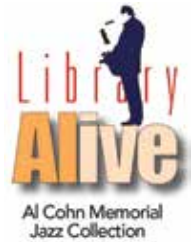




# The NOTE



Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania • Fall / Winter 2016



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The NOTE contains some content that may be considered offensive. Authors' past recollections reflect attitudes of the times and remain uncensored.

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## From the Collection . . .



Cover Photo (front): Jackie McLean at the Village Vanguard, NYC. Photo by Larry Fink.



Center Spread: The Dixie Gents at the 2015 COTA Festival. Photo by Bob Weidner.



Cover Photo (back): Al Cohn, from the ACMJC photo archives.

# The NOTE



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The mission of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection is to stimulate, enrich, and support research, teaching, learning, and appreciation of all forms of jazz.

The ACMJC is a distinctive archive built upon a unique and symbiotic relationship between the Pocono Mountains jazz community and East Stroudsburg University.

With the support of a world-wide network of jazz advocates, the ACMJC seeks to promote the local and global history of jazz by making its resources available and useful to students, researchers, educators, musicians, historians, journalists and jazz enthusiasts of all kinds, and to preserve its holdings for future generations.

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# A Note from the Collection Coordinator



Fran Kaufman

By Dr. Matt Vashlishan

I find myself writing this installment after cleaning up from another wonderful Zoot Fest. Everyone had a great time, and it was nice to see some familiar faces and of course some new faces too. I would like to thank all the staff and departments involved at ESU for pulling off another great event, and especially ESU President Marcia G. Welsh, Ph.D. for her continued support of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection and the



Photo courtesy Louise Sims

Zoot and his pride and joy... his first beefsteak tomato!

various programming I am trying to put together to support it.

Zoot Fest was a great afternoon and the music was exceptional. Bill Dobbins joined us this year for a very informative and entertaining presentation on Al and Zoot's playing as well as to perform on piano. As if one amazing pianist wasn't enough, Don Friedman attended and performed, thus participating in his very first Zoot Fest. The panel discussion was entertaining and informative as always, the performances were absolutely first rate, and the food was extraordinary!

Over the past few years working with the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection I have had the opportunity to meet and develop relationships with several people, one of which is a wonderful woman who was married to Zoot: Louise Sims. We were discussing some of her favorite memories of Zoot during the planning stages of the recent Zoot Fest, and both Zoot and Al would have been 90 years old at the time of this writing in 2015. She sent

me a few photos that show Zoot in a different light away from the horn and having a little bit of fun. These photos didn't make it into the Zoot Fest program, so I thought it would be fun to show them here. The first is from Halloween around 1978 at Lake Buena Vista when he decided to jump up on stage to play wearing a mask! The second is a shot of Zoot with what Louise called his "pride and joy," his first beefsteak tomato. Apparently he was quite fond of gardening.

While not spoken about openly, there was (as there tends to be these days with most annual



Photo courtesy Louise Sims

Zoot wearing a Halloween mask at Lake Buena Vista around 1978.

jazz events) an underlying sense of mourning due to the loss of yet another cornerstone of music in the Poconos and around the world, Phil Woods. The next issue of *The Note* will be dedicated entirely to Phil, and it will without a doubt be something very special to me and hopefully to all of you as well. Phil's discography speaks for itself, but he was (as well as an unbelievable musician and composer) a very dear friend and mentor of mine and will be deeply missed by everyone in the Pocono jazz community as well as worldwide.

Those of you who pay close attention to the layout of the magazine might be missing the bottom banner on the front cover. The cover photo used for this issue is from the brilliant photographer Larry Fink and I gave up the preview banner to include his photo in the proper dimensions because it's worth it! It is my absolute pleasure to showcase his work and a bit of his life story in this installment. Larry is a great person and it was a pleasure working with him and his staff.

I would also like to thank Su Terry, Erica Golaszewski, Lauren Chamberlain, and Jay Rattman for all of their help with this issue and others down the road. As always, enjoy!





James Richard

by Su Terry

“When you’re 15 years old, art is very dangerous. That’s what art is supposed to be. It’s supposed to be a gigantic edifice that you’re afraid to enter. That was the way I felt. Still feel that way to a certain extent.”

–Phil Woods, 2009

It won’t be easy to fill in the gap left by Phil in the Gap. Phil wrote his column for 26 years. I’m sure you noticed he was no slouch as a writer. And the content! But I’m gonna chomp down like a pit bull, by gum.

(Truth be known, taking over Phil’s column in The Note is my birthright. Birthright, you say? Why, yes. Phil was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, and SO WAS I.)

Before embarking on today’s narrative journey, let’s clear the literary palette by stating the obvious: all writers have an agenda. Whether we express it with comedy, tragedy, or something in between, we want the reader to chew on our words. (One hundred times isn’t necessary. Fifty will do fine—if you masticate too much, you’ll go blind.) My agenda is somewhat varied, and in the interest of clarity let me tick my top topics, so readers know what they will find henceforth in From The Bridge columns:

- Give insight into the music, as well as into the minds of musicians.
- Honor my predecessors, whose shoulders I stand upon.
- Have fun composing with words.
- Figure out what I really think, by writing it down.

Johnny Coles once told me, “If you want to make people cry with your music, first you gotta make your own self cry.” The last thing Phil said to me, from his hospital bed, was “Keep ‘em laughing.” Therefore, I promise to not write anything humorous unless it makes my own self crack up. Then again, as Jon Hendricks is fond of saying, “I’m only serious.”

I’m pleased to introduce my collaborator, illustrator Jonathan Glass. I met him while he was sketching at the bar of the Deer Head Inn. He was eager to contribute his talent to The Note, but he warned me, “I only draw from life. Not photographs.”

## From The Bridge

“No problem,” I replied. “First you’ll go to the luggage carousel in Baggage Claim at LaGuardia Airport. Next, you’ll go to the Bronx Zoo.”

“Okay,” he said.

Without further ado, let us proceed to Monsieur Du Bois’ favorite genre-du-jour: The Road Story.

### BAGGAGE CLAIM COUP D’ETAT

On a recent flight from O’Hare to LaGuardia, the pilot mentioned we would be arriving early in New York. I detected a hint of braggadocio in his voice. “Damn the trade winds! Full speed ahead!” We did, indeed, arrive 20 minutes before schedule. The only problem was, someone forgot to tell the luggage.

There we waited, the weary travelers from Flight 354, at the luggage carousel in LaGuardia’s luxurious Baggage Claim area. It was the usual scene—vultures circling and plotting their line of attack, lesser birds hovering in the outer periphery lest their plumage, or other vital parts, be damaged in the onslaught.

We waited. And waited. Where oh where was my carriage—I mean suitcase?

To pass the time, I began to construct an algorithm in my head. My hypothesis: The Amount of Time Elapsing Before a Passenger Uprising Due to Baggage Claim Delay is in Direct Proportion to the Length of Time of the Flight. Let’s see, the flight was originally three hours and 20 minutes long—but we arrived 20 minutes early, so do I subtract the 20 minutes, or . . . whoa, this was getting complicated.

