary Lou Williams was born Mary Elfrieda Scruggs. Successive surnames were Winn and Burley.] [22]

She had three different stepfathers. I don't even remember them. But she was a Burley—B.U.R.L.E.Y.—when I met her.

CADENCE: I've seen it spelled in other ways.

[Schuller spells her name as "Burleigh".][23]

CADENCE: Did she enjoy playing in the Kirk band?

WILLIAMS: Ah, she loved it. She loved it!

CADENCE: Did you arrange transportation for the band?

WILLIAMS: No, I just took care of the music end of it. Headquarters in New

York—the booking agent—handled where you go and how much Andy was going to get. We didn't know how much he got. We just knew how much we were going to get.

CADENCE: Did you know Howard McGhee?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, he played with Andy's band right after I left. We lived in the same hotel. All the great musicians knew each other. We all lived in Harlem. I mean, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Fats Waller. So we saw each other every day and said Hi to each other.

CADENCE: Did you ever see John Hammond?

WILLIAMS: John Hammond was the one that changed Kansas City. He came out there and took Basie, Joe Turner, Pete Johnson, Hot Lips Page. He's the one that put Kansas City on the map.

Mary Lou Williams: "You see, what happened in Kansas City was that John Hammond came to town. He was knocked out by what was happening musically, because he'd never heard such a thing. And he began to get jobs for the musicians. He took all the good musicians out, and it hasn't been good since. It was very beneficial what he did, but it left no one there that anybody could copy or to continue what was happening, because everybody that was playing left."[24]

CADENCE: So you and Mary Lou stayed with Andy Kirk through the 1930's?

WILLIAMS: Well, I left in '39. She stayed on another year or so.

[She left the bandstand and never returned to the Andy Kirk band after a disagreement with June Richmond in 1942, foreshadowing her abandonment of Paris and her temporary retirement in 1954.][25]

CADENCE: Why did you leave?

WILLIAMS: Well, I was [in bands] from nineteen years old. I was tired. Plus… plus…the big bands were breaking up. And Blacks just quit going to ballrooms. They were going into clubs and listening to combos. So that's how come guys like Tommy Dorsey and everybody…. See, we had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of Black and White big bands across the United States. But the younger generation broke that up.

CADENCE: So you ran a restaurant after that?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I tried it for a while. With my luck, the help stole all the money. So I wasn't in it too long.

[Andy Kirk's biography states that Williams's restaurant was called the Kansas City Barbecue, located at 129th Street and Seventh Avenue in New York City. Red Norvo was reported as Williams's best customer.][26]

I was through with Kansas City by that time. We left there in 1936. That was it. We had been back there many times, but musically anything out of Kansas City was taboo. New York after 1936 was home.

CADENCE: And then you were divorced in 1940.

WILLIAMS: That's right.

CADENCE: I read that the stress of traveling was the cause.

WILLIAMS: No. [Laughs] That's wrong. [Mary Lou] just told me, "If I see another guy I love better than you, I'll tell you." So she told me.
Mary Lou Williams: "I had told [John] that I didn't love him. In fact, I didn't love anyone for long."[27]
The guy she fell in love with was my buddy, Ben Webster.
CADENCE: But they didn't marry.
WILLIAMS: No, they didn't marry. He had sense enough [not to]. I kept telling him, I said, "Ben, look, we've been running together since we were kids." So he said, "She loves me." I said, "Look around at what you're doing." He said, "She says she'll take care of that." So I laughed, and that was the end of that. See, Ben and I were always buddies. See, I mean, to Ben, it was like you and I talking about rehearsing and all. So that's why. She divorced me because of Ben Webster.
[Mary Lou] was in love with Ben…. When the Clouds of Joy went to New York in '37, [Mary Lou] stayed with [Webster] at the Dewey Square Hotel, according to saxophonist Harold Arnold. She also told John she wanted them to live apart for a year, and, after that, Webster would take care of the divorce…. John put his foot down: if she left, it had to be permanent. And [John] talked frankly with her about "the Brute's" unsavory reputation….[28]
CADENCE: Then she married Harold Baker.
WILLIAMS: Uh huh. He beat her up and carried on, so she was with him for one year.
…Andy recalled to Peter O'Brien, "He saw Mary come running around a corner after a fight with Harold Baker. She'd hit him on the head with a Coke bottle and it was bleeding."[29]
[Mary Lou] was over in Europe. They treated her so bad over there. I couldn't swear to it, but I bet you that she was stranded over there working two jobs a night. They had brought her back to the United States, and that's when she swore off of music. That's the reason. Because she had been treated so bad by the men. She asked me twice, "Would you come back to me?" When she made that proposition of "If I see anybody I love," she filed for separation. She said, "I'll do anything I want to do for one year. If I like it, I'll stay that way. If I don't, I'll come back to you." I said, "If you get out, that's it." So I kept my word on it. She found out that I was the best man that she ever knew. You don't know much at fourteen. I taught her everything she knew. [She was] a fourteen-year-old kid, and I was nineteen. I had a whole lot more experience. I was always her big brother. That's the kind of thing it was. I saw that she was taken care of and that nobody took advantage of her. So it was such a bad breakup, but it wasn't hard for us to break up. That's how we were still friends.
John Williams: "I was like a big brother to her. She said, why didn't we get back together? I said no, 'It is over.' I was in love. I had a girlfriend, Kathleen Duncan, who would become my wife in 1951."[30]
CADENCE: Was she religious back then?

WILLIAMS: Not until she had all that trouble. Neither one of us was religious. I mean, we believed in God. We went to church and all that kind of stuff. Most of the time we'd sleep [in church] from working all night and everything. [Laughs] You'd get off of work from a nightclub at four o'clock in the morning, and mostly we'd all go to bed. Or we'd get a steak or something before that. A lot of people were getting ready to work [on weekdays]. Or you'd hang around and drink until eight or nine o'clock and go to bed. We were two crazy youngsters, and we'd bunk in [my aunt's] house. It didn't cost much. We didn't give her a lot of money, but things were so cheap there. You could get a five-room ranch house for $2500 and own it. We kept putting off our house-buying. Automobiles.... One time, I had nine automobiles in eleven years. So... Young. Crazy.

CADENCE: Is George Lee the person who convinced Andy Kirk to move to Kansas City?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Well, he didn't get him to do it. He told him someone would like to hear the band.

CADENCE: That was at the Pla-Mor Ballroom?

WILLIAMS: That's right.

George Lee, another important Kansas City band leader, happened to hear Kirk in Tulsa and recommended him for a long-term engagement at the Pla-Mor Ballroom in Kansas City.[31]

It was the finest White ballroom in Kansas City. I also saw St. Louis, so I know. It was the best in the whole state. See, you didn't play nothing but the big big big big fine ballrooms. I got a tape there in my bag that was [recorded] live at the Trianon Ballroom in Cleveland in 1937. The Trianon was one of the finest ballrooms in Cleveland at that time. It was where your rich people—rich, White, everybody—well, not everybody because Blacks weren't allowed. We played for mostly White audiences, and the reason for that was the type of music we played. See, before "Until the Real Thing Comes Along" [Decca 642, 1936] we had fourteen sides to make, and we only had thirteen. So, we played a number we called "The Slave Song" [the song's original title using the lyrics of Harriet Calloway (who starred in Lew Leslie's 1929 production of Blackbirds ["With an all-star cast of 100 Colored Artists"]: lyrics by Dorothy Fields, music by Jimmy McHugh)].Everybody in Kansas City played "The Slave Song." So we told them, "That's how we'll settle that." He said, "I want you guys to get a new [title]." We could put "Until the Real Thing" on the number two side. So we recorded that, and that was the number that made the band. After that, they told us it looks like you'll have to play all ballads. We were the first Black band to put ballads on our records. After that, we did stuff like "Poor Butterfly." So we had to play music that the White audiences liked. Plus, we did all the hit numbers from the Broadway shows. So the college kids and all would listen to those bands. They knew what was happening. So that's why we played for Whites.

CADENCE: But Bennie Moten and Count Basie played in the Black clubs, didn't they?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Yes. George [Lee] played a lot of White [dances], but not too much in Kansas City. His band used to work in Nebraska and Iowa. He did a lot of work up there.

CADENCE: Kansas City wasn't hurt very much by the Depression, was it?

WILLIAMS: No. Pendergast bought it up. [Laughs]

CADENCE: In the credits for the movie called Kansas City, you were listed as the composer of the song, "Froggy Bottom" [1929, Brunswick 4893] .[32] ***But I've seen Mary Lou also listed as the composer. Did you both write it?***

[Bob Blumenthal's text in the same liner notes states that the album's version is based on Mary Lou Williams's "score."][33]

WILLIAMS: No. It was Mary's idea [to write it]. Andy Kirk helped with the lyrics to it. They settled down between recordings. If we didn't have any songs, we would make up numbers. So that song was made up. It was while Mary Lou was learning to read and learning to write [music], and we gave her credit for [the song]. But I don't know why they put my name in [the liner notes]. Andy Kirk is the one who got the singers, but the drummer [Ben Thigpen] sang it. [Sings "Down to the bottom, to froggy bottom."] As I said, Mary Lou just made up the number. She was a lady, and we gave her credit for it. I didn't know [about the movie credit] until a friend of mine here in Columbus showed me a picture.

CADENCE: Yes, the movie gave you credit for writing the song.

WILLIAMS: Well, everybody makes a lot of mistakes. A lot of mistakes. I got so I quit reading a lot of interviews that Mary made. So many things are off the wall and never happened and never could have happened.

CADENCE: Did Andy write "Bear Cat Shuffle" [1936, Decca 1046-B]?

WILLIAMS: Andy didn't write nothing. Mary wrote that.

Mary Lou Williams: "You see, Andy used to sit down and take ideas of mine."[34]

CADENCE: Why did the band record "Christopher Columbus?" [1936, Decca 729-A]

WILLIAMS: We bought that song for fifty cents in New York. See, you could buy arrangements back in that time for fifty cents. Everybody had ["Christopher Columbus"]. Do you know about Tin Pan Alley? When a new number came off a new show or something, everybody there would want you to play the number. So we went to a studio that week trying to look for some songs, and we wanted another number, and [Andy] said, "Let's play this one." So we rehearsed it and set up a time. I think Fletcher Henderson [played that song]. I know he used it for a theme song.

CADENCE: Wasn't "Lotta Sax Appeal" [1929, Vocalion; 1936, Decca 1046-A] one of your songs?

WILLIAMS: Now that one I did. I wrote that.

"Lotta Sax Appeal" was mainly a vehicle for Williams's baritone sax, played with a gruff and rather stiff, old-fashioned slap-tongue style.[35]

Mary Lou Williams: "John Williams blew a slap-tongue two beat on baritone [saxophone], when he wasn't taking a solo, like a bass horn would slap. It eliminated the need for a tuba."[36]

CADENCE: That was a hit for you, wasn't it?

