University of New Hampshire

Traditional Jazz Series

Celebrating our Twentieth Season!

Our One Hundred and Thirty First Program
1998-1999

Bob Wilber

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

8:00 p.m. Monday, January 25, 1999
Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH
The operations of the artistic imagination and the resultant aesthetic response remain matters of mystery, as well they should. The myth of progress is seductive, and there is a big distance between Mozart and Schoenberg, yet we keep performing and listening to the former even though we don’t compose in his style anymore— is that a paradox? And many serious composers who achieved command of 20th century complexities later found their authentic voices in a refreshed return to tonality, often amid the dismay of their colleagues.

Bob Wilber’s jazz odyssey reflects this reality in a most fascinatingly personal, provocative, even inspiring way. Born in New York in 1928, as a teenager he became drawn to the music of the great New Orleans clarinetist and soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet. Soon he became Bechet’s pupil and housemate, a rare opportunity for a young man growing up in the bebop era which was drawing jazz into a different stylistic dialect. Bob investigated the new as well as the old, even becoming associated with Lee Konitz and Serge Chaloff, and studying for a time with the formidable Lennie Tristano. But unlike so many of his generation Bob saw the viability and renewability of the pre-bop language and charted an independent and often difficult course, separating himself from the superficial revivalists and the avant garde as well. He developed a historical perspective where the integrity of tradition is infused and informed with a contemporary freshness and originality.

How’s this for a partial list of accomplishments?

- Authentic recreation of the music of African American artists King Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton years before Wynton Marsalis discovered his past
- Legendary performances with Soprano Summit and the World’s Greatest Jazz Band
- The Grammy Award-winning soundtrack for the movie Cotton Club, recreating the sounds of Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway.
- Recreation of the famous 1938 Benny Goodman Carnegie Hall Concert on its 50th anniversary
- Performance of all the major classical clarinet literature (including the Mozart and Artie Shaw concerti on the same program!)
- A frank and insightful autobiography (Music Was Not Enough; Oxford University Press, 1988)
In November of 1997 the writer of these program notes was seated in a packed Boston Symphony Hall listening to The Wizard at 100, the music of Sidney Bechet performed by Wynton Morsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Ensemble. At the start of the program Wynton introduced the group, plus two guests, Dr. Michael White and Bob Wilber. He then sat down and let the latter do the talking. It is hard to conceive of a more fitting justification of Bob’s lifelong efforts.

Mark Shane is a long time associate of Bob’s; the first sounds you hear on the Cotton Club video are his. A Berklee graduate, he likewise has gone in an independent direction, as his vigorous stride style reveals. In his Boston days he had occasion to perform with a bass player from Maine named Jim Howe; tonight yields reunion.

Jim Howe and Les Harris, Sr., were members of the Tom Gallant Trio for many years, and their presence this evening serves to dramatize the strength and continuity of our local tradition.

It is a pleasure to welcome all four of these artists back to our campus, especially just after a visit from the venerable Milt Hinton, with whom Bob played on his first appearance here, and who embodies the very best of what traditional jazz is all about.
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 (postponed until fall)

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