Luckily, the airport had provided its customers with the adult equivalent of a baby pacifier—namely, a wide-screen television tuned to CNN. But would this be enough to quell the imminent revolt? I think not, Comrades! What passes for news is merely pabulum of the State! Waaaahhhh! You give us a bottle with no milk in it!

Sorry. Got carried away for a sec. Speaking of which—suddenly we noticed an airport guy approaching our carousel with a giant hand truck piled high with luggage. Everyone turned to look, as they would at some stricken citizen being wheeled out on a gurney. We watched in

jealous disbelief as the cart went right past us on its way to a far corner of Baggage Claim, where another flight's worth of harried passengers hopefully would find their bags, eventually.

The flickering fluorescents overhead began to entrain my brain waves to the Salvador Dali channel. CNN commentators on the wide-screen TV read from teleprompters hacked by Andre Breton. The very air seemed to whisper, "This is it, the final straw in the vagaries of travel in the 21st Century. The revolution of the luggage carousel is only a metaphor . . ." (The air down in Baggage Claim has a very literary bent.)

I began to ponder the philosophy of our revolt. (Every revolution needs a good philosophy behind it, n'est-ce pas?)

I addressed the throng. "What, Comrades, is our ultimate goal? I would say—if I may speak for us all—it is to retrieve our luggage. Will we accomplish our goal any quicker by staging a revolution? Well, if we start running amok and throwing things, that would likely delay the baggage even more. So maybe this is not a good idea."

"But Comrade," called a timid voice from the rear (no doubt one of the Lesser Birds) "there is another purpose to our Revolution." (Let's start the capitalization process,

it does so lend importance to our Cause). "We are angry, Comrade. We have had a long, tiresome journey. There's no chairs! There's no food! There's no cocktails! We want to vent!"

"Yes, Comrade," answered another bird. "You have an excellent point. But think how much more effective our Revolution will be if we begin it AFTER we get our luggage!"

A raucous discussion ensued. Wings, beaks and talons moved to the beat of the fervor. As the uproar increased, I could barely discern the beginning of a rumbling undertone beneath the hubbub.

It was the familiar B-flattish hum of a 60-cycle-per-second motor . . . it was . . . the luggage carousel starting up!

In a fiendish, sadistic bid for supremacy, the Ruling Party made us watch the empty luggage carousel go around for a full six minutes before loading bags onto it. The Vultures then swooped in, making off with their precious cargo. The Lesser Birds found their own trajectories and did the same. As I grabbed my bag and made a beeline for the egress, a distant voice called in a fading warble, "But Comrades!

What . . . about . . . the . . . R e v o l u t i o n . . . ?" ☺



Artwork by Jonathan Glass. [www.fountaingallerynyc.com](http://www.fountaingallerynyc.com)

# Larry Fink

Interview by Dr. Matt Vashishan. Photos by Larry Fink.

Larry Fink is a professional photographer of over 55 years. He has had one man shows at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of Modern Art, the San Francisco Museum of Art, among others. He has been awarded two John Simon Guggenheim Fellowships in 1976 and 1979, and two National Endowment for the Arts, Individual Photography Fellowships in 1978 and 1986. He has been teaching for over 53 years. Since 1988, he has been a professor of photography at Bard College.

Larry has had several books published including: *Social Graces* (Aperture 1984); *Boxing* (powerHouse Books 1997); *Runway* (powerHouse Books 2000); *Primal Elegance* (Lodima Press 2006); *Somewhere There's Music* (Damiani Editore 2006), *Attraction and Desire: 50 Years in Photography* (The Sheldon Art Galleries 2011), *The Vanities: Hollywood Parties 2000-2009* (Schirmer/Mosel 2011), and most recently *The Beats* (powerHouse, 2014), *Larry Fink: On Composition and Improvisation* (Aperture, 2014), and *Opening the Sky* (Stanley/Barker, 2015).

Recently, Larry has had one man shows at Box Gallerie in Bruxelles, Belgium, and The Los Angeles County Museum of Art in California, among others. Retrospectives of his work have been mounted at the Sheldon Art Gallery in St. Louis, Missouri, as well as the Fahey Klein Gallery in Los Angeles. A large retrospective, *Body and Soul*, has toured many museums in Spain since 2012.

Larry's photographs from his monograph, *The Beats* have been shown in festivals in the United States and Europe since

its release including Noorderlicht in the Netherlands, Fotografia in Rome, Paris Photo, Feroz Gallery in Bonn, Germany, LOOK3 in Charlottesville, Virginia, and SI Fest in Savignano sul Rubicone, Italy.

Larry is also working on a massive retrospective book with University of Texas Press that will enter into territories that no one has ever seen before, along with the already established work. Grafiche dell'Artiere in Bologna will make the exquisite prints for the book.

With work previously appearing in *Vanity Fair*, *W*, *GQ*, *De-tour*, and *The New York Times Magazine*, Larry now occasionally publishes portfolios with the New Yorker.



The Dancing Tree, 2006.

*Matt Vashlishan: This is Matt Vashlishan; it is Thursday September 3rd 2015 at 2:30pm. I'm here with Larry Fink at his amazing compound, is that what you call it? [laughs]*

*We're going to talk about Larry Fink's experiences as a photographer, his involvement with musicians over the past 50 years, and a little bit about his life in general and how it connects to the Pocono area. So Larry, tell me a little bit about your history with the Pocono area, where you're from, and your experiences with our jazz club here, the Deer Head Inn.*

**Larry Fink:** Well I've been out here since 1974 and I started to learn about and go to the Deer Head around 1976, but not habitually at that time. So I've been here for about 44 years.

*MV: And before that where were you?*

**LF:** In New York.

*MV: And you grew up in New York?*

**LF:** I was born in New York - in Brooklyn in 1941. Then my folks moved to Long Island in the 50s. I went to a private school called the Stockbridge School in Massachusetts, because I screwed up in regular school. [laughs]

*MV: So tell me more about your experiences with the Deer Head Inn.*

**LF:** I don't have a really firm recollection about when I started to go in a habitual way, but after a while I started to photograph there. I guess it was my familiarity with it even though I knew Chris Solliday (who was the owner at that time), and I guess people knew me because I was a photographer on some note, so I started to get familiar with the place.

*MV: Did you go primarily to hear music or did you go with the specific intent to photograph musicians?*

**LF:** No, to hear music.

*MV: Ok, so then it just evolved from that?*

**LF:** Even though I'm the major photographer that I'm supposed to be, the most important thing in my mind when I go somewhere is to be there and to do what I'm supposed to do there, which in this case is to listen. Photographing is not subordinate, but it's a crystal reaction to something, which excites me. I'm not thinking to myself, "Oh I'm a photographer, that's a good place to go get pictures." Most folks work that way, and I can't say I've never worked that way because I want to make good pictures too, but it's a different kind of relationship with the experience.

