



Our Twenty-fourth Season

Our One Hundred Fifty-eighth Program
2002-2003

**FOREVER FRESH:
THE BACK BAY RAMBLERS**

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

**8 p.m. Monday, April 21, 2003
Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH**

THE ARTISTS

The Back Bay Ramblers

It is easy and not wholly inaccurate to think of the jazz mainstream as having been developed through small groups emphasizing improvisation, collective or individual, and larger multi-sectional ensembles featuring written arrangements. But as is true with most history, the facts are less susceptible to such facile oversimplification. Sometimes the smaller groups wanted the tightness and compositional finish of the larger, while the latter yearned for the spontaneity of the former, and on occasion the blessings of human creativity have favored us with the best of both worlds, as is the case this evening.

Moreover, the combination of similar oversimplification with the passage of time has generated a canon of tunes considered to be "standards", which however meritorious, have contributed to the premature neglect of a multiplicity of selections deserving fuller recognition. (In academia this would be analogous to dealing only with "A" students!)

In confronting these realities Bob Connors and his indefatigable producer, collector Ed Reynolds, explored what to less enlightened souls might be considered a "vast wasteland" and uncovered numerous recorded gems eminently worthy of revival. The performing sources are fascinating; expectedly, the likes of Oliver, Morton, Ellington, and Henderson are encountered, and also such slightly less famous artists as Frankie Trumbauer, Andy Kirk, and Benny Moten, but most interestingly, figures obscure to today's general public such as Ben Bernie, Joe Steele, Ray Miller, and Ben Selvin (who ostensible recorded for nine labels under different names!) Bob steeped himself in these early versions—often several of the same tune—and then imaginatively orchestrated them for an ensemble which can suggest the diverse possibilities of the "big band" approach while retaining the intimacy of a small group. (Just for the record, in perusing two of the BBR's five CDs, this writer listened to fifty items, only a handful with which he was previously familiar in any way.)

This undertaking being a challenge not to be trifled with, Bob engaged in some basic geographical research and discovered that the borders of Back Bay were subject to liberal interpretation, thus he could summon a truly select assemblage of players from both Boston and New York environs, each being widely recognized as an expert instrumentalist especially well-versed in this particular idiom. Several of them have played on this series previously; for example, Bob's King Oliver-based Yankee Rhythm Kings actually gave our third concert in 1980; Billy, Peter, and Bill have been here with the New Black Eagles (Peter being a charter member), and Vince has brought his unique Nighthawks to UNH. John Clark (who is working on a Ph.D. in musicology at Brandeis) has played with Ray Smith, which is pretty close to home, and we enthusiastically welcome transplanted Midwesterners Jon-Erik and Ross, whose impressive reputations precede them in both aural and oral testimony.

Certainly this music stems from a period when the boundary between jazz and popular music was far less distinct than today, if it can be said to have existed at all. Even the very arrangements we will hear tonight could be made to sound "square" in the wrong hands; the swinging beat defies notation, as do several other aspects of jazz expression and articulation. The leader of many dance bands of that earlier era were known to caution soloists against getting too "hot", and some charts only sounded overtly jazz-influenced in their final "sock" choruses; (this would have stymied the Grammy Awards!). And the young among us are startled to learn that single 78 rpm recordings contained less than 3 ½ minutes of music per 10-inch side! But consider



TRADITIONAL
Jazz
SERIES

JON~ERIK KELLSO~CORNET

ROSS PETOT~PIANO

BILLY NOVICK~REEDS

PETER BULLIS~BANJO

JOHN CLARK~REEDS

VINCE GIORDANO~BASSES

BOB CONNORS~TROMBONE

BILL REYNOLDS~DRUMS

the artistry which could be encapsulated in that brief time frame; notwithstanding the greater flexibility live performance may have allowed, much of the public quite innocently became attuned to the necessarily compressed results of a creative process which at its best provided both easy access and a wealth of concentrated detail revealed upon repeated listening—(and we hardly knew that we were absorbing so much!).

We are indebted to Bob Connors and the Back Bay Ramblers for bringing their music back to life with such freshness and joyous sense of history; the halls of ivy seldom permit our knowledge of our heritage to be expanded so painlessly!

*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.*
♦
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.*

♦♦♦

For tickets call (603)862-2290