WILLIAMS: There wasn't nothing we did that was a hit. Not at that time. The only thing we did that was a hit was "Until the Real Thing Comes Along." After that, we had several hits.

CADENCE: Did you know Don Byas?

WILLIAMS: Yep. [Knowing smile] He was a good tenor player, except when he was drinking. He turned out to be an alcoholic. He was one of Mary's boyfriends. When he was working at the Cotton Club in New York, he jumped on her and beat her up. So Andy had to fire him.

Her lover, Don Byas, who wrote her tenderly lyrical love notes, was fired from the Clouds of Joy by Kirk after slapping her around publicly at a gig: possibly the last straw for Kirk who warned her to leave the men in the band "alone."[37]

CADENCE: What about Dick Wilson?

WILLIAMS: I enjoyed playing with Dick better than anybody. He and Lester Young. See, I used to know all these guys. Those were my two favorites.

Mary Lou Williams became…one of [the Kirk orchestra's] two stars; the other, in the late thirties, being the remarkable tenor saxophonist Dick Wilson.[38]

CADENCE: What did you do after the restaurant closed?

WILLIAMS: I had decided to quit playing music. See, but after the restaurant failed, I went back to music. That's when I joined Earl Hines. For six years I played baritone sax.

Dizzy Gillespie: "…That's when I joined his band…. Next, they got Charlie Parker, but they didn't need an alto player because they already had Scoops Carey, who played alto and clarinet, and Goon Gardner, who played also. Thomas Crump played tenor, like Lester Young, and Johnny Williams was on baritone. So Earl got Charlie a tenor to play…. People talk about the Hines band being 'the incubator of bop….' But people also have the erroneous impression that the music was new. It was not. The music evolved from what went before."[39]

CADENCE: At the Grand Terrace?

WILLIAMS: No no. No, the Grand Terrace, that was in his heyday. I played the Grand Terrace with Andy Kirk during the gangster days. [While I was in the Hines band, we] played all over the United States. Yeah, I played with Earl.

CADENCE: Who else was in that band?

WILLIAMS: In six years, we had about forty different people. Wardell Gray. Charlie Parker—Yardbird. Dizzy Gillespie. I got pictures of Dizzy Gillespie. Sarah Vaughan. I paid Sarah her first salary. I took care of the financing for Earl. So when new people came in the band, he turned them over to me to break them in and help them out. Just before that, right after the barbecue place broke up, I played with Cootie Williams. [In the Hines band I played with] Benny Green, Billy Eckstine. [Eckstine] had picked up the trombone just to be fooling around,

but [he] never played it in the band. Singing was his [interest]. I worked with the Coleman Hawkins band for two weeks after he played "Body and Soul." He got a band together. But it didn't take, so it broke up. His home was in St. Joe, Missouri, but he moved to New York in the '20's.

Cliff Smalls: "Wardell Gray came in on alto at first. Scoops Carey, the straw boss, didn't like Wardell…. Scoops took the numbers at tempos almost twice as fast as we usually played, and Wardell….just ran through them…. 'See what you got?' John Williams cried. 'I've been here all the time, and they're playing them better than I am!'"[40]

With openings scarce in New York and no prospects of further tours Hawkins had no option but to disband. Under a headline ARE NEGROE BANDS DOOMED AS MONEY MAKERS? the 1 December 1940 issue of Down Beat reported the band's demise: "Coleman Hawkins's recent tour with a large band was not successful. The day it returned to New York in November the band dissolved."[41]

CADENCE: Did you play with Jimmie Lunceford too?

WILLIAMS: No. I had Jimmie Lunceford play in my band for four days. I had to go to Oklahoma to join T. Holder. I had four dates booked with my eight-piece band. And I was on alto sax. See, I asked Jimmie to take my place while I was gone. So he played with Mary. Mary directed [the band] and did what I would have done. But I never played with [Jimmie's band]. Of course, at that time, Jimmie had a lot of schoolkids in his band. They weren't good enough to play with me. High school kids. He was just farming that band. That was in the '20's.

Mary Lou Williams: "Jimmie Lunceford…then an unknown saxophone player out of Denver…became a close friend of John's, and they spent hours playing checkers together."[42]

During John's trial period with the Dark Clouds, Mary fulfilled the bookings made for the Memphis band, some of them with Jimmie Lunceford taking John's place as lead alto.

CADENCE: When did you move to Chicago?

WILLIAMS: In 1947. See, you couldn't work as a Black musician in one town all the time. You had to go from town to town—one-night stands. Sometimes we'd go to six different towns in six nights. We'd drive a thousand miles. That's what tired me out. See, those bands traveled all around and sent for different people in different places. Just like a baseball player, you're with this team. So as I told you, I was tired of traveling. Plus, the big bands were breaking up. There weren't no ballrooms for us to play at. We used to work all weekend. On the weekends, they would take their wives to the Deshler [hotel in Columbus] or the other hotels because all the hotels had a big band. And we played in the ballrooms. And all that dried up. So that's when I went to Chicago. I tried to decide what I wanted to do…or what I could do because I didn't know nothing but music.

CADENCE: Did you work in a hotel there?

WILLIAMS: I worked as a bellboy in a Black hotel.
CADENCE: Which one was that?
WILLIAMS: Alpha. You wouldn't know it. There were about ten Black hotels in Chicago. That was one of the biggest.
CADENCE: What happened after that?
WILLIAMS: That's when I got the job at the factory. That's where I stayed on until I came here [to Ohio]. I stayed on there for twenty-one years.
CADENCE: What did you make there?
WILLIAMS: A big factory that made speakers. For everything that uses speakers.
CADENCE: Was that Zenith?
WILLIAMS: No, they made them for Zenith. Zenith's name was just printed on them. Philco's name: We printed that on them.
CADENCE: What was the name of the company?
WILLIAMS: Quam-Nichols.
CADENCE: I understand that you thought Chicago was starting to be rough, and you decided to move [to Columbus].
WILLIAMS: Yeah, we moved here in the '70's. We sold the house there and moved here. I've been here ever since. After working here on a job for a fellow…. I got the job in May and had to quit in October on account of hypertension and high blood pressure. So I haven't worked since 1971. I got sick [with congestive heart failure] in the last couple of years.
CADENCE: Were you married in Chicago?
WILLIAMS: Yes, in 1951 [to Kathleen].
CADENCE: Where did you meet your wife?
WILLIAMS: In Chicago. She was the desk clerk at this Black hotel, the Alpha.
CADENCE: Is she still with you?
WILLIAMS: Died seventeen years ago.
CADENCE: Have you lived with your stepson since then?
WILLIAMS: No. I live alone. See, being an only child from the South, it teaches you to do everything yourself. I washed, I cooked and sewed. I could do it all. In fact, I did all the cooking anyway because I'm kind of funny about my eating. With Mary Lou, I always did the cooking. That's the way my restaurant had all types of seasoning. So that's why it's hard for me to eat this [hospital food].
CADENCE: So what have you been doing since '71?
WILLIAMS: Enjoying myself. Cutting the grass. I like the TV. See, I took a vacation every year.
CADENCE: Did you ever play saxophone after you quit in the '40's?
WILLIAMS: Nope. I just made up my mind to put the music down. Straighten up and fly right and not have a girl in every town. Get a square job and find one woman. So I accomplished all of that. Smoked for thirty-six years. I drank for over forty—and I mean heavy. But the kind of work we did, it was hard to

leave [liquor] because you were working in all the nightclubs, and that's where they were smoking. So I made it. They'd come up to you and say, "Oh, John, have a drink." And I couldn't refuse. So I was lucky that way. And you eat all the food to help you avoid cirrhosis of the liver. See, alcohol will burn your liver up. Cigarettes—I smoked two or three packs a week—not a day. So I was doing some bad things but used real common sense.

CADENCE: Do you still listen to music?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah. I mean, some of it that I want to hear. Sometimes an old timer would come over to my house who enjoys the type of music I enjoy. An old friend that I met who knew what was happening in the '30's and '40's and knew all about Jimmie Lunceford and all those bands. I have all of that stuff. I have forty recordings by Jimmie Lunceford and about forty by Earl. I've got just about everybody in my collection since I was seventy-five or eighty years old. It's in that era when they danced to that music you could get a kick out of. Once in a while, I'll play something to reminisce. Most of the time, I spend my time watching TV. I got a couple of soap operas that I like. The rest of the time, I'm by myself doing my washing, doing my cooking, cleaning up. And then I tape different things I see on TV. I got the lives of Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis, Billie Holiday. Of course, I knew her before she could sing.

CADENCE: Where did you meet her?

WILLIAMS: New York City. Her father [Clarence] played [banjo and guitar] with Fletcher Henderson, and he was a friend of mine. I used to go up to their house.

CADENCE: Do you mind if I publish what you said?

WILLIAMS: I wouldn't have talked to you if I did.

CADENCE: I appreciate your time, and I hope you feel better.

WILLIAMS: So do I.

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The Life of an East German Jazz Musician, Part 2: An Interview with Conny Bauer

By Jeffrey D. Todd

This is the second installment in a series of interviews that I conducted with free jazz masters of the former GDR. They are still active in reunified Germany, but I associate them with the former GDR because that's where they grew up, where their careers were forged, and where their reputations were made. The first, a joint interview with Baby Sommer and Uli Gumpert, was published earlier this year in Cadence volume 48, nr. 1. This interview, like the first a translation from the original German, is with the great trombonist Conny Bauer, who began his performing career as a guitarist and singer.

I came to each interview with a similar core of questions. Both interviews address the musicians' paths to the music profession, the types of music they've played in their careers, and the professional challenges they have faced since the reunification of Germany. Still, each interview took on a life of its own and went its own direction. While Baby and Uli addressed the East German institutional structures, from the educational system to the musical venues, in which their music-making took shape and form, and the change in the GDR's policy towards jazz, Conny brings up other issues: the difference in artists' social attitudes in the West as compared with the East; the economics of royalties in the GDR; how he came to find what was unique in his playing; finally, his concept of free melody-making and the importance of antagonism in music. Consequently, this interview is quite different from its predecessor and just as fascinating.

We met in the breakfast room of my hotel in Friedrichshain, which, appropriately enough, has retained its GDR-era decor and feel. As recording began, we were in the midst of talking about the GDR's authoritarian regime and the sense of Zusammenhalt, or social solidarity, often cited as a trait of the population of the former GDR...

CB: This dictatorship situation causes the populace to band together, because of the pressure placed on them. When that pressure is gone, each person stands on their own, and the closeness is gone.

JT: Do you think any of that has remained?