*MV: I see. Did you ever have any specific projects that resulted from photographing there? Or was it just something you did because it was there and you were interested in it?*

**LF:** At the Deer Head? I just did it... and then some of the pictures were taken with Liebman, JD Walter, and a piano player that lived there for a while ended up in the book, "Somewhere There's Music." But that wasn't necessarily a project that I had sustained...

*MV: Ok sure, it just contributed to it. So as far as that book goes, since you mentioned it, what is that project a product of?*

**LF:** The book itself?

*MV: Yes.*



**Jimmy Rushing, 1957.**

**LF:** Well it's a product of love, for one thing.

*MV: And this is over a course of how long?*

**LF:** Fifty years.

*MV: So all the photographs in that book were taken sometime during those 50 years?*

**LF:** Yes, I mean the first one is from 1956 - the picture of Jimmy Rushing. I was just in high school at the Stockbridge school and I had a senior project or whatever. I decided I wanted to meet, photograph, and interview jazz musicians. So I decided to do Jimmy. I didn't do anybody else. I don't know why, but Jimmy was just beautiful - a really sweet guy and great musician.

*MV: And when did you decide to do that book? How did that come about?*

**LF:** Oh I don't know... Let me see, when did that book come out Emma?

Emma (one of Larry's assistants): 2006

**LF:** Ah 2006... In case you don't know, Emma, besides being a brilliant photographer... I mean really good, in very different ways than me, has an encyclopedic knowledge of my very being. [laughs]

Emma: I'm just here a lot... [laughs]

*MV: Well that's pretty useful!*

**LF:** We've been together for about four years now, and we do prints and shows and whatever is gorging the present. There is also an ongoing and underlying theme, which is archiving. We have my collection back here that is 49,000 prints strong and negatives to boot



Dave Lantz IV at the Deer Head Inn, 2012

and we convert them to files so it makes some kind of sense. And that's a big job!

*MV: So how many people work here with you?*

LF: Well we have a payroll [laughs] of about seven. You know for an old commie who had nothing but dreams an aspirations in his mind... you know... I learned how to kick ass! [laughs] But on the other hand it's not a contradiction to my mother and my father too, who loved money. They loved to go to Florida, that's why she got kicked out of the communist party and left it. She was a leftist until the end but she loved money, and she loved property and comfort and drinking and the good life. Not in a disgustingly bourgeois way even though she had some degree of that even though she didn't know it... she was unconscious of it.

*MV: And what did she do?*

LF: She was an organizer. She was an organizer for peace, for education... this and that. She was unpaid. My dad was an insurance guy, they had some money. Not wealthy but they were cool.

*MV: Oh ok.*

LF: So she just organized and organized and organized. She was powerful. She was a known person in the left wing circles. We were all very disappointed in mother when the McCarthy hearings were going on – that she wasn't called!

[Editors Note: The McCarthy hearings were held in April 1954 between The United States Army and Senator Joseph McCarthy. These hearings received considerable media attention and led to Senator Mc-

Carthy's extreme criticism by the Senate later that year.]

It was a **bite** on her integrity that she wasn't in front of the committee saying some nasty thing that she was known to say. "What happened mom? I thought you were important!" So rather than talking about a new Cadillac or being excited our dad was the CEO of a new company, we were talking about why our mother wasn't called to be on the committee! So it depends on which way you want to wash your brain as you grow up, you know?

*MV: No kidding!*

LF: And **it's** all about that; how you wash your **ki** brain. [laughs] So that's where I was. My brain was as clean as money, until I decided I wanted a lot of it! In the early days I didn't make much at all, but then I got wise. My wife, Martha, **th** very money oriented in a very practical way, so when I had the opportunity to go into advertising she was all over it. And for me it was total contradiction and irony and horrific in many ways, but I did it and I had fun... but it's depersonalizing.

*MV: Well it's a job! So what exactly goes on here then? Here on the property, as far as photographing or production? You talked about the archive and getting all the prints organized, but what else as a photographer?*

LF: Well we have a dark room, but now we just use the computers. Had you come two or three weeks ago we would have been in a printing order. We had a show and had to print and organize 71 prints and get them out in about four days. Previous to that things that are in books are scanned into files so we can reproduce them and things like that.

Now, in the old days when it used to be film, each print was an independent gesture – you couldn't collectively do a print. If you did portfolios, which I did, you would work with your arms vs. a printer doing all the work! Dark room workers always have long arms because the shoulder keeps stretching out! Just like tenor players have longer fingers than alto players... [laughs]

I was playing with Paul Desmond the other night; he's a pretty player. This was a series they put out on Mosaic with him and Jim Hall. It's a little too sweet for me but his contrapuntalism is so much fun to play with.

*MV: So let's talk about this a little bit. You took me around your property here, and basically every room that I've seen so far has either some type of audio collection or books, and I was in at least two or three rooms that have a piano or keyboard of some type. I know you play the harmonica as well. It seems like as well as photography you've been **in**sted in music for quite some time. You've spoken about **for**ars ago when you went to the Deer Head Inn to listen to music, so how did that happen? How*



*did you become interested? Were you always interested? Did you hear something at some point that turned you on to it?*

LF: Well here's the story. The first memory I ever had was probably when I was 1½ years old in Brooklyn, and I was in a bassinet on the floor in a big room of my parents' house, and there was a blackout from World War II. They had just pleurably (and habitually) had a couple of scotches. They said "oh it's a blackout!" And they put on Chick Webb on the crazy old record machine that played 78's. Then they started dancing around the room. So my first memory was about my parents dancing to Chick Webb during a blackout. [laughs] Which was right on. The point is that the folks didn't know Charlie Parker or Coltrane, and were pretty much saddled up with Chick, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Billy, Sarah, Ella, all the swing monsters who were prominent at that time.

*MV: And they listened to that all the time?*

LF: All the time. That was their deal, they were jazz heads. They listened to Louis Armstrong as well of course.

*MV: This is important to note, because it's what you grew up around.*

LF: That's the way they washed my brain! [laughs] But, what a great washing! And they also took me to the symphony in Brooklyn or wherever it was. They had paintings in the house. Since my dad was an insurance guy, he insured the Soyer Brothers: Moses, Raphael, Issac; they were painters. He did them, a couple other left wing painters, stuff like that. So I had that branch of culture.

*MV: So there were a lot of different kinds of art going on around you.*

LF: It wasn't an artist family, so I wasn't growing up unconventionally, even though I was an unconventional kid. Jazz in those days was pretty popular stuff.

*MV: So when did you start making your own decisions about what you heard, when, where, and how you heard it? Were you still pretty young?*

LF: Oh yeah I would say right out of high school I started to move onto Miles and Bird because that's what was happening.

