

T R A D I T I O N A L
Jazz
S E R I E S

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

OUR FIFTY-FIFTH PROGRAM

JAY McSHANN
and
RALPH SUTTON
TWO PIANOS

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

8 PM MONDAY
FEBRUARY 8, 1988
STRAFFORD ROOM
MEMORIAL UNION
DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

THE ARTISTS

JAY McSHANN and RALPH SUTTON

Tonight's program is one of those rarities that usually occurs only in wishful thinking, imaginative fantasy, or prayer. On the more practical level, we have long wanted to have Ralph Sutton on this series, and have also hoped to appropriately observe Black History Month with an artist of Jay McShann's stature; for various logistical reasons neither result has been previously attained, so their convergence, as well as the instrumental format, confer a double blessing.

Two-piano concerts are a shade more common in this series than in the world at large, but are hardly everyday events. This one has its genesis in a remarkable pair of recordings issued in 1980 with the beguiling title, *The Last of the Whorehouse Piano Players* (CHAZ JAZZ). In reference to this undertaking, the perspicacious Dan Morgenstern, Director of the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers, had the following to say: "...The team of Ralph Sutton and Jay McShann is something new, surprising, and refreshing. It is a joyful meeting between two great piano players, each with his own distinctive musical self and background — not previously closely associated, or stylistically matched...yet getting together on common ground and making the sparks fly; that common ground is the language of classic jazz, deep, broad, and wide."

Those who subscribe to the New Orleans-Chicago-New York hegemony in the unfolding of jazz history will be enlightened to learn that both Ralph and Jay are products of the Southwest, a fertile musical ground described eloquently by such writers as Ralph Ellison in the enhancement of our understanding of the many strands from which the fabric of jazz tradition is woven.

Jay McShann was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, in 1916. Largely self-taught as a pianist, he spent some time during his youth alternating between college and the road, but in 1934 landed in Kansas City with whose musical culture he has largely been identified ever since. World War II put an end to his well-received big band which toured widely, recorded successfully, played the famous Savoy Ballroom, was spoken of in the same breath as Basie, (and included the young Charlie Parker!). Jay's piano style, though diverse in its range, is rooted in the blues and boogie-woogie idioms of his youth, and after some years of the neglect that is so often the result of fickle changes in popular taste, the enduring qualities of that fundamental language have caused Jay to be recognized nationally and internationally over the last two decades.

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TWO PIANOS

Ralph Sutton was born in 1922 in the now non-existent (!) town of Hamburg, Missouri. Although classically trained as a child, his real inspiration came from hearing the likes of Fats Waller, James P. Johnson, and Art Tatum on a St. Louis radio program called "Harlem Rhythm"; thus the message of "Eastern" stride was being preached and practiced on the far side of the Mississippi. In 1942 Jack Teagarden heard young Ralph, and soon invited him to New York. After the war he had a long and distinguished stint as intermission pianist at Eddie Condon's, recorded extensively, and later travelled widely, eventually settling in Colorado. To many he may be best known as a charter member of *The World's Greatest Jazz Band* (which also included our recent visitor, Bob Wilber).

Jay and Ralph typify and dramatize the highest qualities of human interaction through which America's indigenous contribution to the musical art of the world has developed and flourished. Dan Morgenstern reminds us that "the joint sermons they deliver are inspiring...and a celebration of the pleasures of the jazz spirit". Amen.

*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

September 14	Dave Whitney Quintet
October 19	Mike Markaverich: Solo Piano
November 16	Bob Wilber Quintet
December 7	Paradise City Jazz Band
February 8	Jay McShann & Ralph Sutton: Two Pianos
March 7	Jimmy Mazzy & Friends Explore the Banjo
April 11	Herb Pomeroy Big Band