CB: Maybe among the older people.

JT: How did that social solidarity manifest itself?

CB: I don't know how it functioned in society in general, but I know how it functioned among artists. My sister is a sculptor, and she lives in Mecklenburg on a farm. Since she has been there, that is, for the last 30 years, she knows the artists around there. They drive through the region, through the countryside visiting friends, as much as you might do if you lived in Berlin. Sometime after reunification, artists from Mecklenburg, in the northern part of the former East Germany, were invited to Schleswig-Holstein in the West. They remarked

that the West German artists from that area didn't know each other at all. So, at a meeting where the West German artists met the East German artists, they noticed that the West German artists were also meeting each other for the first time.

JT: (Laughs). That would be funny if it weren't so sad.

CB: Everybody fights to sell their own art and it doesn't interest them at all what other artists are doing. It's a bit different in the East, at least among the older folks.

JT: What do you think about the phrase that's sometimes uttered about life in East Germany: "We wanted to build something here"? Baby Sommer commented, "we wanted rather to dismantle something", meaning oppressive social and political structures.

CB: In the beginning, everyone thought that we could improve the GDR. We were born here and didn't know anything else. But that feeling left us pretty quickly.

JT: Then comes the question of the Wendezeit, before the GDR was assimilated into the capitalist system. How did you imagine the Wendezeit?

CB: I have to think about that one. It's been a long time, after all.

JT: But certain possibilities must have occurred to people.

CB: At the beginning there was a nine-month period of open borders, and people actually thought that it would continue so, that the GDR would be an independent democratic country with open borders like Czechoslovakia or Poland. But then the reunification happened very quickly.

JT: Why didn't it remain independent?

CB: Because everybody wanted the Deutschmark? I don't really understand why.

JT: If you agree on a common currency, then some degree of economic union occurs pretty naturally.

CB: But that doesn't even exist now! It's still the case that people in the East receive less money for the same work, because they allegedly don't create the same amount of economic value. Still after 23 years.

JT: How did you get into the jazz scene? You weren't a trombonist from the beginning, were you?

CB: In high school, I taught myself to play guitar. At that time I played dance music, but there weren't any discotheques. I was an amateur dance musician. At the beginning of the '60s, the foxtrot was the main dance and you played swing to it. We played all the old standards. We also played solo choruses, so it wasn't so different from jazz. Then, in the mid-'60s came English rock and roll. People didn't want to hear swing music anymore. There wasn't a jazz scene yet, just people who did that on the side. The radio supported us. They had their own jazz ensemble, and the musicians got paid for their rehearsals.

JT: Nice!

CB: They produced every month a jazz program. That was state-sponsored jazz. After a while I became a singer and guitarist in Petrowsky's band. Then I

started practicing the trombone more.

JT: You were practicing when I called you. How long do you practice on a normal day?

CB: It's hard to say, because it starts in the morning and when I get an idea, it continues. I've got a practice room. I practice there usually for an hour at least, but it can be as many as five hours. It all depends on how I feel. I can't say in advance. Sure, there are specific practice routines I go through. That lasts a while, but mainly my practicing flows from my ideas and from playing. After all, that's the situation we experience on stage. Free improvisation. But few people really practice that. Most people deliver a finished product, and don't step onto the stage if they don't know precisely what's going to be played. I practice this free situation very consciously and consistently. It's very important to practice being in the moment.

JT: Do you still do solo concerts? What are your thoughts on the structure of a solo concert?

CB: I don't plan the structure of a concert, because my music challenges the physical limits of what I can do. Sometimes I have to take a break after 10 minutes, then the music gets calm. Sometimes it lasts longer; sometimes I can push for 20 minutes. After that it also depends on the material that I'm working with. My physical limits however create or set up a fairly logical dramatic structure. I don't think about it that much. I have ideas about how the ending might be, generally when the climax will be, and the conclusion. I do think about stuff like that, but that can all happen with different kinds of musical material. So I don't really think so much about the specific structure of the music. The material is well prepared in my practice, but the sequence is not planned out.

JT: When did you take up the trombone?

CB: Well, in the ’60s I studied trombone in the conservatory in Dresden, in the program of dance and entertainment music. They taught us swing. So we played Count Basie arrangements. It was definitely a jazz program. We didn't have the real book yet; that came later on in the ’70s. The professors didn't teach us much about scale theory. They taught us a lot of stylistic things, how you play so that it swings, feeling in triplets and so on. We learned that very well. But when it came to playing a solo chorus within a big band arrangement, they told us you got to write the chorus down. They thought it’s not possible to just improvise that when you only have 12 bars of time. So we as students prepared our solos, learned them and then played them by heart. My teacher at that time told me: “When JJ Johnson has a solo, he plays so beautifully that must have practiced that! He can't have improvised that on the spot!”

JT: I guess they underestimated human creativity.

CB: Indeed they did. Very understandably so, because we didn't have a whole lot of time to practice in the GDR. Because the pay was so limited, we had to play so many times a month and the opportunities were there. It's not the way it is now, when I get up and start practicing at 8:00 and can stop at 10:00 in the

evening. There's much more time to practice now. And you have to practice on a daily basis. Even now, if I leave for a couple of days on tour, when I come back I have to start again at the beginning. I've got to figure out where I stopped. When you focus on concerts, and have to take care of all the logistics on the way, then you don't have much time to think about creative things.

JT: Too much work...

CB: ... And too many distractions.

JT: Where did you play before you started playing concerts?

CB: Primarily for dances. In Waldhäusern oder Kulturhäusern. I studied in Dresden. You couldn't have called the place in Dresden a club; that was an English concept. But there were definitely hotels and youth hostels. They had dances there. In the villages around Dresden there were Gaststätten with dance halls in the back. And on weekends they had dances.

JT: When did you stop doing gigs of that sort and start doing concerts?

CB: Günter Sommer started playing jazz on an amateur basis. He played for dances and always traveled to Leipzig. In the '60s the only thing that remained there was a Dixieland scene. Modern jazz was kind of the forerunner of free music. The musicians really didn't have that much experience with modern harmony. They played relatively freely, at least the groups that there were at that time. Joachim Kühn was pretty important, but by '66 he was already in the West, I think.

In my case it was like this: I was a guitarist, a very good one I think, and a singer. When I played with Petrowsky, the bass guitarist sang and I then also played trombone, but more as I was trained to do in the music school, playing my solos by heart. At that time I would not have had the courage to play a concert. When Petrowsky got the offer from the Berlin Radio big band, I then followed him into that band as trombonist. That became the Modern Soul Band. It exists even today. That was the first band where I just played trombone. It went fairly quickly from there. For one thing, this band began to play concerts, and invited Petrowsky as guest artist. He was 10 years older and already had a name as a jazz musician. From that point on you can call them jazz concerts. Rock concerts weren't even allowed yet at that time.

JT: To what extent was Rock even allowed? I mean, that music was closely associated with England and the USA.

CB: It was probably allowed. The problem had to do with the originals. We played for dances, and people wanted to hear something from The Beach Boys or Cream or some other English band, and that became a problem, because in that case royalties then had to be paid to the songwriters in hard currency. The GDR did not have that. It was forbidden to play those songs, but not for ideological reasons. The GDR wouldn't have cared about that. But there were GEMA agents who frequented the dance halls and noted what Western songs were being played and then demanded royalties from the GDR. The analogous agency in the GDR was the AWA, which stands for Anstalt zur Währung der

Aufführungsrechte. At that point it became a problem. The AWA had then to find the hard currency to pay the debt. So the State had to be very careful, so that very little forbidden material was played. It was forbidden because the state didn't have the hard currency to pay the royalties, not for ideological reasons. If you would have had lyrics critical of the regime, that might have been a different story, but that really wasn't the case. These were all love songs; that's what rock music was all about. So the GDR had to pay attention to all this. If somebody's here from the West, hears that and calls attention to it, then the royalties have to be paid in hard currency, and we don't have it.

JT: Could the GDR not just ignore the demands?

CB: Oh no. The GDR was very serious about such things.

JT: So everything had to be correct, legally speaking.

CB: Oh yes, you can't fault the GDR on that account. Naturally people wanted to hear us sing in English, when we were singing a Beatles song. And the State wouldn't have cared. But we could not broadcast anything like that. It was a state institution. We could broadcast in the radio or produce a record on VEB Deutsche Schallplatten, but that was only possible in English by the mid-'70s. Because people thought it totally ridiculous...

JT: … to translate the Beatles' songs into German! (laughter)

CB: Long hair was a totally different matter. You could play a dance with long hair, but when we wanted to go on TV, the long hair had to go, because then all the party functionaries objected. They would say:
"we imagine socialism very differently." So the long hair had to go.

JT: So you're saying that, when it came to the point of being a public representative of socialism, long hair was not allowed?

CB: Exactly. On television or in any other official capacity. There were trailblazers here in the rock and roll scene. Renft, for example, was a band that was later banned. They wore long hair, and became so famous that they were even allowed to appear on television. That was the first time, that a band with long hair was able to appear on TV. The functionary said, "What the heck, they're everywhere now and are so famous, we might as well let them appear that way on television." At that point it was just time.

JT: What was the complete panoply of musical genres that were related to Jazz in the GDR? You played free music, Fusion or Jazz-Rock, didn't you?

CB: Yes, I played in the Modern Soul Band. There were maybe three or four horn bands. The rest was guitar music. Almost all the GDR free jazz musicians came out of the dance bands. It was different in England when we think about people like Paul Rutherford or others. They came to free jazz from classical music. That wasn't the case here, but I think that the classical composers were very interested in our music. When we had those jam sessions in the Große Melodie on Monday evenings – that was in the old Friedrichstadtpalast before it was torn down – in the basement there was a bar that was open every night, except on

Mondays. Klaus Lenz succeeded in persuading the manager to open it up on Monday nights so that we might be able to play jazz there. And the composer Georg Katzer sat there on Monday evenings watching and listening, and he got a lot of musical ideas from it. Paul-Heinz Dittrich, another composer, wrote a composition entitled "Begegnung." He was a classical musician from the Gruppe Neuer Musik Hanns Eisler from Leipzig. A few jazz musicians – Petrowsky, Klaus Koch, and I – were there. The classical musicians were much more interested in what we were doing then the people who, like us, had from dance music and were now doing more mainstream jazz. They hated free jazz and still do. So there was a big rift between the two groups.

In the '80s I had a big band that brought the two groups together with a rhythm section of Baby Sommer and Jay Oliver. Jay was a black bassist who has passed now, but at that time he lived in West Berlin. When at times the tempo would get really fast, the mainstream guys would just turn their heads and marvel at the rhythm section because their rhythm sections couldn't cook like that. There were astounded that that kind of intense playing was possible in free jazz too.