*MV: Did you go out to hear live music? You were in a great place to hear it.*

LF: In Long Island I used

to go out to the Cork and Bib. Wednesday night was amateur night. Jackie Mclean came out with a student of his and they played one set. The student had all the embroidery of hipness: a really beat up horn, a black dude with a really tarnished look, and a lot of goodness and anger. He played like Jackie did but worse or better, or worse and better, I mean with these swooping harmonics. For me as a kid this was the tonic of hipness, from reading Norman Mailer: "The White Negro," about all these types of existential tones about guys who had experiences that precluded the civil rights movement. It was the idea of hopelessness but also empowerment. Anyhow, the cat comes out and plays. Mike, the piano player decides he wants to go home and have a hotdog and that he is not going to play anymore. So they say, "Screw it, we won't play anymore!" and I say, "No, no this can't be! This cat is too good I have to hear him again at least once...I'll play the piano!"

*MV: You said you would play?*

LF: I did.

*MV: Did you play at all then?*

LF: A little bit. [giggles]

*MV: So your parents had a piano?*

LF: Yeah, we had a piano! I played fundamental blues but never learned key signature or timings. Still don't know it! [laughs] I have a semblance of it but it doesn't necessarily compute, which is a pain in the ass because it's really the primary thing for improvisation.

*MV: Besides intuition.*

LF: I can improvise like shit, all kinds of ways, but it's all wrong.

*MV: It depends who hears it!*

LF: [Laughs] Right. Anyhow, I go outside and had this big ball of hash that I had scored in the car. I sit there and smoke half of it thinking that this is going to be the elixir that's gonna bring my chops into order. Lord help us! So we get back on the bandstand and I sit at the piano; they have a nice Steinway too. I get up there and they all get ready to count off the tune "this and that in Bb"...[Laughs] and I say "Excuse me... I am a little limited, can we work on it in C first and then we can move up to those other tonics?" So they give me a look and mumble, "Alright



Dave Lantz IV with Bob Dorough and George Young at the Deer Head Inn, 2009

man okay, we can do that... Okay..." You know how they can be.

*MV: I do, I do.*

LF: So I start to stride out a little bit and they are looking at me like, "this cat can't play piano." I am trying my best. Anyhow, the cat starts to play and they get the thing going on and I just comp a little bit. Then it's time for my solo and I get so damn breathless that I faint and I fall off the goddamn piano chair and slide under the piano, anxiety stricken! But the band is on and that's what I wanted!

*MV: So you end up getting what you want in the end anyway. They didn't, but you did!*

LF: Right. They left me down there... "You stay down there, okay? We'll be pianoless this set, you're cool."

*MV: You probably had the best seat for that set too!*

LF: Right [Laughs], I tried to get better after that but I haven't succeeded.

*MV: But you've had a lot of fun.*

LF: I have.

*MV: Which I think is more important. So that was your piano debut, right?*

LF: [Laughs] Yeah.

*MV: Have you ever tried to play publically since, or is it something you just fool around with at home?*

LF: Well, do you know Claire Daily? Claire is a friend along with Ruben Rodin, who is a bass player and a photographer. She has a flat in New York and invited me to come and play with her from time to time. She thinks I am not terrible, or even better than that! She likes my energy and is a dear of a person. So I was going to this Look 3 Festival out in Charlottesville. I was the star photographer of that festival. I asked if I could bring up a trio because we had played at her loft a couple of times and had some fun. I can't attest to the quality of the music, but she said that it was better than I thought so that was enough for me. I brought my trio down, got them paid and they stayed at this sumptuous plantation I was staying at... an unbelievable place. I have a friend down there and it's like Monticello. So I gave a lecture, and then we had an hour to play.

*MV: What was the lecture on?*

LF: Oh, my pictures. Actually, the lecture was with Donald Antrim, who is a writer and friend of mine. Then we played for an hour or so and the next night there was another thing and we played again. It was okay, I was very shy. Then after that I started playing the harmonica.



Steve Lacy, 1964.

*MV: When exactly did that start?*

LF: The harmonica is only about four and a half years old I guess. But Jesus that's a thrill, since it is so limited you can't get too bad!

*MV: Right, now we have talked about this. You have a bunch of diatonic harmonicas, but no chromatic?*

LF: I can't play chromatic. I have one but all it does is play the wrong thing! [laughs]

*MV: That's the funny thing about the chromatic scale, it always does the wrong thing! So that's only four years old, you have come a long way on that thing!*

LF: I can play it. I am reasonably articulate on the sucker. I used to go to a harmonica club over in the Poconos...

*MV: Harmonica club?*

LF: Yeah, there is a harmonica club out at Stroudsburg. A couple years ago I was going up and there was a guy, Scottie, who was the head of the club. Not a guy



John Coltrane, 1961-1962.

who really played the harmonica but old Irish tunes - he was a good old family Irish guy, and he played clean. Each note was like a whistle. I would come up and play my wobbling blues. I never play clean, I can but it takes so much extra effort that why... just go on through and have a little extra intonation on the side. What difference does it make? Unless you are really anal... He heard me play and he said, "You are really good, but there is something to be said for a clean note Larry." [Laughs]

*MV: So we talked about growing up and the musical influence in your house. We talked about piano, harmonica, playing a little bit here and there. So when did you start interacting with all these musicians? There must have been something about them that drew you to either photograph them or be around them. How did that start?*

**LF:** Mostly to photograph them. You know, I had a perverse idolatry about jazz musicians. Not perverse against them but against my own sense of worth. I mean I used to "heroize" them to a high degree.

*MV: Was that about their music or their personalities?*

**LF:** They were black and I had a reverse racism if you would call it that, which of course obviously by this time is gone. The music was so important to me, not only to me but at that time all of the beatniks and intellectuals...

*MV: What time are we talking about?*

**LF:** The 60's. Before the Stones came in.

*MV: That's the best time, there was so much going on.*

**LF:** Oh, unbelievable. Archie, Marian and Leroy, those were all my friends. I started to interact with them with the left wing movement and the civil rights movement, and with the free music thing. You know,

that's where I met Steve Lacey and Ann Roswell.

*MV: So did you go to see these people and then just tried to talk to them? Because I know you are very open and you are not hesitant.*

**LF:** Yeah, I am more vociferous now because I am older and I don't give a shit. Back then I was shy and I did have a little modesty because I was "hero-izing" these guys.

*MV: What did you find when you did talk to them? Did you feel this vision that you had of them was justified? I know a lot people today say that jazz musicians are so accessible or friendly or just open to do whatever. A lot of people think, "Oh so and so, they are so much this way or that way" but then when you talk to them you find out that they are really*

*just normal people. So did you find that as you started to meet these people, you also enjoyed them as people too?*

**LF:** Yeah, but I hung onto the isolated idolatry for a long time.

*MV: Well it was probably out of respect because you hear what they do.*

**LF:** What they did to my soul opened me up in so many ways. Musically and humanly it was unbelievable. They were the total tonic for my existence, they made it possible.

