UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OUR FORTY-THIRD PROGRAM

CHICAGO RHYTHM

FRANK POWERS — CLARINET
JOHN OTTO — ALTO SAX & CLARINET
TED DES PLANTES — PIANO
JACK MEILAHN — BANJO & GUITAR
VINCE GIORDANO — TUBA
HAL SMITH — DRUMS

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

8 PM MONDAY
MAY 12, 1986
STRAFFORD ROOM
MEMORIAL UNION
DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE
One of the more exciting and provocative challenges for the jazz performer involves the tension between freedom and structure, between his individualistic impulses as improviser and controlled imagination as ensemble player. From the New Orleans front line to the “big band” the interplay of these elements has generated the widest opportunities for creativity in style, format, and orchestration. The passage of time has a tendency to oversimplify the activity and force things into neat categories, but those who probe below the surface find an exploratory richness all too frequently overlooked.

Chicago Rhythm has done just this, and has brought to life an atmosphere and a combination of instruments which may well have been as surprising in the late 1920s as they are refreshing now. Jimmie Noone’s Apex Club Orchestra with its absence of brass in the front line was no doubt a response to the variegated necessities of Chicago’s musical life at that time, but it provided an inventive forum for the possibilities of two reeds deriving maximum contrapuntal, harmonic, and coloristic interest from such economical means, a feat perhaps not replicated until the Wilber/Davern Soprano Summit almost five decades later. Using this sound as a point of departure, Chicago Rhythm has reached into other relevant realms such as that of the Austin High Gang to present a broad spectrum of material from repertoires often neglected.

Besides being a geographical location, Chicago represents a musical frame of reference, and maybe a state of mind. This is reflected in the fact that the group’s members developed their Chicago-style chops in such diverse locales as Portland, Oregon (Ted Des Plantes and Hal Smith), Cincinnati (Frank Powers), New York (Vince Giordano), as well as the Windy City (John Otto and Jack Meilahn); certainly this is a tribute to the commonality of the language in a manner quietly pervasive if not overtly spectacular, and has led one writer (William Schafer in The Mississippi Rag) to enthusiastically depict Chicago Rhythm as “a kind of open Midwestern jazz conspiracy”!

Chicago Rhythm has performed for numerous festivals and jazz societies, appeared on A Prairie Home Companion, and on one of their highly acclaimed recordings featured our recent guest, Butch Thompson. Reviewers have been unanimous in praising their capacity to combine the letter and spirit of their chosen idioms, and we are flattered to be the occasion for their first visit to New England.
William Schafer describes a Chicago Rhythm concert as providing a “tasty menu, delivered hot and punctually, with good humor and relaxed esprit, the kind of musical fare that sticks to the ribs, digests readily, and becomes transubstantiated into solid blood and marrow”. Elsewhere he notes that the band is “a kind of native American, deeply Midwestern I Musici of early jazz”, and that “it should captivate anyone whose soul has not been shrivelled or ears bent by convention”; to all of this we joyfully look forward.

Earlier this year Bud Freeman, Milt Hinton, and Red Norvo brought us varieties of nearly first-generation Chicago jazz. We are heartened tonight by the presence of those who can wholesomely interpret the tradition from the perspectives of their own generations. Welcome, Chicago Rhythm.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 23</td>
<td>Red Norvo Trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 14</td>
<td>Eli Newberger and Jimmy Mazzy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 11</td>
<td>Bud Freeman Quintet</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 9</td>
<td>Classic Jazz Quartet</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 10</td>
<td>Butch Thompson</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>Jerry Fuller Swingtet</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Bob Wilber and Milt Hinton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>Chicago Rhythm</td>
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</tbody>
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