JT: This division between mainstream musicians and free jazz musicians is understandable enough. You even hear a great difference between the music played at the concert in 1965 with the GDR Jazz All-Stars and the wild things that Peter Brötzmann does.

CB: Of course. But that kind of playing was for us in 1965 still quite a way off. We had heard something of Brötzmann, but hardly ever on the radio, because it wasn't played in the East. Sometimes the TV cameras, for example at the Westberliner Jazztage, showed Brötzmann, Korwald, Benning. But in the '60s we really didn't have much exposure to that here in the East. And we didn't really understand it. There wasn't really a fertile ground here in the East for that kind of stuff. Joachim Kühn did very creative things musically, maybe not so much from the perspective of the instrument itself. But he couldn't stand it here and left early on, and the GDR leadership was totally fine with that. They said in the newspapers in 1966: "Our artists aren't yet politically mature...." After that, the doors to the West were closed for a while for the rest of us. They were glad that Joachim was gone. Friedhelm Schönfeld began then at some point toward the end of the '60s with his Trio, which consisted of Joachim Kühn's bassist Klaus Koch and with Baby Sommer. He began to play more freely but that had nothing whatever to do with Peter Brötzmann. Brötzmann's style wouldn't have worked in the social situation here. It was possible in the Wuppertal, but there was no place in the East where that would have worked.

JT: Because it was too openly revolutionary?

CB: Probably.

JT: He plays with such abandon and conviction.

CB: Oh yes, and continues to do so.

JT: So back to the various genres in the GDR. There was big band music. Klaus Lenz, was that rather Basie-oriented or what?

CB: Klaus Lenz always had a dance band. I played with them for a short time in 1967. They played for dances, popular things like Herb Alpert for example, very tastefully, not exactly like Schlager but somewhat in that direction. The band had a very high level of professionalism. He was a very skillful businessman, and was always able to take care of his band. That was not always easy.

JT: Sort of like walking a tightrope.

CB: Yes. But he was able to get that done and, every couple of years, put together a big band and organized concerts for it. In that case, the big band didn't play for a dance audience. That was definitely concert music. Later the free jazz musicians had a different kind of encounter with dance as a form of artistic expression on the stage. But that came later at the end of the '70s or in the '80s.

JT: Hard bop was not played so often here, right?

CB: Not really. We played that early on in a dance kind of situation, for example when I played with SOK. They played that sometimes. But not in a concert situation. Even all the way up till the end there were not so many mainstream jazz groups. They weren't all that good either. When the free jazz musicians began playing in the West at the end of the '70s, the mainstream musicians of course wanted to do the same. But when one of those guys, say Axel Donner, wrote on his vita, that his influences were Keith Jarrett, McCoy Tyner, and Chick Corea or something like that – which is already kind of funny – they laughed about it in Amsterdam at the Bimhuis. They said, "What's this? Here comes this guy out of the GDR and he wants to play here?" So that was an obstacle for those musicians. For that reason, all of the people who might have had ambitions to perform in the West went in the direction of free jazz. That was something that we had that we knew could stand on its own. These musical fashions were of course all international. I don't actually know how free jazz came to the GDR. We were pretty disconnected from a lot of things in the world. I think it was also part of the Zeitgeist.

JT: So that kind of music connected to something in the way people felt here?

CB: Yes. There was definitely something of the Zeitgeist involved.

JT: I've never quite understood why Cuban music didn't influence jazz in the GDR. Cuba was ideologically close to the GDR, and people did go back and forth between both countries. For example, Baby Sommer actually traveled there.

CB: But not in a musical capacity.

JT: That's right. But he heard the music. He said, however, that there was no question of that music being an influence for him. I find it kind of puzzling that Cuban music didn't find more resonance here.

CB: Naturally there were also Cuban students here who played music. There was one band in Weimar that always had a Cambodian and a Cuban

percussionist. They had that kind of concept. There were a lot of students in Jena und Weimar of course.... As far as influences from abroad were concerned, sometimes we couldn't even distinguish whether something came from England or the USA. Here, the first Latin influences were Bossa Nova in the '60s and that came from Brazil. Then we found out that the musicians were living in New York but actually came from Brazil. But for other kinds of music we didn't know how it all hung together.... Radio International in Nalepa Street was of course a source of information. They had programs from all kinds of places, Africa and so on. But would they have had one especially for Cuban culture and music? It was hard to distinguish between that and other Latin American things.

JT: Oh, I see. Where there's confusion, it's hard to grasp hold of anything in particular.

CB: At the beginning, we had no idea that the Bee Gees came from Australia. Then we found out somehow from the radio. That was all for us in the East very far away. And I was at that time in Dresden. In Dresden, things were even further away. You couldn't get FM radio, you could only get medium wave radio with whistling interference and if you wanted any kind of information….

JT: There is this concept of the representative artist of the GDR, of artists that represented the country to other countries. Did you play that kind of a role, and if so, what was life like as a representative artist of the GDR?

CB: Well, those were two different lives. The one took place abroad, in the West, where we were always awaited with anticipation, despite the fact that people didn't know what we did (laughter), just because we came from the East. It was as if we were coming out of a zoo. "Let's have a look and see what they're doing." Then on the other side, we had developed a public following for our music. We always played to packed houses, and played a very important social role here. That sense of importance, this sense that a lot of people like our music – we took it with us into the West when we played there. But those were two different lives. I never thought of our playing in the West as being a state function, but rather as playing an important social role. Our art has a social function, not a political one. It was with that mindset that I went abroad. I brought with me that knowledge of what can happen when you play this music. In an interview with Bert Noglik, Fred van Hove called the GDR "the paradise of improvised music." It was also important for the Western musicians to be able to play free jazz for six to eight days straight in front of a packed house. That was a big deal: three to five hundred people listening to free jazz.

JT: They were enthusiastic about it.

CB Yeah, they were following intently. The Western listeners were just like our listeners here in the East.

JT: Then the Wende came. We already spoke a little bit about the Wendezeit. After that, you said, things changed. Then you found yourself on the world

market as an artist, having to hawk your wares. Do you think that art is well promoted in this way? Is the atmosphere now in that sense a favorable one for art?

CB: Sure, without a doubt. There have been two important moments in my life. The one was playing for the first time in the West German town of Moers, in this tent where all the black musicians were around us, and played before and after us. One of them stood there and watched what the guys from the East were doing. Sure, I tried to play as fast as JJ Johnson and as aggressively as Roswell Rudd or someone like that, but the American musicians loved what I was doing, and they wished us well. Then it became clear to me that I've got to let all that stuff go. If I'm going to make a name for myself internationally, I've got to find my own thing. That was a really important moment. The second moment was the Wende. Then our protections were gone. There was definitely something protective about the GDR, even when you were traveling abroad. You knew you had a place to go back to. And you could rest a bit. You can't do that anymore.

JT: So your life as an artist has become more difficult since the Wende?

CB: Well, it's also been a kind of process. At the beginning we had a great deal of luck in that we were already known in the West. We just didn't need a passport anymore. We could simply get in the car and drive to France, Switzerland, or Munich and play. So at the beginning it just proceeded normally as it had done. And it went very well. But then in the mid-'90s, when the consequences of the Wende arrived in the West as well, and welfare funding dropped and arts budgets as well, then it got difficult. At the beginning we had our East German bonus and were often called to play at festivals and such things. Before the Wende, both a West German and an East German band were invited to the festival in Scandinavia, but after the Wende, only one German band was invited. That had an impact. And there was also a kind of fatigue here in the East. All the people who had fought to do concerts, finally they could also call musicians from the West, like Klaus Doldinger or Albert Mangelsdorff. As a result we weren't called as often. We noticed that and it was also understandable. At the Western festivals where we had previously played, we musicians had been able to see all the international acts, but the East German audiences back home couldn't. So it was definitely understandable that the promoters here developed a new concept. Add to that the fact that, instead of one GDR, there were all of a sudden five new individual federal states. The Jazz Club Leipzig suddenly had a different idea of what they wanted to do. They didn't want free jazz anymore, they invited Keith Jarrett instead. Even Bert Noglik, who had done so much for our music, asked himself, "What's going on?" So something had changed. This whole centralized aspect of music in the GDR was gone overnight. That was actually not a problem for us. The problems came in the second half of the '90s. That's when the Wende really

happened for us.

JT: That's when the financial difficulties happened for you.

CB: The fact that the people who had been in the West for a long time had an advantage and then that the cultural budgets had been slashed. In France, the budgets lasted a bit longer and in Switzerland they are probably still there, although Switzerland is very careful that only Swiss musicians receive the benefit. A German musician like Nils Wogram, who is married and living in Zurich, has said that he has plenty of work with Swiss musicians, but if he wants to promote his own projects, he can't get them off the ground. So the Swiss are very careful that their money remains in Swiss hands. It's the same way in France as well. Germany's a bit different. In Germany the old adage that "no man is a prophet is his own land" really applies. Even in the classical music scene, where my brother Matthias is very active, German musicians play for very little money, including three weeks of rehearsal and a concert, but when there is real money to be had, they want to bring musicians from Japan and Korea, because it's something special. That is typically German. (Laughs)

JT: Do you find that the jazz scene in the GDR is given its due credit when people talk about it, or is that even an issue anymore?

CB: It's hardly an issue anymore for former GDR musicians. There are some that were against it all and remain so, thank God. And for others, for me for example, it is completely clear that I lived a period of time in my life that will never come again. It lasted a bit too long, maybe a few years too long, but it was important for me, and it was perhaps also an experiment, and I was there. And that's the way it is for many; that's how our life was. And we couldn't do anything about it. Ultimately, all of Germany has had to pay the price for WWII. It's for that reason that the GDR had to pay reparations to the East European countries for 40 years. Those payments were disguised as mutual economic help. GDR wharves were building ships for the Soviet Union up until the very end, and delivering them conscientiously on time for prices that had been contractually determined in the '60s. They were basically gifts to the Soviet Union. But when you look at it in all honesty, you know exactly why the State was the way it was and couldn't function differently. Everything was decided in Moscow, or here in Berlin in Karlshorst, where the Soviet embassy was. Of course, it's now often the case that one asks, why did people take the positions they took or behave the way they did?

JT: But it's not really an issue anymore….

CB: Not really. Only if someone is disliked here in the West, then they look to see if there is perhaps something in his Stasi file.

JT: Do you have a particular artistic ambition, that is, something that you really want to communicate as an artist?

CB: That's all related to my practicing. Of course I have a lot of things in my mind that I still would like to play, but they come from my practice sessions, when I come upon an idea that I've never heard. Then I have to work with it for

a while and see what comes out of it. Above all, it's things with the trombone that nobody has done yet. And when you play those new things, the audience hears it and understands it. I've always noticed that people that heard me 30 years ago show up and say, "You always come up with something new." It's the most satisfying thing that people notice that you've put in the work. And then of course there is something that I'm after. The greatest feeling is when people are happy after a concert, look up to you and thank you. I'm glad that I have been able to contribute something new with my work. They come to the concert and are supposed to be able to take something home with them.