*MV: Did those relationships happen first and then the photography happened second?*

**LF:** No, as a young photographer I would photograph wherever I was. There was always a camera around. I photographed whenever I saw something that I felt and reflected on, like if I was at the Five Spot or something like that. I didn't photograph enough now that I see my archives - they are broad and wide and encompass much of the last century's culture, but I didn't photograph enough. I should have photographed more. I don't know why that is, but it just so happens to be. I wasn't the kind of photographer who would say, "Oh, that's my project," and then would start to hammer away at this type of thing compulsively like a work a day thing.

*MV: Because it does come off kind of forced...*

**LF:** It can be, or it doesn't have to be. For me it was like, "wow," and then I would get pictures harvested and I wouldn't have to go back. That didn't happen until Social Graces in the 70's when I said, "Wow, this is something!" I started to feel my oats as a photographer in a very singular way. I had been at it by that time in the 70's for almost 15 to 20 years. I was starting to bulk up and then I started to work really hard and I have ever since. Now I am laid back again because I am



Bob Dorough and his wife, Sally, 2010

older and I have achieved everything you can possibly achieve just about, and I just photograph out of the same impulses and the same meanings, but much less.

*MV: Well, there is much less pressure to actually do something.*

**LF:** Yeah, I am not under assignment for the most part and when I am I go to do it. I love assignments.

*MV: Now how about the other book, the boxing book? Were you drawn to that in the same way you were drawn to musicians? Can you draw similar connections between what inspired you, whether it is the personalities, or were you inspired by what you saw?*

**LF:** I liked the emotional honesty of the expression. I liked the obsessiveness of it. Musicians are obsessive out of their brains and boxers are obsessive out of their brains. It's a different kind of training, that's for sure. But it's that kind of incredible marriage of will and mystery and obsession. Boxing is like that. Boxing more than music, there's a highly dramatic class structure between managers and owners and promoters and simple innocent boxers and champions. Unbelievable slices of class life in terms of Marxist sociological ties.

*MV: All existing at the same time in one situation. Whereas the musicians are pretty much just singular identities or the most you have is a band...*

**LF:** Even though managers can screw musicians all over the place, but I wasn't privy to that.

*MV: Well it is not as visible.*

**LF:** No, exactly. What happens in the boxing arena

and club is really visible, what happens in the back offices of Atlantic Records is not so.

*MV: Right. Did you ever have an opportunity to get back there, whether it is just the kitchen of a club, to interact or see people?*

**LF:** Well, the kitchen of the Vanguard was mine to have because I was Max and Lorraine's family photographer. Because they were leftist, they knew my parents so they were always together.

*MV: Was there a big difference when you saw people that were backstage or hanging out versus the feeling you got from them when watching them perform on stage?*

**LF:** Oh yeah, sure because they just fell into their own being on stage. By definition they are going to proactively be a different way.

*MV: Is there anything you look for when you are photographing something?*

**LF:** Well, sure. I'm looking for this...music like photography, like art, like the question of anything is the mathematics of what creates beauty. Basically what you are trying to do is create a structure for which the person/subject can live. If you are photographing one person, or the musician in this case, the objective is to see how many different ways you can invent a mosaic for that person to live in, not necessarily just as a pleasing design but also as a design of the experience you are having in front of your eyes. So like improvisation where you take a tune with a various number of changes within it, then you scope and waddle and architect and move out beyond and make it into very slim lines and then fatten it back up or bring in a kind of vibrato and then finally end it with a smooth motion, well you can do the same thing without sound using a visual premise. That is if the person who is looking at the picture can see it that way. I try to make it easier than harder. I am not obsessed with being obscure. In fact I want to be accessible, but my whole credo in terms of being accessible was not to cheapen the experience by the accessibility, but to enhance it.

*MV: Did you ever try to recreate or portray what you were hearing through what you were creating visually?*

**LF:** One-to-one, never that...that's because the abstractions just don't concur. It would be rigorously phony to think that they do.

*MV: I'm saying if you heard something that was a really fast, an exciting tune, then a photograph from that exact moment could appear quite opposite. It could be sad or appear slow, but you don't know because you are capturing this one moment a certain way. Do you ever try to capture the emotion of the experience literally for the sake of a photograph?*

**LF:** No, for the sake of trying to find a code or visualize the experience, no. For instance there is a picture in the music book of Trane that refers to the sheets of sound, you know the one? I definitely purposely

tried to do that. That's called panning the camera. You stabilize it and then move it. I tried to do that because Trane was talked about back then in '62 as playing "sheets of sound" and I said, "Hmm."

*MV: That was a very prominent adjective that was used in any articles that were written about him during that time.*

**LF:** Yeah, it was like rapid-fire impressionism.

*MV: But that doesn't even necessarily reflect the moment musically, it just reflects how people were describing him.*

**LF:** Right, but either way the words were in my brain and I thought I would try it and I did it. The biggest miracle was realizing it worked! [Laughs] Really! Those things are gifts to me. I mean, I am a talented guy but when the shit comes out like that...that's cool!

*MV: Whether you try to or not. Like the photo of the trombone we were talking about fitting into the shape of the tree. That's a hell of a thing. [The photograph is used on page 6 of this issue.]*

**LF:** Right. I saw that a while ago as I told you.

*MV: But that was a surprise to you, right? That was not something that you had intentionally planned?*

**LF:** Oh no, I intentionally planned that but I didn't know if I was going to be able to get it.

*MV: Oh I see, I see.*

**LF:** I was two blocks away and I saw the crook in the tree and I saw the trombone. I said to myself, "Huh, I wonder if this is possible." So I was moving along with it, like the undercurrent to a wave and then \*whap whap whap\* and I didn't know whether I had gotten it until a week later.

*MV: That makes it even better!*

**LF:** No no, it was willful but still based on chance. The symphony was written. Whether or not I was going to be able to expedite it was another story.

*MV: That's great. So do you have other stories that stick out on your mind about any particular musicians or clubs?*

**LF:** Bruce Langhorne was the guitar player who is

known to be Mr. Tambourine Man in Bob Dylan's song. He was a beautiful, happy-go-lucky guy who had his three fingers of his strumming hand crushed by something, and they were basically three balls. Since he was a guitar player, this enhanced his guitar playing ability by creating a rhythmic possibility and he elaborated on it extensively. We met through God knows where and I used to go to New York before I lived there and go to his flat. I would hang out and play blues dulcimer of all things. [Laughs] And get high and hang with Mr. Tambourine Man. Who would know that that kind of fame would ever become him! That went on for a year and then finally I took his flat. That was pretty much on the folk music scene so even though I was listening to jazz and I was going around the corner to the Metro-pole and downstairs where Eldridge and those guys would be holding fort, basically what would be happening in the homestead was more of a folk blues kind

of an orientation. It was more important for me to play music at that time, even as inept as I was I think, than it was to photograph. Photographing has always been, even though I have done quite it well over the years, something that is against my claw because I am not shy but I don't like to interrupt people or mess them up. In order to photograph you have to cop an attitude. You have to be on top of it, like, "I am a photographer and I have certain privileges and rights!" One of the reasons now, in my ancient times that I don't photograph as much as I could, especially on the street or at public events, is that

I don't particularly feel like my putting my camera in people's faces. Because I know when I do, I do it. It's not just a joke.

