



Our Twenty-fourth Season

Our One Hundred Fifty-seventh Program
2002-2003

Pellucid Pianism:
Bill Charlap

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

8 p.m. Monday, March 3, 2003
Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH

THE ARTISTS

Bill Charlap

Despite her love for ensemble improvisation, Dot Prescott was particularly drawn to solo pianism; although bands were featured in three of the four concerts of our initial season in 1979-80, the opening program was given by Dave McKenna alone, the first of his many visits here. Artistically successful solo jazz pianists are a rarity, the challenges of spontaneously managing melodic, harmonic, and rhythmical materials in a stylistically appropriate manner with only two hands being somewhat daunting.

In the fall of 2001 Bill Charlap appeared here with Byron Stripling's group, and the lucidity and integrity of his playing had already generated considerable comment at intermission. Moreover, as everyone else on stage was packing up following the concert, Bill sat at the piano in his overcoat, chatting with passers-by, all the while delivering an impromptu display, historically informed, of what the unencumbered instrument can offer (including some Chopin, and excerpts from the score of *Porgy and Bess!*). Unbeknownst to Bill, he was designating himself for a slot on this year's series.

A native New Yorker and son of two musical professionals, Bill grew up immersed in both jazz and the music of Broadway shows. He attended the famous High School of the Performing Arts, but left college after two years to concentrate on the piano, renting a fifth-floor walk-up (!) where he could practice literally from morning until midnight. (In the interests of institutional solvency, UNH undergraduates are instructed to disregard the preceding sentence.) Before long he was invited to join the *Gerry Mulligan Quartet*, and a bit later played in the *Phil Woods Quintet*; highly educational for a young pianist. His career was further enhanced by contacts with the likes of Benny Carter, Jim Hall, Frank Wess, and Clark Terry, fellow pianists Dick Hyman and Marian McPartland, and singers Shirley Horn, Carol Sloane, Sheila Jordan, and Tony Bennett; pretty good company. (You may have seen him with Tony on BRAVO.) Since 1997 he has worked regularly in a trio format with Peter and Kenny Washington. And he recently has received accolades from such astute but diverse judges as composer/leader Maria Schneider and *New York Times* critic Ben Ratliff; the words "honesty" and "purity" often occur. Certainly a virtuoso pianist who can say "The melody and lyrics of a song are paramount, just as important to me as improvisation", can't be all bad!

In response to an adulatory comment during his visit last season Bill replied, "There's always something else to leave out."; from him not a flippant retort but a compact statement of an aesthetic attitude that he summed up elsewhere as follows—"You want to give the listeners a chance to reflect—and sometimes even complete an idea themselves. It can be better to suggest something rather than to say it straight out." His familiarity with the total literature of the instrument—classical as well as jazz—allows him to make such choices with purpose and perspicacity.

Recently the distinguished writer Nat Hentoff referred to Bill as "emerging as a candidate for the pantheon of jazz keyboardists." Significant praise, and particularly interesting because it occurred in an article about the aforementioned Dave McKenna, Nat having quoted Bill as proclaiming during a blindfold test "That's as great as solo piano ever was!" While on the surface their styles may differ, there are matters of substance which Dave and Bill share; they both are avowed "song players", seeking lesser known gems from the vocal tradition and transforming them into imaginative (and swinging) instrumental explorations; (it is more than coincidence that each has recorded a Hoagy Carmichael album)—and of course they both exemplify the elusive potential of two-handedness.



Bill Charlap

piano

Currently, chronic physical problems prevent Dave from performing. We miss him, and take the liberty of dedicating this program to him, with deep affection and profound respect. As our series approaches the year marking its quarter-century, it is tempting to visualize a generational torch being passed; we can only do so with a sense of wonder at the unique quality of artistry which Dave and Bill each have achieved, and with a sense of gratitude at having been able to partake of it first hand.

Bill Charlap is just half as old as Dave McKenna. We welcome him to our Steinway with enthusiasm, anticipation, and the knowledge that the future of this highly personal art we love is quite demonstrably in good hands.

*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 through the imaginative vision and generous commitment of the late Dorothy C. Prescott. 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

2002-2003 SCHEDULE

- September 23:** The Quintessence: Donna, Bucky, & Scott
♦
October 21: The Rarest of Pairs: Toots Thielemans & Kenny Werner
♦
November 25: Family Values: The Brothers Heath
♦
February 3: Remembering Vic: Phil Wilson & Company
♦
March 3: Pellucid Piano: Bill Charlap
♦
April 21: Forever Fresh: The Back Bay Ramblers

OTHER SPECIAL JAZZ PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

- October 19:** *Family Weekend Concert, UNH JAZZ BAND and COMBOS, Dave Seiler, directing: UNH JAZZ SINGERS, William Kempster, directing. Granite State Room, Memorial Union Building, UNH.*
♦
January 21: *Harry Jones Memorial Concert: Seacoast Big Band featuring composer/saxophonist BOB MINTZER; Dave Seiler, directing. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.*
♦
February 28: *Dave Seiler Quintet: David Seiler, clarinet; David Newsam, guitar; John Hunter, bass; Ed Saindon, vibes; Les Harris Jr., drums. "A Tribute to Benny Goodman, Charlie Christian and Others". Johnson Theatre, PCAC.*
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March 16: *Gala Jazz Concert, DR. CLARK TERRY, trumpet and flugelhorn with a distinguished guest and the UNH JAZZ BAND, Dave Seiler, directing. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.*

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For tickets call (603)862-2290