Our Twenty-sixth Season

Our One Hundred Sixty-Seventh Program
2004-2005

TRIPLE PLAY:

DICK HYMAN,
HOWARD ALDEN,
AND JAY LEONHART

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

8 p.m. Monday, November 22, 2004
Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH
During the first half of the last century as jazz was wending its way through the cultural thickets on its path from the vernacular to the cultivated (as only an academic would write!), it was simultaneously generating two seemingly contradictory images. One was of an art enmeshed in the myth of progress, where each stage was thought to be aesthetically superior to the preceding; the other considered that series of contrasting styles to have individual merit, much like the different idioms emerging over several centuries in classical music. These views have been in constant tension, and for much of the time critical judgments seemed more drawn to the first, with its emphasis on originality and technical expansion. But more recently the second view has achieved broader acceptability, reflecting a deeper appreciation of how earlier styles still can catalyze the imagination and produce freshness and urgency in improvisatory impulse.

Our guests this evening, their birth dates spaced over three decades, are prime exemplars of a spacious point of view which finds inspiration in sources spanning virtually the entire history of jazz. Their separate performing lives have placed them in every conceivable stylistic situation, and their absorptive insights have led them to a command of the entire tradition and beyond, isolating indigenous elements when necessary but more often than not impressively reminding us of enduring underlying relationships. Dick, Howard, and Jay are no strangers to our stage, but capturing them together, if not an actual coup, certainly compares with a World Series win!

There is no aspect of the musical scene untouched by Dick Hyman. Born in New York in 1927, he is a composer, arranger, conductor, organist, producer of concerts at the White House, developer of film scores for Woody Allen, organizer of historically recreative ensembles, promoter of accurate chord changes, creator of a marvelous CD-ROM on the history of jazz piano, and to fill his spare time, a virtuoso pianist whose knowledge of the past (and present) extends to actually being able to emulate everyone’s personal style, leading to his own comprehensively shaped language. Fifty years ago he was playing with Bird and Diz after study with Teddy Wilson and a stint with Benny Goodman, but he also recorded in a somewhat different idiom under the name Knuckles O’Toole! And he does every bit of this with the highest integrity and respect for the matter at hand.

Howard Alden, a native California (b. 1958), covers the guitar spectrum in a similar manner; Whitney Balliett has described him as “one of a handful of young musicians who contains the past and present.” Influenced in his youth by Charlie Christian and Barney Kessel, he was also drawn to the work of George Van Eps, and under the latter’s influence adopted the 7-string instrument with its more complete sonic range. Eventually he recorded duets with the venerable Van Eps, just one example of the universality of his interests. You may well have heard him “ghosting” for Sean Penn in Sweet and Lowdown, and he was in our neighborhood early this year with James Moody and the Newport Jazz Festival 50th Anniversary touring group.

Jay Leonhart, born in Baltimore in 1940, had a well-rounded education via the Peabody Institute, Berklee, and Ray Brown. Being himself a song writer and singer of same, Jay has been in particular demand by vocalists, including Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Judy Garland—and even Madonna. His own vocal efforts extend to unique odes, for which there is no ready comparison. His résumé reveals him to be the quintessential free-lancer, having been designated Most Valuable Bassist of the year three times by the National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences.

These gentlemen have experienced it all, and from it they have gleaned truths which transcend both language and category; intrinsically refreshing, but particularly so in November of every fourth year.
Dick Hyman, piano
Howard Alden, guitar
&
Jay Leonhart, bass

Special Note:

In connection with the fall conference of the New England Jazz Alliance, its exhibition honoring the first 15 members of the New England Jazz Hall of Fame will be on display in the Special Collections area on the first floor of the Dimond Library through December.

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

2004-2005 SCHEDULE

September 20: Whistlin’ Dixie: The Eli Newberger All-Stars
October 25: Ellingtonia Plus: Clark Terry, Jimmy Woode and Shawnn Monteiro
November 22: Triple Play: Dick Hyman, Howard Alden, and Jay Leonhart
January 24: Second Annual Tommy Gallant Scholarship Concert: The Incomparable Bob Wilber Pays Tribute to the Incomparable Johnny Hodges
February 28: Manhattan Magic: The Bob Mintzer Quartet
April 4: Right from the Source: Dave Pietro’s Banda Brazil

OTHER SPECIAL JAZZ PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

October 23: Family Weekend Concert, UNH JAZZ BAND and COMBOS, Dave Seiler, directing; UNH JAZZ SINGERS, William Kempster, directing.
January 18: Harry Jones Memorial Concert: Seacoast Big Band featuring trombonist/composer JAY ASHBY; Dave Seiler, directing. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.
March 21: Gala Jazz Concert, DR. CLARK TERRY, trumpet and flugelhorn and the UNH JAZZ BAND, Dave Seiler, directing. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.

For tickets call (603)862-2290