*MV: Well you have to.*

**LF:** I have to go after it obsessively. That to me... it makes me curdle from the social end. However, back to music. So when I finally inherited Bruce's 8 Amsterdam Avenue (which is now Lincoln Center) flat, I used to have some of these musician guys over like it was the style of Bohemia of that day. If somebody had a good place that they had as a flat, kids would come around and they want to stay for a long time because "somebody had a flat so let's stay around." Now I, being my mother's son, wasn't going to have any of that. I needed my territory, I needed my privacy, and I needed



Bobby Avey at the Deer Head Inn, 2012

my control. So they would come around every night and we would get high and we would play and play and play and Bruce would come by. A guy named Sandy Bull, a piano player and odd person who eventually killed himself by burning down his townhouse because he was smoking in bed, was a brilliant musician and would come back with very odd and obscure configurations from the east. We would all do that all the time, but when it came to be four o'clock in the morning and everyone was just about passed out on the floor... "Alright, let's go!" "What do you mean?" "Let's go! Four o'clock... time's up. I gotta go to sleep." "Man, this is a house... this is cool, what a place! Yow!" "No, no, no yow about it! Out!" And then the other part of my mother that I shed quite considerably is the mean part that set in, "Alright motherfucker, out the fucking door!" And they would leave but come back every night at eight! [Laughs] But it was all about music. It was all about getting high, hanging out, and about music.



Dave Liebman at the Deer Head Inn, 2010

*MV: So you were actually living like musicians were living. I mean, you seem to have been doing all the same things that they all talk about doing.*

**LF: Yeah.**

*MV: So it is interesting that photography took you through life, not music. Music stayed with you the whole time but what you ended up doing is photography.*

**LF: Yeah.**

*MV: So how did that come about? Is it just the way it happened or was there an event?*

**LF: You mean, why am I not a musician?**

*MV: Yeah! If that is how you were starting out. Was there a particular event or were people drawn to what you were doing with photography instead of music?*

**LF: Well I think it was too introverted.**

*MV: What was?*

**LF: Music.**

*MV: For your personality?*

**LF: Since I am my mother's son and I had social engagement as part of my personality, I wanted to contribute in a way where communication was really on schedule. Music was not that. Music was to communicate the schedule of the soul to the bigger whole but it was not about talking about public events. I was a real political, revolutionary, public event kind of guy. So along with playing music all night I would be on a demonstration line or in an office, or photographing on the**

**street in the daytime. So had I been a musician, rather than going out to those public events and photographing and using the camera as my license for my curiosity about what is happening out there in the street... those six, seven, eight hours that I spent in the broader arena I would have spent in front of a piano. That I couldn't do.**

*MV: I see. The solitary thing...*

**LF: Yeah I couldn't do that.**

*MV: Because a lot of the time that you were spending was still with people or musicians playing or hanging out. That had to be part of it also.*

**LF: Yeah because in order to develop real musical chops one has to have real musical chop time. I didn't want to put that time in. Photography was a loose way to put in chop time because you can go out in the street and photograph and see all the events.**

*MV: You are still actually doing the thing.*

**LF: You are still engaged.**

*MV: You aren't sitting at home with your camera taking a picture of a cup and then looking at it and figuring it out...*

**LF: There are 88 keys on a piano and I could photograph each one of those keys and come back with... not much. [Laughs] I was hungry, hungry, hungry for life experience as I was hungry for musical beauty and**

release, but I wasn't willing to put in the chop time to become the musician that I possibly could've been.

*MV: Did you ever take a third road at any time or was that basically what you did? It was either music or photography?*

**LF: Yeah, the third road was the revolution in the 60's, political action and activity...**

*MV: But you were still photographing during that, so that was still the vehicle.*

**LF: Yeah, but I was still pretty well ensconced in certain activities.**

*MV: But you never decided to be a lawyer or anything...*

**LF: No, I never took a conventional road. I started teaching in 1963 in Harlem as part of the revolution.**

*MV: Was that teaching photography?*

**LF: Yeah. Teaching photography and teaching community awareness, being part of a bigger revolutionary program. That was my conventional way, if you will. I became a teacher and then I went to school at the U Arts in Cooper Union. I have been teaching all my life and I am teaching still.**

*MV: Where are you teaching now?*

**LF: I've been teaching at Bard College for 24 years, professor. And then Lehigh University, Lafayette, Yale, Cooper Union.**

*MV: Now is that as a guest?*

**LF: Ever since Yale in 1978 I have been an active professor. No college degree but I was always a guest. I was full time at Cooper Union as the acting head of the department for a moment of time.**

*MV: Do you have any particular thoughts or experiences about these area musicians like Bob Dorough, Phil Woods, Dave Liebman, or Urbie Green? Anything like that that sticks out to you since you have been here and been around?*

**LF: Well, Bobby Dorough is a leprechaun of goodness. One thing that is really clear about all the musicians in this area here is the extent of their generosity when it comes to young kids and to the continued development of the music. This is really pretty profound. Unlike the sometimes mean spirited cutting contests of some fabled yesteryear, this place takes on the present with some tremendous amount of generosity.**

*MV: And you have had a lot of interaction with the younger generation too, whether it be Jay Rattman or Bobby Avey. I know*



**Ornette Coleman, 2007**

*you have a relationship with Bobby.*

**LF: Oh yeah with all the guys. Pat McGee as well as Davey Lantz, a good piano player man...complicated harmonies, and McGee is ridiculous. He can do it and with such heat too, he is not shy at all. It's fun.**

*MV: Well, it's a small very close family up here, you know? So I think the learning environment - this master to younger apprentice type thing is just a much richer experience for everybody because it's not that big. It is who it is and there are only the handful of people that the kids are going to go to, but they all happen to be these generous type personalities that you are talking about. A place like New York or Philadelphia... there are just too many people and it's so spread out and un-personal in a way. It's a city and that's just the way it's going to be, but I mean it is a unique situation here. I will tell you when I went to college for the first time you realize that if you grew up in Minnesota, you didn't have this. Being a kid growing up here you think that this is the way it is, but it is not the way it is and this is a very special place in that regard.*

*That's the whole reason that I am here with you in the first place. You did the same thing with Jonno Rattman and others I'm sure. Jonno in particular has gone on to do wonderful things and has a great career ahead of him as a photographer. It is not just about music, but about art in general. So I consider you the same kind of person as Phil, Liebman, or Dorough, and I appreciate you taking the time to show me around and have this conversation. I think it's important for our readers to know you are a staple of the art community with a great appreciation for music and culture and one of the true heavy hitters in the history of photography with an incredibly unique viewpoint and sense of humor on any topic! Thank you! ☺*

# 38th COTA 2015 Jazz And Art Festival

By Lauren Chamberlain  
Photos by Bob Weidner



The 2015 COTA Cats

The last COTA related article in the Fall/Winter 2015 issue was a feature written by one of COTA's founders, Rick Chamberlain. As many of you know based on word of mouth and my articles here, Rick passed away after a one-year battle with cancer in March of 2015. Because of both Rick's and Eric Doney's passing, this was a special year for the COTA Festival and I thought it was fitting to hear about it through the eyes of Lauren, Rick's daughter. Lauren is the COTA President on the Board of Directors for the festival. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Lauren for taking the time to write this article (certainly not easy!) and share her thoughts and views on what was a special event that will be remembered for a long time. – Matt Vashlishan

The 2015 COTA Festival was no different than any of the other 37 years in that it was an awe inspiring weekend of composition, world class music, and celebrating the musicians who have made this jazz mecca their home. It was a differ-

ent year though, as this year was celebrating Rick Chamberlain; co-founder, trombonist, composer and friend. My father lost his battle with cancer on March 27, 2015, and the COTA organization celebrated his life and legacy with a line-up of music that was dedicated to him.