JT: What are your current projects?

CB: Well that's difficult. I'd like to do a lot more. At the moment my favorite thing is this classic trio of horn, bass, and drums, and my favorite musicians are Hamid Drake and William Parker, but to bring them here on tour is so difficult, because it's gotten very expensive to bring them here. You can't play with such great musicians and then give them 200 Euros after a concert, you just can't. I played with them and Peter Brötzmann 10 years ago. Brötzmann can do that. Everybody played just in order to play with Peter Brötzmann. Then you say afterward, "That wasn't very much money, was it?" But I don't want to do that. When I play with such great musicians they should also be paid properly. And it's difficult then to do a tour in Dresden or Munich, for two or three hundred dollars each. That's just difficult.

JT: Was that easier to do in the GDR time?

CB: Yes, but in the West with Western funding. That was definitely a different time. But it was also difficult in the West for us. I had somebody in West Berlin, a lady that coordinated or organized that for us, because the State artist agency of the GDR was unable to call promoters in the West. It was a State agency but somebody in the West had to do that. Even then, the pay was still not all that great. I don't know if Peter Brötzmann or other Western musicians previously had the possibility to play for a lot of money, I have no idea. Maybe Jan Garbarek or somebody like that. But with creative music like this, it's never been very easy.

JT: Do you have any favorite recordings from your production?

CB: I haven't really left a lot of documentation. I only know what my favorite recordings are not. Those are often recordings done at concerts where somebody said, "Such a great recording! Can we release that? – Sure. Why not?" But those are not always the best recordings. Just because the concert went well, it's not at all clear that the recording is also exciting. But I stand behind everything I have produced that I wanted to do. They are all solid things.

JT: Do you have any particularly bright moments in your career?

CB: Each concert is a great moment! (laughs) But there were naturally some special things. Things like the concert in 1988 at the memorial of the Battle of

Leipzig. There were a thousand people there. It was my idea to do a concert at that memorial. No one had ever done a serious concert there. Sure, there's always been an amateur choir there and they sing there. I called the Leipzig Radio if they to see if they wanted to record the concert. The Radio staff was quite cooperative. Just a call sufficed. "Great! We'll be there!" Then a van from the studio came. Do you know the building? It's huge! You have to have seen it or have gone up in it. Anyway, they hung up microphones all over it and it was really great. And there were so many people there. That was a really great moment. There was always some kind of really nice event. On the other hand, from the stage it's hard to judge what's better or worse.

JT: Those were actually all my questions.

CB: They're also definitely very good questions. The GDR lasted for 40 years and a lot of things actually happened during that time. When I get a question that relates to the '80s then comes a question that really belongs to the '60s, it's not easy to answer. Here I was able to keep things pretty straight. I began making music fairly late in life. I was 18, self-taught on the guitar, lived in a small town, in Sonneberg, and there was a music teacher there. I tried all the instruments until I came upon this good trombone teacher. I went home and asked my parents, "Can't we get a trombone? There's a real good teacher…" My brother Johannes is 11 years younger and was nine at that time. My folks thought that it made sense and as a result Johannes also became a trombonist.

JT: (Laughs)

CB: ... And this trombone teacher prepared me for the conservatory. He taught me how to read music and music theory, enough so that I would be able to pass the entrance exam. And I came to the conservatory with quite a few hang-ups. There were quite a few students who had started playing the piano at the age of five and could easily play everything that was on the page, while I had trouble reading quickly and so I spent the rest of the '60s thinking I wasn't as good as other musicians. But I wanted to be better and always wanted to play jazz and I have always tried to do something. I've never had to organize gigs for myself. For example in the Modern Soul Band we played for dances. Some guys got together and asked each other if they wouldn't want to play free jazz in a low-pressure setting. I had a few people that I played with and we all said yes. And that's how it all happened. I never managed myself. My entire career in the GDR happened because of interested promoters that asked me to play. I never coordinated anything myself. And I really miss that today of course, because nowadays you have to do it all yourself.

JT: Unless you have someone to do it for you, like Ernie Watts who says, "I just play the saxophone."

CB: No, I do things myself, but that's very difficult because the promoters are naturally bombarded with 150 emails per day and calls from other managers or gifted musicians that really stay on task and don't give up until they've got

something. Let's say we're playing with the Zentralquartett somewhere, and a promoter comes and says: "I would very much like to do a have you do a solo concert for us. Give me a call in two months. Here is my telephone number." Very nice and as polite as you please. Then you call. He's working another job, is currently at work, and asks: "What was it you wanted to play at our place? With whom?" I say, "Wait a second, you gave me your business card and asked me to call you. You wanted me to play a solo concert." Naturally I'm pretty disappointed and ask "What's the point in calling you?" "I understand, but we can't do that now. Call me again when fall comes around." Then I'm pretty depressed about it, so depressed that I can't practice for the rest of the day. I get depressive and think, "why did I even bother to call this guy?" And naturally you think he's just trying to get rid of you. That's really tough. So I really don't want to bother with that stuff. I just would rather work on my music. (Laughs)

JT: Do you give lessons?

CB: No. Now and then a workshop, but only when I'm asked. I've never really done that kind of a thing. That would have been a totally different career. In the mid-'90s, when things started to go south, somebody from the music conservatory in Weimar called and said, "I'm a professor here at the conservatory and I'm retiring. There are all sorts of teachers here from the West. Would you be interested in applying for the job? You're such a great player!" So I applied, got to the interview, began my solo audition, and I'm really getting into it. Then the leader of the interview committee starts leafing through his papers, and says, "I've not heard of you…" It dawns on me that they had already mapped the whole process out and actually knew already which trombonist they were going to pick. (Laughs) The people on the committee were all from the West. Maybe I went into it a bit half-heartedly too. I had to do a teaching demonstration, and you really have to work on that. Other people there had an idea of how to teach. I had prepared something and I executed it but I had never taught previously. There is something of a teacher mafia. These folks weren't so interested in whether a candidate was performing a lot, otherwise they would do that themselves. They want to remain in the conservatory. Baby Sommer has been pretty successful in this area, but he was also a local celebrity in Dresden. He is definitely very important for that conservatory and very good at what he does.

JT: Sure, teaching is its own discipline as well.

CB: Yes, and at the conservatory they've got to prepare very versatile musicians, and acquaint them with all the various ways you can earn money making music. After all, that's what that course of study is for. It is for professionals. And in that case you can't expect that all those people would necessarily be interested in free jazz or in my ideas on free melody-making.

JT: Free melody-making? What exactly do you mean by that?

CB: The first thing is that, when you are improvising freely, you can improvise any melody in any tonality, but you never know where it is going to go. A

lot of people listen for a root and orient themselves on that, like a lot of jazz musicians or fusion musicians. That's not what I'm after. It's supposed to be free! You can land anywhere. There are few people with whom I can play like that. Barre Phillips, the bassist, is one of them. With him it works great. I can land anywhere and then, he plays a note to that that makes the sun come up! There are very few bassists like that. William Parker is not really like that. He always plays his own thing and it's also very beautiful. Everything works with him too. My own free melody-making extends far beyond playing scales and is always changing. I'm always working on something. At present I've got a system of practicing. If I say it here, maybe some folks will imitate it, but who cares? So here it is: when I change a note, I change the entire scale that it corresponds to. In this case, you are not allowed to play certain intervals. You can of course, because everything's allowed in music. But the idea is that you leave major seconds, major thirds and thirds in general out. The third is especially prevalent in jazz, blues, and bebop. And when you play a while without that, it gives your lines a different kind of color. And you can land anywhere and it sounds good. You emphasize more fourths and fifths. You can confirm the tonality with a fourth or a fifth and yet be in a completely different tonality.

JT: Makes me think of McCoy Tyner and his quartal voicings. The harmony becomes more open.

CB: I never really thought of it that way. But that's true: without the third, the harmony becomes much more open. I'm always thinking about music from the point of view of the melodic line. Previously, as a guitarist, I thought more in terms of chords or at least in a polyphonic way. I haven't done that for a long time though. So how that is for somebody who has so much at their disposal, like a pianist, I don't really know. They have a different process of discovery. But the guitar is not really so different from the trombone. The way you play scales is almost the same, with the positions. The lowest position is E on the trombone, and that's the open string on the guitar. It's very similar. Think about the frets of the guitar. Each fret position is a little bit narrower. The same thing is true of the positions on the trombone. The lower positions are longer and then they become shorter the higher you go. Albert Mangelsdorff also started out on the guitar. Anyway, that's the kind of thing I think about with respect to free melody-making.

JT: So you wouldn't want to hear a continuous drone as in Indian music?

CB: No, it's got to remain open. Especially when you play with other people. Sure, you can find a common bass note for a moment, but then it goes somewhere else. I always find in my music that I want to use a lot of material. I loved Coltrane's music in the '60s, the idea of staying on one idea for 15 minutes and longer. I found that wonderful for a while, but in improvised music I find it more exciting to use more material, it also serves the purpose of

taking the public by the hand and leading them through various landscapes. That's not the only way to do it. There are so many possibilities in music and everything is permitted.

JT: I have myself played with people in free situations where you have the feeling that they feel that it always has to sound dissonant, as if you're not allowed to play anything that reminds you of a normal chord or tonality. How do you see that?

CB: There are of course puritanical types in free music. There's a certain kind of a class feeling in that. But take Peter Brötzmann for example: those are all melodies, wonderful melodies! Maybe they aren't always intonated cleanly; they don't have to be. Eric Dolphy, for example: that is genius music. In music you also have to play horrible things in order to show people when the next beautiful thing comes along precisely how beautiful it can be.

JT: I see!

CB: You've got to have contrast in music. Free jazz has certainly gone through further developments, but not always for the better. When I think of my first memories in the '70s with Peter Brötzmann, and not only with him, we played completely against each other, each going his own way, and when everybody is out of breath after 15 minutes or so, then it comes down slowly, and you find something very beautiful that you've never played before. Everybody finds themselves on something they've never done before and this is a very important process. The audience has to go through this as well, this playing against each other you, they've got to accept that as part of the bargain, but they have always understood that that is very important in order to find afterward something completely new and beautiful. Then you go on to another starting point, playing against each other, or however. I miss that nowadays. Nowadays people come to the B-Flat, good musicians. They begin to play, it sounds good, then after 45 minutes you have a break, the audience applauds, and then the second set goes the same way. There is no playing against each other anymore.

JT: They play always with each other.

