Our Thirtieth Season

Our One Hundred-Ninetieth Program
2008-2009

Four Brothers Redux:
Harry Allen’s Four Others

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

8 p.m. Monday, October 13, 2008
Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH
THE ARTISTS

Harry Allen’s Four Others

As a point of historical reference, and perhaps more so an indication of the quantitative passage of time, the writer of this page recalls purchasing the original Woody Herman item titled Four Brothers (composed by Jimmy Giuffre) on a 78-rpm recording well over a half-century ago, prior to the appearance of LPs, not to mention CDs. Thus we are dealing with a singular phenomenon dating from approximately midway through the unfolding history of the art. What was it all about? (And for that matter, how many listeners even then really knew?!) Essentially it was not about notes or personalities but about color of sound, specifically the ensemble saxophone sound. Certainly on the surface we appreciate the basic contrasts among, for example, trumpet, clarinet, and trombone as affecting our aesthetic experience. Likewise those of us of a certain age remember animated discussions in our youth about the relative virtues of the individual saxophone sounds of Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young, as well as Johnny Hodges and Charlie Parker. And of course we took as a matter of faith that the conventional big band saxophone grouping of two altos, two tenors, and baritone was proclaimed on Mt. Sinai!

As the jazz imagination continued to manifest itself diversely during the 1940s one significant trend was toward a “cooler” quality of sound (however mixed the metaphor and complex the explanation.) Jimmy Giuffre applied this concept to the sax section by eliminating the higher alto voice, so no matter how any of us might choose to describe the effect, the sound of three tenors and bari subtly but clearly differs from the usual format. But at the same time, when solos arrived each tenor had a greater challenge of finding a way to define his expressive uniqueness.

Harry Allen (b. 1966) grew up in Rhode Island and while still in his middle teens was a guest performer at Portsmouth’s Press Room with the Tom Gallant Trio, thus his future ties with this concert series were undergoing early incubation. Harry’s artistic sojourn has been somewhat unusual; precocious youngsters tend to be drawn into the volatile world of jazz exploration as it appears to be “progressing” to something generationally new, and only with time do the more sensitive acquire the perspective which allows their full appreciation of the living vitality of earlier styles—Wynton Marsalis is a prime example. On the other hand, Harry Allen actually started out using the classic idiom associated with the Lester Young/Ben Webster generation and only much later selectively absorbed influences from Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane. In a published interview not long ago Harry observes that in his undergraduate days at Rutgers he was the only tenor working for a “mellow” sound, but that recently he has heard a number of collegians doing likewise. He notes, “It seems that now maybe there’s an acceptance that all styles are relevant.” (Hmmm...maybe the young Harry was onto something!)

Harry appears on over thirty CDs, his flexibility resulting in an extremely wide set of collaborations, well demonstrated by his extensive cross-generational work with both Pizzarellis. Presently he has assembled a worthy contingent of believers and practitioners to pay tribute to a particular aspect of Woody Herman’s lengthy and varied contributions to the body of enduring jazz content. Among his co-conspirators is Joe Cohn, a regular colleague of Harry’s and like him a veteran of several programs in this series. Joe has an especially valid credential for this program; his father, Al, replaced one of the original “Four Brothers” with Herman shortly after the famous recording was made.

This event can also serve as a remembrance of composer Jimmy Giuffre himself, who passed away earlier this year at age 86 after many years of teaching at the New England Conservatory.
Harry Allen
Grant Stewart  tenor saxophones
Jeff Rupert
Gary Smulyan  baritone saxophone

Joe Cohn  guitar
Joel Forbes  bass
Luca Santaniello  drums

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
Program essays from the entire UNH Traditional Jazz Series now can be accessed on the internet.
http://www.izaak.unh.edu/nhlj

2008-2009 SCHEDULE

September 22: So Much More to Say: The New Black Eagle Jazz Band
October 13: Four Brothers Redux: Harry Allen’s Four Others
November 10: Bob’s Big Band Binge: Bob Wilber
February 2: Depth of Emotion: Ed Saindon and Dave Liebman
March 2: Where the Guitar Now Is At: Russell Malone Quartet
April 13: Bria and Jim’s Borderline Jazz Band

OTHER SPECIAL JAZZ PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

October 24: Family Weekend Concert, UNH JAZZ BAND and COMBOS, Dave Seiler, directing. Strafford Room, Memorial Union Building, UNH.
January 20: Harry Jones Memorial Concert with the Seacoast Big Band, Dave Seiler, directing. A program of Harry’s favorite music by Count Basie, Woody Herman and Maynard Ferguson. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.
January 28: Faculty Jazz Ensemble. Johnson Theatre, PCAC. Free and open to the public.
March 15: Gala Jazz Concert, DR. CLARK TERRY, trumpet and flugelhorn, and guest artists. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.

For tickets call (603)862-2290