The festival opened with Nancy Reed, (no stranger to COTA as she and her husband, Spencer played at the first one and quite a lot through the years). A beautiful voice backed by an all-star rhythm section: Jim Ridl, Steve Varner, and special guests Bill Goodwin and Spencer Reed.

The Dixie Gents took the main stage for the first time this year. The Dixie Gents were always a favorite strolling band during the festival and a staple on Sunday nights at the Tannersville Inn every Sunday night throughout the 80's and early 90's in their red striped shirts and musical antics. Bob Leive, Ken Foy, Jay Rattman, Paul Hubbell, Paul Scott and Ray Schweisguth paid tribute to just one of the very many musical genres that made up Rick Chamberlain's career through the years. And in true Dixieland fashion they honored him with When the Saints Go Marching In which brought the crowd to their feet, and to tears.

## Bob Dorough

Very few can argue that seeing the charismatic bopster Bob Dorough live is not a great experience. A long time local to the area, Bob has always been a COTA friend. The festival would not be complete without Bob's whimsical lyrics and enthusiasm. His talent has spanned decades and he continues to delight the audience. His friendship and involvement with



COTA Festival Orchestra

the community is also unsurpassed. Although known internationally for Schoolhouse Rock, his talent range is so much broader. His tribute to losses this year near and dear to us was sad, but so heart-warming in a way only Bob can be. He can warm the heart of anyone with his smile and voice, and pair him with Steve Berger, Pat O'Leary, and Tom Whaley...no one can help but smile.

## COTA Festival Orchestra

The COTA festival orchestra transformed through the years as many different names in its growth stage but ultimately became the Phil Woods' COTA Festival Orchestra. Under the leadership of Woods and the dedication and nurturing of Chamberlain, the COTA festival orchestra album Celebration became Grammy nominated. Woods' writing for the band, a band he knew like himself, and my fathers' charismatic



Bob Dorough Quartet





**COTA Cat Saxophone section**



**Jim Ridl**

way of leading the band was a combination that made musical history. The big band honored him eloquently at the festival with a trombone section that wanted nothing more than to play him proud. The band is a steadfast at the festival, representing two of the founders' passion for the festival and music. Now led by Matt Vashlishan and coordinated by Erica Golaszewski they play the last Monday of every month at the Deer Head Inn.

Shortly after Dad passed, the COTA community also lost Eric Doney, pianist, composer and mentor. He and my father were not only friends, but they shared the same philosophies, embracing the importance of mentoring new cats in the jazz world. In that vein, COTA dedicated a double set in memory of Eric and gave the reins of organizing it to his students, past and present, to pay tribute to him in their own musical words. Bobby Avey took this task to heart and brought together a group of musicians that were all deeply touched by Eric and follow in his footsteps with their ability to mesmerize people with such lyrical melodies and compositions. Bobby Avey, Zach Brock, Mitch Cheng, Davey Lantz, Patrick McGee, Vaughn Stoffey, Connor Koch and Tyler Dempsey played a melancholy, yet fitting,

tribute to Eric, with such beautiful lines that it felt like Eric was there.

### **Jazz Mass**

The Jazz Mass was started in 1978 by then pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the Mountain, Bill Cohea and COTA Founder Richard Chamberlain. In exchange for Cohea performing Chamberlain's marriage for him Bill asked for him, in lieu of money, to develop a jazz mass. Chamberlain took the commission to heart and enlisted the help of other talented writers; David Ellis, Wolfgang Knittel and Mark Kirk, and they developed what we have now come to know and love over the last 37 years as the Mass. Mark Kirk took over the conductor role this year and led the Mass band and choir gloriously.

### **COTA Cats**

Celebrating its 35th year, the big band comprised of local high school students, again rose to the occasion and performed with the air of professional musicians. They honored my father musically with the help of Sherrie Maricle who composed a piece in his honor which the COTA Cats played. Sam Burtis also joined the Cats bringing his amazing trombone talents in his honor.

### **Chamberlain Family**

The Chamberlain family could not have been prouder (or larger) when COTA named the stage the Rick Chamberlain stage. It was such an honor for the family to know how great his outreach was and how much he was loved and respected by COTA and the community. ☺



**The Chamberlain family**



**Jay Rattman - clarinet, Paul Scott - tuba, Paul Hubbell - saxophone,  
Ray Schweisguth - banjo, Bob Leive - trumpet, and Ken Foy - trombone**



# THE DIXIE GENTS

Photo Bob Weidner



ter Gap



Jonno Rattman

By Jay Rattman

*Jay Rattman: So you were in L.A. staying with your wife's grandparents, is this Dottie?*

**Jerry Dodgion:** Yeah, I stayed all night and then I picked up Gerald [Wilson] and we picked up Teddy Edwards and we drove to Las Vegas. Then I said, "Who else is in the band?" and Gerald said, "Well there are four saxes: Teddy, and Wardell [Gray] is playing the other tenor." I said, "oooh." [Laughs] "And Jewel Grant is playing baritone." I said, "okay." And then Teddy mentions, "You know," he says, "that Wardell was revived from an overdose just three weeks ago and did we think he is going to be okay?" Gerald said "Benny said that Wardell told him that he would be fine, and Benny is very a classy, honest guy so if he told me that, then that is good enough for me." He gives everybody their due, you know. So we got to Las Vegas and the new hotel is on the other side of town, over the tracks on the west side, but all the big hotels are on the strip which is on the other side of town on the main highway. There was a whole real estate development there with new houses and such, so they put us in houses. There were about three or four of us in each house. Teddy's wife was there; she was a dancer in the line in the show, and there was a line of girls with all sorts of things happening. The band was four saxes, three trumpets, one trombone, piano, bass and drums, and Benny was the conductor. It wasn't a jazz gig, it was a show gig, but it was good money for jazz players