CB: They play with each other. They have a way of playing where that works: the drummer doesn't go crazy, they play pleasantly. And no moment comes where you hear the music say: "I've got something to say here!" You don't find that anymore. I think that's a shame. Maybe it does exist and I'm just not around it. (Laughs) So that's a development that I don't really like so much.

JT: That is very interesting, this idea that you've got to play against each other first so that you can understand really what it means to play with each other.

CB: You've got to celebrate that! You've got to do that!

JT: And then, when the playing with each other follows upon that, you hear its uniqueness.

CB: Precisely. That is in my opinion also one of the essential points of free jazz.

JT: Perhaps our music-making is altogether too governed by the beautiful. I'm sure that is true in my case. But this is a very important point. Perhaps this

comes also from your experience in the GER, where you have this need to make to play something explosive. What do you think?

CB: No, I don't think so. It was the same in the West. If you played with Alex Schlippenbach, the same kinds of things happened: when you got a bit out of breath, then everybody came back together, and then built something else. And I also find in this playing against each other there's naturally a kind of a cacophony pre-programmed into it. That's true, but it doesn't have to be that way. People can also just by chance play really wild on C minor because they just happen to be there.

JT: I think about the early recordings of Ornette Coleman, where it often sounds as if they're playing in a major key. But it was his way of playing free, it doesn't always have to sound so dissonant. Coleman's recordings often have a very humorous and joyous mood.

CB: There are these recordings of Günter Hampel in the '70s. They often play rather intensely against each other in those. There is often a rather intense antagonism in that music.

TALKING WITH DANNY HEALY

CAD: Let's start right at the beginning, date and place of birth.
DH: 2/4/1980 Born in Melbourne
CAD: Did you come from a musical family, parents, siblings play an instrument?
DH My family wasn't at all musical. A friend of the family took me in musically around the age of 12 and gave me my beginning in the musical world of performing.
CAD: When do you first remember being influenced by music?
DH: I remember watching an episode of Sesame Street when I was a child and they were at a saxophone factory, that resonated with me and when given the opportunity to play saxophone at school I pounced.
CAD: Did you listen to Jazztrack on ABC radio or other radio programs, or start collecting recordings that interested you?
DH: I didn't really get into jazz until I was around 15 when I left home to go to a music school (VCASS). So I guess I didn't start collecting until relatively late.
CAD: First musician you were impressed by? In Australia? Overseas?
DH: Going to a music school I was heavily influenced by some amazing teachers. I guess Charlie Parker was my first real musical love.
CAD: First instrument? How did it come about? Tuition?
DH: I started on alto saxophone. I was able to join the school music program when I was living in a small town in QLD at the age of 12. Lessons and band rehearsals used to be in the tractor shed up the back of the school. Pretty sure I lost some brain cells to diesel fumes. After that I moved to country Victoria and then had the opportunity to Audition for a music school at age 15. I left home and stayed at the same institution for my university years. I was there for almost a decade in total.
CAD: Were you initially drawn to a particular area of jazz, you seem to have a wide appreciation of the genre.
DH: I was drawn to modern jazz for the majority of my career. Coltrane, Brecker, Kenny Garrett all inspired my late teens and early 20's. I then started studying Third Stream Composition learning from a classical composer. In the last decade or so I've started playing a lot more Trad and Gypsy jazz also.
CAD: First gigs – where and when.
DH: I used to gig quite a bit when I was younger (12 and 13), I guess it was the cute factor and a friend of the family organised and played on the gigs. Not jazz really but a great experience.
CAD: It used to be that musicians honed their craft by regular playing six nights a week in some cases in pit bands, dance bands etc. How does the lack of that affect the modern player's ability to think as a group, to be aware of the playing of the person sitting next to them or is this the reason so many

want to become soloists but because of their technique can sound so similar? Is that instant personal recognition of a person's style lost?
DH: That's such an interesting and complicated question. Jazz will never be what it was in its heyday, too much has changed and it's no longer a popular form of music. A combination of lack of popularity, change in economy, technology and the world in general has deeply affected both the mental state and perhaps even the love of the music for musicians. There are so many great players around now but the language has changed for the better or worse. The quest for wanting to be a soloist is possibly more to do with the economy (big bands mean big bucks) and ease of organisation for a lesser financial reward. Regular gigs really improve most musicians and the relative lack of in current society has to influence the music.
CAD: When did music as a full time occupation become apparent to you?
DH: I guess at about age 18 or 19 I was attempting to pay the bills with my craft. There have been many periods in my career that I haven't wanted to call myself a musician due to a relatively low gig income.
CAD: You have taught overseas in several areas, how did these come about?
DH: I've probably done more performing than teaching in my overseas nomadic journeys. Teaching music has only really happened mainly privately due to residing in a country. Pre COVID I was teaching at an International School full time that my wife was also teaching at for 6 months or so but the long hours made my practice routine difficult.
CAD: Students now seem to concentrate on technique and reach a very high level. Do you think there is too much emphasis on this and if so what do you think is missing?
DH: Another tricky question. I don't really teach many high end students at the moment so I'm probably not in a position to comment. I'm finding less of the younger generation focus on knowing jazz standards and I guess for me this is a big thing. Standards are your dictionary, your thesaurus, the bible and the karma sutra all tied into one. The language of jazz (to me) requires the common ground and storytelling ability that only really knowing tunes can give.
CAD: You recently undertook a very rigorous commission to present 100 compositions in 60 days for Tasmania's prestigious Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) Can you explain how this evolved and how you felt about the result?
DH: That contract has been extended and I'm currently (very lucky I know) still doing it. The project is called 'By Hand' and essentially I'm a composer and performer in residence. I go in at 10am, write most of the day and a band comes in and performs those pieces with me at 4pm. The initial contract was 10 weeks and I planned to compose at least 100 pieces, I well exceeded that. I'm currently about 5 months in and just passed 440 tunes. There are obviously limitations to what I can compose for a band that has to sight read the material. That being said I'm a fan of simpler compositions and they're merely vehicles to

transport you somewhere. It'd be nice to have a Ferrari but a Toyota Corolla is better for the grocery shopping and everyday life...

CAD: Do you feel that jazz is promoted as the art form it is, or is it still underrated in most areas?

DH: Jazz lost its popularity and jazz musicians need to help to regain it. I don't think it's widely seen as an artform because it has mostly become for musicians only. In its heyday it was to dance to, to socialise or make love to. In my opinion it needs to steer back towards the general public in order to become widely accepted as an art. Obviously I think of jazz as an art form but I think jazz musicians (most, not all) need to change their approach to help jazz help them.

CAD: With recent world situations, a pandemic resulting in the closure of venues world wide, what is your opinion for the future of emerging musicians?

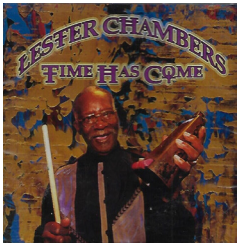
DH: We've been very, very lucky down here in Hobart, Tasmania so again I probably haven't earned the right to comment on this. Jazz has lived through this little social apocalypse but it has claimed many a career. Things are different and will most likely remain so. Those unfortunate enough to be born silly enough to be jazz musicians will become such. Every generation is different and everyone has to learn to roll with and adapt to the times.

CAD: Been nice talking with you Danny, thank you so much.

Alwyn Lewis
Hobart Tasmania
15/9/2022

Interview: **Danny Healy**

Book Look



LESTER CHAMBERS with T. WATTS, TIME HAS COME: Revelations of a Mississippi Hippie, SELF PUBLISHED PAPERBACK.

The Chambers Brothers were never high on my listening list. As a working saxman I preferred horn bands like BS&T, Cold Blood,Chicago, Tower Of Power, etc. or combos that used horns like Sons Of Champlin, Sly & The Family Stone, EW& F, Luther Kent & Trick Bag,etc. back when R&B was heavily infused with Rhythm and tons of Blues and not so slick as nowadays. To my ears the strong point for the Chambers Brothers were their voices with ties to doo-wop and the Black Gospel . This volume came in the mail unsolicited, no request to review and no cover note so I naturally assumed it was fodder for Cadence coverage.

This autobiographical writing of slightly over 200 pages is chock full of black and white photos located in the mid-section as Chambers Family Archives and at the end of the book. After the Preface, Forward & Introduction are 13 Chapters relating the author's life story. Among them the Fourth one is loosely titled On and Off The Road and contains an unnumbered plethora of musician yarns, bandstand tales, performance anecdotes and interviews. There is rumored to be an album by the Brothers with cover artwork by Mati Klarwein (of Bitches Brew fame) but this writer was unable to find it. The writing style herein these memoirs is casual and conversational and at age 82 the subject's memory is marvelously intact. Still active and kicking out the jams today he can be easily found on his website. Although this work may only hold peripheral interest to some Cadence readers to those (like yours truly) who think the sixties were the golden age of music will find it an enjoyable read. Right on!

Larry Hollis

BOBBY BROOM
KEYED UP

STEELE RECORDS 002

HALLUCINATIONS (AKA BUDO) / SECOND THOUGHTS / HUMPTY DUMPTY . SOULFUL BILL / QUICKSILVER / MISTY / DRIFTIN' / BLUES ON THE CORNER (TAKE 2) / SCOOCHIE / BLUES ON THE CORNER (TAKE 1) . 57:03.

Broom, g; Justin Dillard, p, org; Dennis Carrell, b/ Kobie Watkins, d. 8/31&9/3/2021/ Chicago, IL.

