Our One Hundred Forty-third Program
2000-2001

Bob Wilber
presents the music of
Fletcher Henderson

with members of the
Seacoast Big Band
prepared by
Dave Seiler

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

8 p.m. Monday, October 30, 2000, Johnson Theatre
Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH
THE ARTISTS

Bob Wilber (and Fletcher Henderson)
The writer of these notes recalls a touching event in the spring of 1986 when a public television tribute to Benny Goodman was introduced by BG himself (in what was probably his last TV appearance) dedicating the program to the late Fletcher Henderson in appreciation of his fundamental contribution to the successful style of the Goodman band. A still photo was flashed on the screen, and the writer wondered (and still wonders) how many viewers otherwise would have identified him, in the manner that images of Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Goodman, and so many others have become cultural symbols. After all, the young among us who only have encountered big band music in venues such as our immediate one cannot be expected to comprehend that this kind of music, at its best so worthy of listener concentration, was in fact the universally popular dance idiom for at least a generation, (now revived with vigor if not accuracy in the “swing dancing” craze!). Those of us tempted by literary allusions can easily consider Fletcher Henderson to be an Invisible Man.

He was born in Cuthbert, Georgia, in 1897, was exposed to classical music by his mother, who also taught him the piano, and majored in chemistry and mathematics at Atlanta University—certainly an uncommon accomplishment at that time even for middle class African Americans. He came to New York in 1920 and could only find work as a song-plugger with a black publishing firm; when one of the owners moved into the recording industry, Fletcher became the accompanist for a number of singers, most notably Ethel Waters (see below). Though not originally jazz-oriented, his absorption of all that New York provided and his association with so many excellent musicians led him to form his own dance band, which with the creative help of Don Redman (and later Benny Carter) grew into a highly sophisticated and influential aggregation, active well into the 1930s. In somewhat oversimplified terms their contribution can be described as codifying the ongoing replacement of the individual melodic instruments of New Orleans jazz with full sections of brass and reeds, thus resulting in a new relationship of ensemble and solo, and even more significantly, requiring the development of an approach to the notation of those elusive elements which help generate the phenomenon of swing.

Although marvelous performers passed through his band—including Louis Armstrong, and a tenor saxophonist Murderer’s Row of Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Ben Webster, and Chu Berry—and he had a solid base at the Roseland Ballroom (playing for white audiences), this near-accidental professional musician did not possess the persona to succeed as a leader, and in 1934 he sold some charts to Benny Goodman. He later became a full-time arranger for BG, and as such was really one of the most listened to and influential artists of his time, however lacking in public recognition.

Beyond his stellar attributes as a performer, Bob Wilber has a passion both instinctive and experiential for acknowledging those aspects of our heritage which will ultimately endure; for example, he was exploring the music of King Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton long before it was fashionable to do so, he re-created the famous 1938 Benny Goodman Carnegie Hall Concert on its 50th anniversary, and he celebrated the 100th birthday of his mentor Sidney Bechet by a major presentation with Wynton Marsalis. Although nominally retired, he has become a member of our UNH extended family, and we thankfully rejoice in his eagerness to suggest such things as tonight’s event, and to provide the arrangements from his personal library.

We are likewise indebted to this superb orchestra, its members illustrating the musical vitality of our own region, and to the indefatigable Dave Seiler for organizing and rehearsing same.

And tomorrow is Ethel Water’s 100th birthday!
The Music of Fletcher Henderson

presented by

Bob Wilber
Clarinet

and

Members of the Seacoast Big Band
prepared by Dave Seiler

Saxes
Rick Gordon
Gina Cusanelli
Marc LaForce
Sean Berry
Jim Ferrini

Trombones
Jeff Galindo
Steve Thayer
Peter Steucek

Trumpets
Jeff Hoyt
Craig Skeffington
Denny Perriccio
Gerry Taube

Rhythm
Jim Butka
John Hunter
Ken Clark
John Catino

Tape recorders and cameras are not permitted due to contractual arrangements. Please turn off beepers and watch alarms. 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

2000-2001 SCHEDULE

September 11: Chicago’s Best: Bobby Lewis
October 2: The Frank Wess Quartet
October 30: Bob Wilber Presents Fletcher Henderson
January 22: Don Doane’s Super Senior Sextet
February 12: Bill Mays at the Steinway
April 9: Ray Smith’s Paramount Jazz Band

OTHER SPECIAL JAZZ PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

October 28: Family Weekend Concert, UNH JAZZ BAND, Dave Seiler, directing; UNH JAZZ CHOIR, William Kempster, directing; with special guest artist, Bob Wilber, clarinet. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.

December 14: Clark Terry’s 80th Birthday Celebration, with special guests, including Bob Brookmeyer, trombone; and Roger Kellaway, piano; with a Big Band of UNH Alumni conducted by Dave Seiler; and the Clark Terry Quintet: Don Friedman, piano; Sylvia Cuenca, drums; Marcus McLaurine, bass; and Dave Glasser, sax. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.

January 16: Harry Jones Memorial Concert, Seacoast Big Band, Dave Seiler, directing; with special guest composer/pianist Bob Florence. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.

Jan 28 – Feb 1: Guest Residency: Composer, scholar, and conductor of the Smithsonian Jazz Orchestra, David Baker, Distinguished Professor of Music, Indiana University. Contact the UNH Department of Music at (603) 862-2404 for complete residency schedule.

March 11: Gala Jazz Concert, Dr. Clark Terry, trumpet and flugelhorn; with special guest woodwind artist, Paquito D’Rivera; and the UNH JAZZ BAND, Dave Seiler, directing. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.

For tickets call (603)862-2290