TRADITIONAL JAZZ SERIES

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OUR ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTEENTH PROGRAM

BENNY WATERS
WITH
HOWARD ALDEN
AND THE
TOM GALLANT TRIO

SPONSORED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
AND THE NEW HAMPSHIRE LIBRARY OF TRADITIONAL JAZZ

8 PM MONDAY
OCTOBER 21, 1996
STRAFFORD ROOM
MEMORIAL UNION BUILDING
DURHAM, NH
BENNY WATERS

To all too many of the young history equates with obsolescence; prior to the immediate, time frames rapidly blur, and the connection of an actual living person with a seemingly remote past appears beyond rationality — after all, one’s grandparents don’t go back much further than WW II. To any in this state of mind, as well as to experienced jazz listeners who yet might not believe that there could still be someone in our midst who recorded with King Oliver, tonight’s featured guest will provide shock treatment. His life is worth a look.

Benny Waters was born in Brighton, Maryland on January 23, 1902 and thus missed the 19th century by only thirteen months; Theodore Roosevelt was beginning his second year in the presidency, and Louis Armstrong was still an infant. While growing up in the Philadelphia area his first musical interest was the piano (still not a bad idea!), but he soon switched to clarinet and sax, and was playing gigs in his mid teens. Around age eighteen he was drawn to Boston for conservatory-based study in the theoretical side of music (still not a bad idea!), and began playing and teaching in the area, where his contacts included two future distinguished Ellingtonians; he performed with the very young Johnny Hodges — and actually gave clarinet lessons to an even younger Harry Carney!

In 1926 Benny was called to join Charlie Johnson’s band, the house orchestra at Small’s Paradise, one of the more important nightclubs in Harlem. (This band, not well known in later decades, nonetheless included such luminaries as Benny Carter, Jabbo Smith, Sidney De Paris, Dicky Wells, and Edgar Sampson — not bad company!) Later, Benny played (and sometimes arranged) for King Oliver, Clarence Williams, Fletcher Henderson, Claude Hopkins, Hot Lips Page, and Jimmie Lunceford; he also recorded with most of these leaders, the authoritative Brian Rust discography listing approximately eighty 78-rpm sides through 1942! (Good news — he now records under his own name!)

As the big band era ended Benny worked with various small groups, including Roy Milton’s rhythm-and-blues band, and Jimmy Archey’s dixieland group with which he went to Europe in 1952 — and where he subsequently stayed for forty years! This time span included touring with Bill Coleman, a fifteen-year gig at La Cigale in Paris (his new home), and two decades of individual bookings world-wide.

Since relocating in New York he has retained an international schedule — in fact on a return visit to Paris he was given a medal by the French Ministry of Culture. The New Yorker covered his 94th birthday party, and both the New York Times and New Orleans Times-Picayune raved about his recent performances in those communities with Doc Cheatham — “...projected youthful exuberance and the assurance that comes with longtime mastery....simply a powerhouse....hard-swinging, melodically inventive, technically proficient....exudes great joy as he plays.”
Howard Alden, a transplanted Californian living (and blooming) in New York, has become a prominent member of our extended family; his musical values exemplify the philosophy that initially gave rise to this series, and his stylistic comprehension should be a model for those aspiring to professionalism in the field. (And he loves to play with Benny!)

Tom Gallant hosted Benny at Portsmouth's Press Room during two of his occasional stateside visits a decade or so ago. As a unit, Tom, Jim and Les, Jr. (and before him, Les, Sr.!) have long been the focal point for jazz activity in the seacoast area, supporting guest artists, encouraging the young, and just being themselves.

Finally, let it be said that although he is probably the world’s oldest active jazz musician, the real reason for listening to Benny Waters is because he communicates something which transcends periodization, shaped not only by unique historical experience but also by ongoing involvement with the contemporary world. Take note of his own words; “I practice for at least an hour a day and I keep learning. I listen to all the new guys on the radio.” Thanks, Benny.

Tape recorders and cameras are not permitted due to contractual arrangements.
Your cooperation is requested.
THE SERIES

The UNH Traditional Jazz Series began in 1979. It promotes the enjoyment and understanding of the art through concerts featuring musicians of regional, national, and international prominence. The program represents a unique endeavor to expand interest and honor outstanding talent and achievement.

Musicians wishing to do so are encouraged to offer their recordings for sale or mail order during intermission; a brief announcement may be made. The sponsors have no financial interest in such sales beyond offering a courtesy service to the artists and the public.

Program Notes – Paul Verrette
Production – David Seiler

THE SCHEDULE

September 16  Frank Wess Octet with Carol Sloane
              (Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center)

October 21   Benny Waters with Howard Alden and the Tom Gallant Trio

December 2   Billy Novick’s Shades of Swing
             (note change) (Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center)

February 10  Classic Jazz Epochs: Jelly Roll and W.C.
             Jim Fryer and Jeff Barnhart

March 10     Tommy Flanagan Trio
             (Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center)

April 14     Bucky Pizzarelli Trio

May 5        Clarinet Family Summit
             John LaPorta and Dick Johnson

(Concerts in Strafford Room of the Memorial Union Building exception noted)