We all know a guitar has strings, not keys so why the title? Because as explained in the liner notes, this piano-themed album is a rarity in that the leader so seldom leaves the confines of the bass/drums trio format. Sure, there are those excellent works he made with The Deep Blue Organ Trio but those fall in the Soul Jazz genre while most of his other endeavors were mainstream offerings with Carrell and Watkins. Happily his more commercial titles were short-lived and appear to be out-of-print. After that flirtation he more than made up for it with his fruitful association with the much-missed Sonny Rollins. This most recent release serves to introduce Justin Dillard a most promising new talent on the keys. As related in his liner annotation his initial encounter with him was at an unidentified jam where the favorable impression was duly noted. From a suggestion from bassist Carrell it blossomed into a full-fledged salute encompassing compositions from the likes of not only Bud Powell but scripts by McCoy Tyner, Chick Corea, Erroll Garner, Horace Silver, Mulgrew Miller. James Williams and Herbie Hancock. There's also a tune from Booker Ervin “Scoochie” that featured Horace Parlan. Also titled “Budo” the leadoff number is something of a jazz standard as is Garner's signature and “Quicksilver” from an original Messenger named Horace. Throughout this mostly up-tempo program Broom navigates his Koentopp Chicagoan axe (devoid of electronic gadgets or gimmicks} over a firm rhythmic bed laid down by the section while Dillard comps intelligently and sometimes employs the portable Hammond SKX. In a 1986 Cadence interview with the late, great Barney Kessel we discussed the employment of two chordal instruments and came to the mutual conclusion that it all came down to the ability to listen to one another. Broom and Dillard do just that on this satisfying outing.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

STEVE TINTWEISS SPACELIGHT BAND
LIE AT NYU: 1980

INKY DOT MEDIA 007

The Theme – Man Alone / Spring Raga / Whistle stop Tour – I Lust You / Love's Fortune / Risk-o-Disc / Motion / Abandoned Dance / Knowledge Is Power / Flash! / Ash Dung Blues Bowl / Vermont Tune /

Do Not Look Back / closing remarks and credits. total time: 89:28

Steve Tintweiss – 5-string double bass; Charles Brackeen – ts, ss; Byard Lancaster – as, ss, flt, picc, b clt; Lou Grassi – d, perc; Genie Sherman – vcl, dramatic reading. 11/8/1980, New York City

ROBINSON-WHIECAGE-FILIANO-GRASSI
LIVE @ VISIONFEST 20

NOT TWO 1023-2

One For Roy / Dance Macabre / Glyphs. (40:58)

Perry Robinson – clt, ocarina, wooden flt; Mark Whitecage – as, half-horn, Native American wooden flt; Ken Filiaano – b, electronics; Lou Grassi – d, perc

Bassist Steve Tintweiss is a bit of a shadowy figure in the history of free jazz… at least to this listener. He appeared on a number of ESP recordings from the late 1960s including those of Patti Waters, Burton Greene, Frank Wright and Marzette Watts. His highest profile work however was with one of the founding titans of "free jazz", Albert Ayler. He was the bassist on the saxophonist's last recordings done in France at Fondation Maeght in 1970. After that he vanished from the recording scene. Or so it seemed.

Apparently, he played around New York leading his own bands. But there wasn't much coverage outside New York. He surfaced on a couple of recordings with poet Amy Scheffer in the 1980's but very little else besides that. However, starting in 2019, he began releasing historic recordings from his archives on his label, Inky Dot Media. Live At NYU: 1980, a double disc, finds him leading an impressive group with two great reed/flute players Byard Lancaster and Charles Brackeen (regrettably both now deceased), drummer Lou Grassi and singer Genie Sherman. All compositions are by Tintweiss. The group assembled sounds like a seasoned ensemble, and they all appear to be on the same wavelength.

Singer Williams appears on about half the tracks and she's a solid improvising jazz singer. Whether singing lyrics or purely improvising, she is clearly a member of the ensemble, interacting with the other musicians, not merely an add on. Her discography is slim but around this same time she was working with trombonist Garret List. Apparently, she is still performing as Genie (Sherman) Walker.

Tintweiss picked two of the finest and under recorded reed players of the time: Charles Brackeen and Byard Lancaster. They were a good combination and play well off each other. Oddly, Lancaster delivers a particularly effective piccolo (not a favorite instrument) solo on "Risk-O-Disc". And Backeen's tenor/soprano work is well-featured throughout. The rhythm team of Tintweiss and Lou Grassi also play wonderfully

together. Grassi is an adaptable player, at this time playing in both free jazz and more traditional ensembles (preferring the former). By this point he had developed a technique of being both a color/ texturalist and a drummer who can move an ensemble ahead without overpowering the group's balance. This recording is worth hearing if only for hearing Grassi at this relatively early stage, when he wasn't getting many recording gigs. And it's also worth hearing if only to hear that Tintweiss had his own ideas of bass playing on his five-string acoustic bass as well as composition and group leading. He wasn't merely the last bass player for Ayler.

The link between Tintweiss' disc and the second is, of course, Grassi. He once mentioned that TIntweiss was one of the few players of the avant-garde who would give him gig back in that period. He also played with Borah Bergman in the late 1970s. But perhaps his highest profile gig at this time was with ragtime pianist Max Morath. I guess that's quite a range.

Live @ Vision Fest 20, recorded 35 years after the previous disc, is a good demonstration of how "free jazz" (for want of a better term) players of that early era have stayed true to their ideals and worked to develop their music without compromise. Clarinetist Perry Robinson and reed player Mark Whitecage have roots in the music extending back to the 1960s. Filiano, the youngest member of the band has been recording since the 1980s. This release was produced by Grassi and Filiano as a tribute to the two reed players, who recently passed away. (Robinson, d. 2018, Whitecage, d. 2021)

This was an impromptu ensemble, but all members had played with each other in various formations. So there's an ease and naturalness to the music. Which is not to say it's lacking in energy. That's here in spades. But it also has a confident forward momentum effortlessly slipping into various sections. Robinson and Whitecage play around each other spiraling in counterpoint, commenting on each other with little fillips and phrases. The first track, "One For Roy" (for trumpeter Roy Campbell, who played extensively with all of these musicians and died in 2014) is an epic 23 minutes and is a great demonstration of this group's interaction. Perhaps the most surprising interlude is an extended solo with Filiano augmenting his bass with electronics. The concluding "Glyphs" seems a fitting way to end this tribute. It opens with Robinson playing a lovely interlude on ocarina. Gradually Whitecage enters on a Native American wood flute and the two duet engage in a duet. Filiano (with electronics) and Grassi, (playing subtle shakers and scrapes) enter gradually. Robinson switches to clarinet then Whitecage to alto sax and the quartet takes the piece to a gentle conclusion. It's a masterful eight minutes and is the perfect way to conclude this disc, making it an excellent tribute to two departed masters.

Robert Iannapollo

New Issues

STEVE TINTWEISS SPACELIGHT BAND
LIVE AT NYU: 1980

INKY DOT IDM CD 007

DISK 1: THE THEME/MAN ALONE / SPRING RAGA / WHISTLE STOP/I LUST YOU / LOVE'S FORTUNE / RISK-O-DISC / MARION / ABANDONED DANCE. DISK 2: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER / FLASH! / ASH DUNG BLUES BOWL / VERMONT TUNE / DO NOT LOOK BACK / CLOSING REMARKS AND CREDITS. 1:29:28.

Tintweiss, b, melodica, voice; Charles Brackeen, ss, ts; Byard Lancaster, as, ss, flt, pic, b cl; Genie Sherman, vcl, dramatic reading; Lou Grassi, d, perc. 11/8/1980, New York, NY.

Live at NYU: 1980 is a significant documentation of either infrequently recorded free-jazz musicians or musicians who had moved away from free jazz for a while. For example, Lou Grassi moved on to ragtime and Dixieland opportunities as they arose, particularly with his Dixie Peppers band and with Max Morath. Charles Brackeen didn't record again until the end of the eighties. But the stars aligned in late autumn of 1980 when these singular and authoritative artists assembled to perform Steve Tintweiss's compositions in the Lubin Auditorium of New York University's Loeb Student Center. Tintweiss kept a recording of the concert for more than forty years. Now he has released it for renewed appreciation of his innovative Spacelight Band's powerful singularity. Though known most popularly as the last bassist to perform with Albert Ayler, Tintweiss also was the bassist in Burton Greene's trio that accompanied the inimitable vocalist, Patty Waters, on her classic interpretation of "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair," during the recording of which she beat furiously on the walls of the booth, as Tintweiss recalls. Like Waters and other uncompromising free-jazz vocalists such as Lisa Sokolov or Katie Bull—known for their original deconstructions of standards and unfettered expression of themes capturing their passionate interests—Genie Sherman provides wild on-pitch exclamations, squawks, plainsong-like sustains, cries, rasping, microtonal wavers, scatting, warbles, raga-inspired scalar sound shapes (as on "Spring Raga"), spoken word, and entrancing repetitions of phrases. Sherman's inclusion in the Spacelight Band, along with its explorative saxophonists, is consistent with Tintweiss's previous work. His throbbing vamp setting up the band's imagery, Tintweiss produces the portrayal of a snake-charmer on "Risk-O-Disk." Lancaster takes the lead on flute with overtones and sinuous modal phrasing over Grassi's peregrine-suggestive drum pattern. "Don't Look Back," its word/note motive stated again and again as three quarter notes (with a slight trill on the third), gradually breaks loose into fiery free improvisation when Brackeen's Texas tenor saxophone's deep tone starts the leap from the written notes into the frenzy. Brackeen establishes the mood of "Ash Dung Blues Bowl" as well. His mid- to low-register plaintive blues of sorrow and perseverance wails over Tintweiss's medium-tempo walking bass lines. Again, Tintweiss shapes the initial form of "Knowledge Is Power," its motivic lines rising and descending. Lancaster on

bass clarinet provides the darker shades of the piece's palette with his haunting long tones. Brackeen's soprano sax flutters contrasts in the high end of the register with intermittent energetic warbles. In addition to Tintweiss's restatement of "Knowledge Is Power's" theme in solo between improvised choruses, Grassi magnifies the tension with dynamic drum intensity, so much so that the intensity seems to remain even during his rests. The clarity of the sound on the CD, impressive especially on "Knowledge Is Power" due to the clear sonic separation of the instruments, is a testament to the dedication of engineers Joe Lizzi and Ben Young, who digitized the recordings from analog tapes. "Whistle Stop Tour/I Lust You" establishes a lighter mood of blithe cheerfulness at a medium volume as Sherman hums and sings, with words and without, as if strolling along without worries as the saxophones provide background colors. Tintweiss repeats behind them the motive with resonant force. The entire group—including Sherman with her unpredictable sound shapes and unremitting fervor, not to mention with some repetitive words, too—is in the moment with expressive, sometimes scalar build-ups in minor-key eeriness on "Vermont Tune." She drenches "Flash!" with forlorn oooo's as the saxophones add to the mix the spirituality of the blues. The energetic freedom of "Abandoned Dance" emerges as a unison theme, after which Tintweiss's technical vigor illuminates an extended solo. Both the concert's 45-minute sets are included, one set on each disk, as they occurred before the university's audience during that evening in 1980.

Bill Donaldson

New Issues


steve tintweiss
spacelight band
live at
NYU:1980
BYARD
LANCASTER
CHARLES
BRACKEEN
GENIE
SHERMAN
STEVE
TINTWEISS
LOU GRASSI
2
DISC

New Issues

New Issues

J. A. DEANE & JASON KAO HWANG
UNCHARTED FAITH
TONE SCIENCE MUSIC TSM 00013

PARALLEL UNIVERSE / SINGULARITY / CROSSING THE HORIZON / SHAMANS OF LIGHT / SPEAKING IN TONGUES / UNCHARTED FAITH. 48:39.
Deane, electronics; Hwang, elec. vln. 5/2021 & 7/2021. Cortez, CO & New York, NY.

