Our One Hundred Forty-fifth Program
2000-2001

Bill Mays at the Steinwayway

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

8 p.m. Monday, February 12, 2001, Johnson Theatre
Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH
THE ARTIST

Bill Mays

Those in attendance with long memories (and/or lives) just may recall that the very first concert in this series was a solo pianist, one Dave McKenna. Although we have not been able to duplicate that category every year since, it has in fact been a high priority, and looms larger now that our change of venue gives us access to this magnificent 9-foot Steinway, not a common household item in the family of jazz.

We have observed previously that playing in a jazz style alone on the piano is a problematic undertaking, detailed admirably by Gunther Schuller in his book Early Jazz (pp. 170-1 for those scholars drawn to original sources!) Trying to juggle melody, harmony, and rhythm in a swingingly improvisatory manner has always posed the double threat of rigidity or of leaving something out (and then there is the constant fear of being compared with Art Tatum!). When pianists found the stride style to be too confining for their expressive needs (or simply too difficult!) they tended to acquire a bass player and a drummer; even a virtuosic Oscar Peterson would often make this choice, on purely aesthetic grounds. Nevertheless, there is an intrepid and recondite company of artists, relatively restricted in number but spacious in vision, who have figured it all out. They have listened intensively to the tradition, explored all of the existing possibilities—and even enlarged upon them—creating a comprehensive world of sonic imagination which is unique because of its autonomous singularity; one’s complete artistic persona is nakedly revealed when one is alone on the stage, committed to sustaining an entire program, with no place to hide (despite the size of the 9-foot Steinway!).

Bill Mays (b. Sacramento, CA, 1944) is perhaps best known through his multifarious collaborative roles; he has been accompanist for Sarah Vaughan, Frank Sinatra, and Al Jarreau among others, has performed with an impressive array of outstanding artists such as Gerry Mulligan, Shelly Manne, Benny Golson, Mel Lewis (and Clark Terry!), has arranged for Woody Herman, Lew Tabackin, and Bobby Shew, composed a number of chamber works, and is heard on numerous soundtracks, including Jaws, Kojak, Terms of Endearment, and Sleepless in Seattle. Yet beyond these examples of cooperative effort he has somehow had the time and dedication to develop his solo playing to a level truly remarkable in its scope, freshness, and brilliance. This accomplishment is captured beautifully in Bill’s contribution to the prestigious series of CDs presenting live solo piano concerts from the Maybeck Recital Hall in Berkeley, CA (Concord CCD 4567). The variety, creativity, and spontaneity—not to mention the technique!—are spectacular—and remember, it’s live!

Bill’s tastes are eclectic in the most positive sense of that term, and exquisite as well; he shames some of us not only because he plays so much better, but because he knows the verses to the tunes, customarily neglected by pianists—and often singers as well). And at a time when we have been so copiously encouraged to confront the history of our art, it is touching to learn that Bill’s first pianistic inspiration was Earl Hines.

Bill was here six years ago in a quintet led by vibist Peter Appleyard; time does in fact fly. It is an honor to welcome him back, especially to fend for himself (with the 9-foot Steinway!).
Bill Mays
piano

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
Bill Mays' eclectic career as a pianist, composer and arranger spans the last 35 years. With deep roots in jazz, gospel, pop and classical music, Bill's artistry defies categorization. He has performed on over 100 recordings, including a dozen of his own. His concert and studio credits include work with artists as diverse as Ron Carter, Benny Golson, Freddie Hubbard, Al Jarreau, Barry Manilow, Shelly Manne, Gerry Mulligan, Art Pepper, Bud Shank, Frank Sinatra, Marvin Stamm, Sonny Stitt, Clark Terry, Toots Thielemans, Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Sarah Vaughan, Paul Winter, Phil Woods and Frank Zappa. Bill's keyboard work has been heard on numerous TV and film soundtracks, among them Being John Malkovich, Dallas, Fargo, Interview With The Vampire, Kojak, Late Night with Jay Leno, Lethal Weapon, Mission To Mars, Name That Tune, Rocky, Shaft 2 and Superman. He has written several saxophone quartets, suites for flute and piano, bass and piano, a jazz woodwind version of the Nutcracker Suite, music for the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, Woody Herman Band, Robert DeNiro's Tribeca, and incidental music for the new film, Hamlet. Bill has received grants from the N.E.A. and Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation and is a Steinway Piano Concert Artist. His latest CDs include An Ellington Affair, Mays in Manhattan, and Out In Pa. A native Californian, Bill now resides in New York City and Northeastern Pennsylvania.
Tonight's Program

Someone To Watch Over Me  George & Ira Gershwin
The Bad & The Beautiful/Laura  David Raksin
Gemma's Eyes  Bill Mays
For Me There's No More Love,  Robert Aldridge
   For You There's No More Pumpkin Pie
Medley: Bird Of Paradise  Mike Wofford
   A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square  Sherwin/Maschwitz
Body And Soul (based on a Chopin etude)  Johnny Green
Medley: Crepescule With Nellie  Thelonious Monk
   Off Minor

Intermission

Come Rain Or Come Shine  Harold Arlen/John Mercer
Tribute to Bill Evans:  Very Early  Bill Evans
   Goodbye Mr. Evans  Phil Woods
Willow Weep For Me  Ann Ronnell
Lennie's Pennies  Lennie Tristano
Ballad medley:  Close As Pages In A Book  S. Romberg/D. Fields
   Crazy She Calls Me  S.K. Russell/Carl Sigman
   I Do It For Your Love  Paul Simon
Cubano Chant  Ray Bryant
On A Keyboard  Keith "Red" Mitchell