UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OUR ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTEENTH PROGRAM

THE TOMMY FLANAGAN TRIO
A PROGRAM DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF ELLA FITZGERALD (1918-1996)

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

8 PM MONDAY DECEMBER 2, 1996 JOHNSON THEATRE PAUL CREATIVE ARTS CENTER DURHAM, NH
THE ARTISTS

THE TOMMY FLANAGAN TRIO

Back in the early 1970s here at UNH, before this series, before Clark Terry, before the Jazz Festival, thus before any consistent jazz programming on campus, there were occasional major events in such acoustically and anatomically challenging venues as the Field House or Snively Arena; one remembers Sarah Vaughan, Duke Ellington, Preservation Hall, Dizzy Gillespie, --and Ella Fitzgerald. Before most of our current undergraduates were born, Ella was able to transform cavernous Lundholm Gymnasium into a haven of intimacy, and she was aided and abetted in that cosmic endeavor by her attending pianist, one Tommy Lee Flanagan. We shudder to reflect on the instrument provided, that era’s peripatetic piano being of marginal acceptability, but tonight, nearly a quarter of a century later, it’s payback time, and our concert Steinway (also among the unborn at that time) is ready and waiting.

Tommy was born in Detroit in 1930, becoming a slightly younger participant in a blossoming jazz culture dominated by the unique Jones family (pianist Hank, trumpeter Thad, and drummer Elvin), and vibraphonist Milt Jackson (who by unusual near-coincidence will be on campus with Clark Terry this coming Sunday!). Moreover, Tommy was developing his musical convictions and identity during a period of dramatic ferment in jazz. Although when viewed from our present temporal perspective, the traditional backgrounds of many of its early practitioners as well as a certain amount of subsequent stylistic assimilation may make the coming of bebop appear more evolutionary than revolutionary, to those living through it the atmosphere in the late 1940’s suggested quite the opposite. For example, the complexly linear and angular “horn-based” keyboard approach of Bud Powell seemed on the surface at least to be the antitheses of the richly decorative and virtuosic “stride-based” pianism of Art Tatum. And as in all too many human circumstances, performers and listeners alike were confronted with an “either/or” rather than a “both/and”. However, Tommy acknowledges the influence of both Art and Bud, as well as Teddy Wilson, Nat “King” Cole, and Hank Jones, a diverse panorama of imaginative and sensitive pianism melodically harmonically, and texturally, proof that old values need not be sacrificed as new ones emerge.

Tommy hit New York in 1956 and was soon playing with artists ranging from Coleman Hawkins, “Sweets” Edison, and Tyree Glenn to Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane; he is on the latter’s epic recording of Giant Steps. Following a stint as Tony Bennett’s music director he was Ella’s consistent collaborator (a more accurate designation than “accompanist”) from 1968 to ’78. Since then he has worked principally in the trio format, always with the classiest of (often younger) colleagues such as Peter and Lewis; he has received several Grammy nominations for both groups and solo performance, and has won Down Beat and Jazz Times polls. And we should note once again on this page his duo-piano appearance with fellow Detroiter Barry Harris in tribute to their friend Thelonious Monk in the documentary film Straight No Chaser; (Barry played here in October 1995.)
Surprisingly, even though Tommy made his first trio recording four decades ago (!), there are not as many continuing piano - bass - drums combinations around as one might think; for example, only two have appeared in the previous 116 concerts of this series - Butch Thompson’s, and (near-coincidence #2), Hank Jones’s (see above!). Whatever the cause, we do know that critics and the rest of humankind alike are drawn to the magic of Tommy’s touch, generating such a rare blend of rhythmic energy and lyric beauty; Gary Giddens in the Village Voice describes the group as “the standard by which piano trios are measured.”

But in the spirit of the evening we must give Ella the final simple words; “Tommy Flanagan is a genius!”.

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

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

Benny Waters with Howard Alden and the Tom Gallant Trio

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

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

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

Bucky Pizzarelli Trio

Clarinet Family Summit
John LaPorta and Dick Johnson

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