Always interested in exploring the connections between musical tones and the vibrations inherent in the human condition, J.A. Deane and Jason Kao Hwang collaborated once again in 2021 (having performed in Butch Morris's groups in the 1980's). The exchange of their latest separate projects spurred an interest in a collaborative recording, though Deane was in Colorado and Hwang was in New York. Little did Hwang know at the inception of their project, Uncharted Faith, or throughout its production, that Deane had been diagnosed with stage 4 throat cancer. After the tracks were finished, Deane—employing the Internet's unique ability to connect people but at the same time to disguise from them in-person observations—told Hwang that "I didn't want the weight of this [cancer] to shade your performance, as you were coming from a place of such joy." Packets of audio files had zapped back and forth across the country at the speed of Mbps, if not MBps, during the COVID pandemic: Hwang's violin improvisations to Deane, Deane's processed sonic compositions back to Hwang, Hwang's overdubs back to Deane, Deane's unnamed finished pieces back to Hwang. Then Hwang named them. The results are transcendent, with atmospheric sonic washes, lush tones, and cinematic-like changes of fanciful frames of mind within individual tracks, as if the changes were parts of suites. Hwang's interest in the sonic possibilities suggested by movies' scenes (a study which he teaches now as a Sound Image course at New York University's Undergraduate Department of Film and Television), combined with Hwang's pioneering work with live electronics and live sampling, mesh throughout Uncharted Faith to suggest haunting imaginative images. Those images commence in "Parallel Universe" with Deane's undulating sonic waves, whose forces ominously, dramatically grow and diminish, as Hwang remains, until the quieting ending, in his instrument's upper register with voicing delays. The parallels consist of contrasts of pitch and timbre throughout the piece. The suggestions of voicing charged emotions continue on "Singularity." Hwang's bowed conversation simulates the human voice in its pacing of phrases, pauses, emphases of notes/words, cries, and whines, while Deane establishes the electronic environment for the dialogue. The upswells and buoyancy of "Crossing the Horizon" increase from the initial carefree jauntiness to groaning tension of growing sonic density, entangled increases of volume, and furious speed to the final plucked diminution. Each track of Uncharted Faith differs in emotional bearing, musical complexity, and technical design. "Shamans of Light" sets up uninhibited, seamless improvisational energy with no tonal center that, like the album's other pieces, surges in urgent vibrancy, as if the entire composition

were a single four-minute wondrous crescendo. "Speaking in Tongues"—enhanced by Deane's descending-missile-like whistles, resounding splashes, and the repetitive binging like a timer's—includes brief reminders, amid the oscillating electronics, of Hwang's classical and Asian music backgrounds when the processor simulates traditional stringed instruments. "Uncharted Faith," after its beginning consisting of a pizzicato microtonal matrix of plucking and popping, washes into blasting reverberations like a storm's crashes. As Deane moves into a single organ-like suspended tone in one movement of "Uncharted Faith," along with additional clatter and shuffling and gonging that doesn't decay with time, Hwang performs a solemn violin soliloquy of trembling lines, slurred descents, shimmying uplifts, and ceremonial harmonics. This title track, the longest on the album, features a series of moods until the energy weakens, percussive accents stopped, into a slightly wavering tone of diminishing volume. J. A. Deane passed away on July 23, 2021. He never heard the final album of Uncharted Faith.

Bill Donaldson

ACCORDO DEI CONTRARI
DUDUKA DA FONSECA QUARTETO UNIVERSAL
!!!YES!!!

SUNNYSIDE 1671

SAMBA NOVO / TRANSITION / LILIA / MONTREUX / BEBE / EXODO / VIVER DE AMOR / A CORRENTEZ / WEST 83RD STREET / DONA MARIA. 54:49/

Da Fonseca,d; Helio Alves, p; Vinicius Gomes, g; Gili Lopes, b.4/25 & 26/2022. NYC.

At first glance one might tend to typecast this work as solely one of Latin American musics but that would be miles from the truth. Actually it is as much as a contemporary jazz album as anything else. While all four members are of Brazilian heritage they are equally grounded in our native art form. Keyboardist Alves has collaborated with the leader previously and is well-seasoned with over a half dozen releases under his name not to mention numerous side-gigs with well known names. He's extremely satisfying in both comping and solo roles. His rapport with Lopes, whose steady hands reminded this listener of Bob Cranshaw, is stronger than dirt as it is with Gomes guitar which echos the blue tinged tradition of previous celebrated pickers. There are no big surprises in the tune selection a thoughtful mix of the expected salsa inflections (Bonfa & Jobim/Dom Salvador/Nascimento,etc.) and a contribution from each of the players. Functioning as a unit since 2021 this intriguing blend of Brazilian and American jazz that forebodes a fascinating future.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

ALEXANDER MCCABE
BODY AND SOUL
SELF RELEASE

ELENA/ IF I SEE HER/ CHRISTI'S DAY/ BODY AND SOUL/ ANGELA/ COUNTDOWN
McCabe, as, sop; Paul Odeh, p; Ugonna Okegwo, bass; Craig Wuepper, d.
8/21 Yorktown Heights, NY.

NY saxophonist Alexander McCabe presents his latest CD "Body And Soul" with a superb quartet. The recording features four original compositions and the standards "Body And Soul" and Coltrane's "Countdown".

We get started with Alex's original "Elena", a sweet and appealing 6/8 romp with Alex on Soprano. The sound quality is outstanding and the melody is lyrical with a joyous undercurrent. Alex solos first with grace and ease, rising above the changes with streams of unconscious clarity. Pianist Paul Odeh delivers a strong and inventive solo with lots of rhythmic energy that's picked up and enhanced by the group. Bassist Ugonna Olegwo follows with a fine solo that's elevated to excellence with drummer Craig Wuepper's support. "If I See Her" is a ballad with hints of swing and a lush melody that's spaced out just right and strengthened by the group's rhythmic prowess. Again this tune brings superb solos all around. "Christi's Day" kicks up the tempo and swings hard! Alex's facility becomes even more evident with a fierce solo that puts him right inside the group's driving swing feel. "Body And Soul" lays down a relaxed two feel for a backdrop with lots of space and rhythmic divergence allowing Alex to surf freely above it all. More excellent writing with "Angela" as a sweet ostinato figure invites us to partake in what's to come. A delicious melody ensues only to be rounded out by Alex's horn soaring over the tunes sweet and lovely form. Coltranes "Countdown" finishes the set. I personally find "Countdown" more challenging then Coltranes "Giant Steps" and the tempo Alex chooses is simply breathtaking, I'd put it at about 320 beats per minute. Here we clearly witness what Alex is capable of as he flys through these daunting changes as if there are no changes at all.

So let me say that everyone on "Body And Soul" gives an incredible performance and the writing throughout is first rate. One thing for certain is next time I'm in NY I'll be looking to see where Alexander McCabe is playing.

Frank Kohl

Tomas Svoboda, composer, pianist, died on November 17, 2022. He was 82.

From Gordon Lee, pianist, composer, and former student of Tomas Svoboda

So, I'm in the classroom at Portland State, and there's a few minutes left before the class begins. I had a piano transcription of Wagner's prelude to Tristan und Isolde, which I think is one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written, even though I detest Wagner as a human being. He was a racist, and I really cannot stand racism in any way. So it's a dilemma, but let's face it, there are many, many musicians who weren't great people, but were great artists. They were brilliant at communicating in their medium. Anyway, so I'm there playing on the piano, and it was actually part of, I think, a theory assignment from another class to analyze this piece: how the appoggiaturas and, you know, échappées, escape tones, and all this stuff, how it all works. So I was working on it, I was playing through the piece, and Svoboda heard me. So I said, "What is this? What is he doing here with this chord?" you know, "What do you call this?" He said, here, let me play it. So he sat down and he started playing. And he didn't even play through the whole thing, but many measures, I don't know, 30 or 40 measures of the piece. And at one point he sort of gets to a point and just stops. And I could feel that both he and I, coming from very different places — he's Czech, I'm American, he's 15 or 20 years older than me, so we have different perspectives — but we're both very moved by the music. At the same time, both he and I are very well aware who Wagner was, and he just sort of stops, looks down and sighs, and then looks at me sideways, and says, "You know, Wagner was a very egotistical man."

From David Haney, pianist, composer, and former student of Tomas Svoboda

I studied composition privately with Tomas on a weekly basis. for over five years, often over a plate of rice wine drenched, ginger, garlic, mushroom, jalepeno pepper, skewered together on a toothpick. The lessons were always in the family living room sometimes with his wife Jana in the kitchen, and children Martin and Lenka somewhere in the house.

Tom allowed me to study with him, but more so, he let me watch him compose, and explored music together with me. His mind was open. He was kind and instructed through analogies. Admonish the Wise with Parables (Chief Seattle). That was Tom. Using examples from the past, and critiquing your work through examples, he could show you how to animate your musical ideas: how to bring music to life.

I remember one time I asked Tom to help me with some rudiments of conducting as it had become part of my new job description at a church in the area. We went out back to the garden to be able to spread our arms. Afterwards, we were talking about the challenges of getting an orchestral work premiered. He pointed out that orchestras often have real money challenges and filling seats often requires a little less creative booking and little more predictable programs. New music premieres have been taken up by orchestras that specialize in new music. Either way, it is pretty tough to get your work performed sometimes and consequently it's hard to gauge your success by these external factors. Therefore, you should compose music to enhance the quality of your life.

Remebering Tomas Svoboda

Remebering Keiko Jones

Have just learned of the passing of Keiko Jones…legendary wife of the great Elvin Jones. It is something hard for one to believe and so I won't. As with her husband Elvin, the great energy is now dispersed more widely upon the earth and beyond. A scourge of a spirit racing around the planet, reinvigorated by the sun and laughing at the moon…telling all and sundry that if you have walked two miles, walk five…if you are wearying and want to rest, to get up and run…that if you are feeling even remotely lazy, to find that task that is impossible and finish it up in a minutes time. Granite honesty. Inexorable projection of absolute truth. Despite the rigorous journey and struggle she found time to hold Elvin's hand. Without her by his side our musical world would be quite different. With his work with John Coltrane and others, his legacy was there, but she helped to cement it for all time, no fading out in the garden. Those who would have been left only to imagine the power and shower of sparks he inspired were able to see him for decades to come all over the globe; with Keiko watching intently from the wings all the while. I only knew them for the last decade of Elvin's life. Was allowed to travel with them and be a part of their mission for a while. On my hardest days I can close my eyes and feel and remember the ferocity of that mission: The spreading of love and truth. They, unlike so many others, gave me a chance and called me one of their 'sons'. I will be forever grateful and know that whether through music or simple common everyday kindness, we keep their mission alive. R.I.P Keiko Jones.

Remebering Keiko Jones

Elvin and Keiko Jones; Jazz Alley circa 1999

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