University of New Hampshire

Traditional Jazz Series

Celebrating our Twentieth Season!

Our One Hundred and Twenty Eighth Program
1998-1999

THE NEW BLACK EAGLE JAZZ BAND

Sponsored by the Department of Music and the New Hampshire Library of Traditional Jazz

8 p.m. Monday, September 14, 1998 Johnson Theatre
Paul Creative Arts Center Durham, NH
“Often, in minor rhetorical flights of fancy, we describe jazz as being celebratory in and of itself, and the ontological validity of that claim takes on an additional diversion when there is in fact something to celebrate.” These words began this page when the New Black Eagle Jazz Band last graced our stage a few years ago during its celebration of its 25th season. Both the quote and the presence of the band are appropriate to the circumstances under which we begin this year.

A 20th season is also a notable landmark, and our schedule for this year (and next as well) will largely reflect some retrospection, necessarily selective, in reference to the distinguished roster which we have been so fortunate to present over these two decades. Coincidentally, at this very moment the extensive New Hampshire Library of Traditional Jazz archive of recordings, books, and related materials — over 20,000 items — is being permanently established in the Special Collections Division of the newly expanded and renovated Dimond Library, just across the brook from the Paul Creative Arts Center. We will have more to reveal about this development when installation and access are complete; suffice it to say that it represents the fulfillment of the late Dorothy Prescott’s dream when she initiated this entire venture in 1979.

The New Black Eagle Jazz Band closed our very first series of four concerts in March of 1980, and has appeared several times since. Now late in its third decade, with a continuity of personnel rivaled only by Duke Ellington, it provides an exciting experience unattainable even when the historic style it preserves was brand new. The reason is provocative; in its early days, jazz was considered to be part of what we refer to nowadays (somewhat clinically) as “the popular culture,” and as such was a victim of the rapid stylistic changes characteristic of that realm, as well as of “the myth of progress” which automatically assumed that something new was something better. Thus there was never an opportunity for any of the early groups to match the seasoned longevity of the Eagles.

The primacy of collective improvisation as a creative entity yielded to various configurations of “arranged” music, virtuosic soloists, idiomatic fusions, etc. But there were those who perceived that the viability of the pristine medium was not exhausted. While some took a nostalgic approach, the Eagles went at it with imagination, patience, and a constancy of effort to achieve the most effective mix of ensemble and solo interaction, while always keeping the spirit glowing.
This leads one (at least this one!) to speculate on the future, however fancifully. Despite its vernacular past, jazz is not part of the popular culture of today’s youth; thus, the elect are drawn to it in the way they might be drawn to other “non-popular” art of quality. To the degree that formal education is a factor, most “institutionalized” jazz comes out of a “mainstream” tradition, post-bop as well as part-New Orleans, because of the appeal of its technical level and harmonic sophistication to teachers and students alike. Yet, as the years go by, Bix (b. 1903) and Bird (b. 1920) together may seem as remote as Bach (b. 1685) and Bartok (b. 1881), and experience has shown that the passage of time dissolves short-term nearsightedness and reveals the aesthetic integrity which speaks to the ages, no matter how dissimilar the generational dialects may be. So who is to say that the perceptive youth of the next millennium will not find the vintage New Orleans approach as worthy of mastery as do the devoted members of the New Black Eagle Jazz Band?

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

1998-1999 SCHEDULE

September 14: New Black Eagle Jazz Band

October 19: Donna Byrne & Company

November 9: Trombonist Al Grey, Jane Jarvis, piano, & Clark Terry, trumpet

January 25: Clarinetist Bob Wilber

March 1: The New York Perspective: Dick Oatts, reeds, Mike Abene, piano

April 5: Dick Hyman, piano

May 3: The Original Salty Dogs

OTHER SPECIAL JAZZ PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

October 14: Rebecca Parris, John Bunch and Bucky Pizzarelli with the Seacoast Big Band.

Harry Jones Memorial Education Fund Concert, Portsmouth Music Hall (603) 436-6017

January 19: James Williams and the Intensive Care Unit, Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH

March 21: Gala Jazz Concert: Dr. Clark Terry and guests with the UNH Jazz Band.

Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH