

T R A D I T I O N A L  
*Jazz*  
S E R I E S

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

OUR ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY SEVENTH PROGRAM

**"FIDDLER" AND HIS FRIENDS**

*Claude Williams - Violin*

*Bill Easley - Reeds*

*Gray Sargent - Guitar*

*Marshall Wood - Bass*

*Les Harris, Sr. - Drums*

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

8 PM MONDAY  
MONDAY, MAY 4, 1998  
JOHNSON THEATRE  
PAUL CREATIVE ARTS CENTER  
DURHAM, NH



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## THE ARTISTS

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### CLAUDE "FIDDLER" WILLIAMS AND FRIENDS

The violin has had a curious history in jazz, in retrospect some of it is a bit puzzling. It is easy to understand how the instrument's classical and symphonic identity could impair its jazz image, but rumors of its incompatibility with swing or the appropriate articulation are simply spurious, and even casual exposure to our culture's vernacular traditions from country to Cajun reveals its capacity to deal with the nitty-gritty. Yet despite the fact that the photos of the earliest New Orleans bands often show violins (as do some recordings), and Stuff Smith started using amplification in the 30's, prominent violinists were a rarity between the generation born in the decades before World War I, and the one first seeing the light of day during WW II (a grim unit of measure perhaps, but certainly a compelling dramatization of the time span!). The earlier group was made up of some remarkable personalities - Smith (b. 1909), Joe Venuti (b. 1903), Eddie South (b. 1904), the just recently deceased Stephane Grappelli (b. 1908), the sometime Ellingtonian player Ray Nance (b. 1913), - - and Claude Williams (b. Feb. 22, 1908).

The later exponents of the violin tended to venture into avant-garde and experimental directions (Jean-Luc Ponty, Michael Urbaniak, for example), but more recently we have witnessed a rebirth of interest in the mainstream tradition through the educational efforts of such artists as Lesa Terry and the Uptown String Quartet. Tonight we encounter the inspirational source for much of that activity, a gentleman who remained true to his muse and his instrument as the decades of neglect rolled by, and who will reveal to us what we have been missing.

Born in Oklahoma, "Fiddler" originally played guitar, banjo, and mandolin, but took up the violin after hearing Joe Venuti. He moved to Kansas City in 1927, soon jamming with such notables as Lester Young and Ben Webster, touring with Andy Kirk and Alphonso Trent, and even dropping a few corrected chord changes on youthful Charlie Parker. He preceded Freddie Green as guitarist with Count Basie in the mid-30's, actually winning the *Down Beat* poll. He then decided to stay with the violin and for 30 years was busy working out of Kansas City, if not widely recognized nationally. This began to change in 1972 when he recorded with Jay McShann; in the 80's he played in the Broadway review *Black and Blue*, and since then has toured Europe and Japan, recorded with young Kansas City musicians and the venerable *Statesman of Jazz*, and on March 9, two weeks after his 90th birthday, performed at the White House (watch for it on PBS!).



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## "FIDDLER" WILLIAMS AND FRIENDS

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Educated at Juilliard and Memphis State, Bill Easley worked extensively with George Benson, Isaac Hayes, and Mercer Ellington. Later he played on Broadway for *Sophisticated Ladies*, *Black and Blue*, and *Jelly's Last Jam*. More recently he has been active in the jazz repertoire movement - the Smithsonian, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestras, and the Newport All-Stars.

Gray Sargent and Marshall Wood have been part of our extended family since almost the beginning of this series (despite their youthful appearance); we are fortunate that Gray has a break from his regular gig with Tony Bennett! Likewise Les Harris, Sr., has been a familiar figure on this campus, and while we are a bit younger than "Fiddler", the writer of these notes acknowledges first meeting him nearly 50 years ago when Salisbury Beach had almost as many jazz venues as 52nd Street.

We respectively dedicate this concert to the memory of pianist Red Richards who was to have been with us tonight. He played with Doc Cheatham on the fifth concert in this series in 1980, and passed away on March 12 at the age of 85, being stricken, like Doc, in the call of musical duty.

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

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## THE SERIES

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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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## THE SCHEDULE

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September 15	Clark Terry Quintet with Carol Sloane (Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center)
October 6	M-N-M Trio with Jimmy Mazzy, banjo; Eli Newberger, tuba; Joe Muranyi, clarinet
November 10	Paul Broadnax and Friends
December 1	Artie Shaw Orchestra, directed by Dick Johnson (Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center)
February 2	Duo, Brad Terry, clarinet and Joachim Mencil, piano (Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center)
March 9	Galvanized Jazz Band and Spiegle Willcox, trombone
April 6	James Williams, solo piano (Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center)
May 4	Claude Williams, violin; Norris Turney, saxophone; and Red Richards, piano (Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center)

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