Tradional Jazz Series

Our Twenty-seventh Season
Our One Hundred Seventy-fourth Program
2005-2006

The Hot Club of Portland
Django Reinhardt Almost in Person

Bryan Benson Killough, guitar
Zach Ovinston, violin
Ted Casher, clarinet
David Newsam, guitar
John Hunter, bass

Third Annual Tommy Gallant Memorial Scholarship Concert

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

8 p.m. Monday, January 30, 2006
Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH
The Hot Club of Portland

Along with its vast treasury of transformative sounds, the jazz world has provided us with a gallery of personalities as individually unique as the music they created. This was particularly true in the early decades of the 20th century when jazz was still establishing its identity and there as yet were no formal programs passing on the canonical language with the mixed blessings of academic sanction. In fact, the relation of the artist to his art is one of humankind’s profound mysteries. We marvel at the person of volatile temperament performing with disciplined grace, we wonder how a turbulent result reflects on a seemingly orderly life, etc. But the most fascinating cases occur when singularity of voice emerges almost inexplicably yet alters the aesthetic landscape forever. Django Reinhardt certainly was such a figure.

One could become fascinated with Django even without hearing a note of his music; his is the stuff of a TV series. He was born in Belgium in 1910, his unmarried parents being part of a caravan of wandering French gypsies, probably with some German background as well. He grew up in that independent culture where skill at billiards, fishing, (and theft), were considered more fundamental than conventional literacy. Thus he was self-taught musically, never learning to read, yet absorbing harmonic sophistication and compositional insights, as well as a variety of ethnic and stylistic elements. He moved through violin and banjo to guitar, despite permanent injuries to his left hand from a fire. In 1934 along with violinist Stephane Grappelli he formed the Quintet of the Hot Club of France, (from which tonight’s ensemble takes its name) with the unusual instrumentation of violin, three acoustic guitars, and bass. Django and Stephane were the soloists, and their recordings soon made Django the first European performer to influence jazz in America. He did once visit the USA, touring in 1946 with Duke Ellington, although he was uncomfortable with the demands of reliability. Django died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1953. Bryan will tell us more.

Despite his many personal idiosyncrasies, the following quotes give testimony to his impact. “He is, without question, the single most important guitarist in the history of jazz...” (historian James Lincoln Collier); “...among the few great inimitables of our music” (Duke Ellington); “...out of the ten great guitarists in the world, Django is five of them!” (cornetist and writer Rex Stewart).

Although for years Django understandably was eclipsed by the post-Charlie Christian guitarists who grew up with electrified instruments, in recent years many younger players have been drawn to the originality of Django’s style and technique, even to the extent of organizing groups based on his. Enter Bryan Bergeron Killough.

A graduate of Oyster River High School, for several years Bryan co-led the successful rock group Groovechild which sold over 20,000 recordings. While completing a degree at UNH his horizons broadened, which led him to undertake graduate study, wherein he discovered Django. Bryan has personally transcribed much of Django’s music, as well as using it as a basis for his own creativity and the purpose of this ensemble. Noting that during World War II Django had replaced the violin with a clarinet, since Grappelli had remained in England, Bryan has chosen to combine the two instruments, thus giving us a salubrious taste of both of Django’s worlds.

Zach Ovington started out in his native Tennessee as a guitarist playing bluegrass music. Upon moving to Maine he discovered his grandfather’s violin, and the door to the world of Stephane, Django, and company was soon to open. Ted Casher, a Maine native, attended the legendary and precursory Lenox School of Jazz in the late 1950s, and in subsequent decades has been one of the most versatile stalwarts of the central jazz tradition emanating from the environs of Boston; Django would have welcomed his klezmer ability. David Newsam has had his own private caravan moving around much of New England in his influential role.
as a teacher at Dartmouth, Berklee, and UNH (where one of his students was—Bryan Killough!). And when some years ago John Hunter ceased his graduate work in engineering at UNH in order to be a full-time musician it may not have crossed his mind that he might someday become that institution’s bass teacher.

But it is even more doubtful that Django Reinhardt, despite his ego, would have imagined that a half century after his death there would be a Hot Club of Portland. Thank you, Bryan.

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

2005-2006 SCHEDULE

September 19: At Least One More Time: Ray Smith's Paramount Jazz Band
October 17: Generational Concurrence: Frank Wess and Terell Stafford
November 21: A Feast of Bones: George Masso and Jeff Galindo
January 30: Third Annual Tommy Gallant Scholarship Concert:
The Hot Club of Portland: Django Reinhardt Almost in Person
February 20: The Wisdom of Youth: Geoff Keezer Trio
April 3: International Incident: George Robert and the Mulgrew Miller Trio

OTHER SPECIAL JAZZ PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

October 22: Family Weekend Concert, UNH JAZZ BAND and COMBOS, Dave Seiler and Erika Svane, directing. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.
December 14: Clark Terry 85th Birthday Bash. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.
January 17: Harry Jones Memorial Concert: Celebrating Paul Broadnax's 80th Birthday; Seacoast Big Band, Dave Seiler, directing. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.
January 20: Faculty Jazz Sextet: Jared Sims and David Seiler, woodwinds; Mark Shilansky, piano; David Newsam, guitar; John Hunter, bass; Les Harris, Jr., drums. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.
March 12: 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