UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OUR FORTIETH PROGRAM.

BUTCH THOMPSON
SOLO PIANO

SPONSORED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC,
AND THE NEW HAMPSHIRE
LIBRARY OF TRADITIONAL JAZZ

8 PM MONDAY
FEBRUARY 10, 1986
STRAFFORD ROOM
MEMORIAL UNION
DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE
THE ARTIST

BUTCH THOMPSON

Solo pianists, considered by many to be an endangered species, have nonetheless occupied a conspicuous role in our series since it was inaugurated by Dave McKenna in 1979. Over the seasons we have been so fortunate as to present Dick Wellstood, Mike Markeverich, Jack Burner, Dick Hyman, and the late Don Ewell, as well as a pair of return engagements by Dave himself. Each artist has shown us something different about the possibilities of the piano, the sole traditional instrument on which one can “do it all”, within the parameter permitted by one’s own technique. The challenge of manipulating the three essential elements—melody, harmony, and rhythm—with only two hands often drives those with quite formidable physical equipment to seek stimulation and/or refuge in a combo format. However convenient and satisfying that may be, Butch Thompson is one of those truly rare individuals whose gifts and motivation lead him to enrich his audiences with those special personal qualities that only a solo performance can provide.

Butch has a most unique role in the contemporary musical picture; he is the only traditional jazz artist—perhaps pianist of any type—who is featured weekly on a national radio program. (One must really search into remote archives, material or mental, to find an analogous example!) Moreover, his performances occur in a context somewhat unusual for the jazz world; “Prairie Home Companion” and Lake Woebegeon are separated from Storyville and Lake Ponchartrain by more than geography and myth.

Born in a non-fictitious part of Minnesota in 1943, young Richard showed interest in the piano as a tot, but actually developed his talent first on the clarinet, a skill that he maintains and through which he is represented on recordings as well. He explored a wide range of matters musical while a student at the University of Minnesota, but was especially drawn to the traditional jazz idiom through a long association with the notable Hall Brothers band in the Twin Cities. He began recording in the ’60s, and has gradually built an international reputation which takes him to festivals across the country and to Europe and Australia. Many New Englanders will recall with fondness his appearances with the New Black Eagles a few years ago, and he has also recorded as a guest with Chicago Rhythm, our May event.

Butch draws his inspiration from the ragtime and stride-based styles of Scott Joplin, Eubie Blake, Fats Waller, etc., expanding them to embrace other materials, including original works of his own. He has a particular interest in the pianism and compositions of Ferdinand Jelly Roll Morton, that “strange mixture of genius, musician, poet, snob, and braggart” (George Avakian) whose 100th birthday on September 20th last was all too minimally observed in that year of Bach and Handel.
The passage of time can generate neglect, which is unfortunate, but also detachment, which can be salutary. Listeners today, young or otherwise, are able to approach the music of earlier times which a freshness and honesty of perspective untrammelled by comparisons involving the more transient aspects of certain contemporary popular idioms. At the end of every week, Butch Thompson offers the nation the opportunity for such a refreshing experience—and at virtually no expense to the consumer! We are delighted to afford our audience the chance to actually begin a week with that kind of nourishment, and we welcome Butch to UNH with enthusiasm and gratitude.

Tape recorders and cameras are not permitted due to contractual arrangements. Your cooperation is requested.
THE SERIES

The UNH Traditional Jazz Series began in 1979. 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

THE SCHEDULE

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