## Jerry Dodgion Interview Part Two

who don't get paid like that. I think it was six nights a week, or seven, but it might have been six and we were closed on the seventh night. I don't remember, but anyway we played three shows a night so it paid very well for 1955. Anyway, we rehearsed for a week, oh and Mercer Ellington was there because he had written some of the music for the show. He took the hardest way to write. He transcribed a Machito record for one of these dances, and it seemed like he wasn't experienced in seeing any of that music written which is usually written in quarter notes and eighth notes. He wrote it in eighth notes and 16ths. When we went through it the band was having trouble reading it and Wardell read it perfectly! Now that really amazed me because he is really known for being a jazz player and he read it perfectly, and I thought how is that possible? He can't be reading all the time. I know if I am sight-reading all the time it is good, but if I am not, it's not! So after we got through it once and he had not made one mistake, he turned around to the trumpets and he said, "Okay, you trumpets, the bus's motor is still running to take you guys back to Los Angeles. You can do better than that!" It wasn't until years later when I knew Pepper Adams and we played together, Pepper and Wardell had been very good friends and they were both avid readers. So he had it together, he had really good training some place, and really had it together. No one else read Machito written in 16ths and eighths because it's just a big obstacle. That's a lot of my learn-

ing experience that has happened to me and that's happening all the time. Anyway, we rehearsed for a week and then we had our grand opening.

JR: *Did the band finish the engagement?*

JD: Oh yeah and it was pretty successful all through the summer! The third show was packed full of people who went to the other shows and this was a little later than the other shows. The place was doing well. The casino was always full. But when we left, it was after Labor Day I guess, and Lionel Hampton came in for two or three weeks and during that time the place closed. They said it was because of bad management, which could be. Who knows? Or... Who the hell knows? You know, what goes on... Maybe the other places didn't like the competition. It was a strange place anyway; Las Vegas is just so strange. There is no culture...everything is made for the green tables. The whole city is designed for that. And some people who aren't connected with that are living a normal life. There is only one guy I met that sort of grew up there, Dennis Mackrel. He went to high school there and started college there. He lived in a military family and they lived lots and lots of different places. Then later on of course, Joe Williams moved there, [James] Moody lived there for a while. I thought, that sure is a different place that I knew. I don't know, maybe things are getting better, but it was just so far out to me.

JR: *So, after the engagement I guess you returned to the Bay Area?*

JD: Yeah, and then in October that year I got married! That's why I said it was a big year! In '55 all this happened, Billie Holiday, my own record date, the Vince Guaraldi record date, the summer with Benny Carter, with all of its ups and downs, and I got married too all in the same year.

JR: *So when you were staying in L.A. before the gig at that time that was the family of your fiancée because you weren't married yet?*

JD: We weren't married yet, no. But I had been there several times visiting.

JR: *Was this Dottie?*

JD: Yeah.

JR: *And how did you guys meet?*

JD: We met on a gig; she was a singer. There was a little gig I played near San Rafael, across the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.

JR: *Had she not picked up drums by that time?*



Photo courtesy Jerry Dodgion

Dizzy with Jerry in Perth Australia 1989. Dizzy's United Nations Band.

JD: She played a little drums then. She had good time. I tried to get her to study or take some lessons so that she could sound more professional, but every time she had some reason to not do it. But she had a gift, an unbelievable gift of time. In the little bands she played with, the drummers were often late so she started filling in. That is how she learned, and her father was a drummer. Her father played the strip joints in San Francisco. Her grandparents introduced me to Italian food like I had never known. [Her grandfather] made his own wine, rented trees from an olive orchard and made his own olive oil. Really unbelievable, just great! When we got married, we moved to Larkspur, which is in Marin County across the Golden Gate Bridge. It was great! A friend of mine bought a house and he said, "I am going to fix up the downstairs as a three room apartment and you can have it for 30 dollars a month when it is ready." I said okay. But the whole place was 175 stairs up the side of the hill. So we moved in there and it was great. Thirty dollar a month rent and it was

beautiful up there, but getting up there and getting down was another thing. I learned a lot. You know when you get in your car and are ready to go to a gig and say, "Oh, my mouthpiece!" Well you don't do that when you have to go up 175 stairs. Then of course when we worked together I would carry the drums down, carry drums up, carry the garbage down, but you know when you are newly married it is okay because everything works. You know! We were there just a couple of years when Dottie and I were working some summer gig in '57. I don't know how to describe that area, it wasn't north, it was sort of west of San Francisco in a little mountainous area. It was a room and board place where we played, but every Sunday I was working a jam session at a motel in San Mateo which is close to the San Francisco airport. One time we were playing a slow blues and I had my eyes closed. I come to the end of my chorus and I hadn't even opened my eyes yet and I hear another alto start to play. I look over and it is Charlie Mariano. I thought, "That's amazing! How the hell did he get down here?" I know he is in San Francisco playing at the Black Hawk with Shelly Manne and his band. Then I see that Russ Freeman came down with him, so we ended up playing a number of songs together and it was a nice time. Charlie was a really good guy and he played his ass off.

JR: Had you known him already by this time?

JD: I didn't really know him; I played with him one time at the San Francisco Union. I had played a couple of tunes with him, I think but I didn't really know him. So we had a nice time and about a month later Russ Freeman calls, and he says, "Say, we are doing an album with Charlie, and Shelly Manne, and Monty Budwig, and Victor Feldman, and two altos, and Jimmy Rowles on piano, and I would like to know if you would like to make it." And he said — this is so dated but so true — he said, "Well these days you have to have a gimmick to get a record date."


JR: (laughs) Nothing's changed!

JD: That seems to work all the time, but that's the saying! So I said, "What's the gimmick?" and he said, "They are all World War I songs." And I said, "Oh shit, will you send me the music?" He said, "Oh yeah, we'll send you the music. Charlie's doing all the arrangements." I said okay. So he sent me the music, and Dot-



Jerry with Jerome Richardson in the kitchen of the Village Vanguard around 1985.

Photo courtesy Jerry Dodgion

tie and I both drove down and stayed at her ~~grandfather's~~  place. The first night I think we had a rehearsal and I think we recorded the next two days. I remember we were recording with the two altos, and vibes and rhythm section, and we were listening to the playback and I remember saying, "Gee, we sound a little bit like Phil and Quill!" I didn't know Phil then of course. I noticed that nobody said anything. West coast, you know!

JR: They weren't familiar with Phil?

JD: No. I wasn't too familiar with him either; I would just hear him on the radio. We did one song that I played the flute on, and Charlie played the recorder. We're listening to the playback and I see Shorty Rogers come into the control room. I know who he is, but I don't know him at all. The other guys know him because they worked with him a lot so they run into the other room to say hello to him, and I just stayed out there to look at the music because there was a lot of music coming up. I didn't think anything about that, and about a month later I get a call from Red Norvo and he said, "Jerry this is Red Norvo. Frank Sinatra gave me an opportunity to take a quintet into the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas for a six week gig, would you be interested?" I said, "Sure! Yeah." And we talked about it, and before we say goodbye, I said, "Excuse me, Red. You and I have never met, so why are you calling me?" He said, "Oh, my brother-in-law told me to call you." I said, "Who is your brother-in-law?" He said, "Shorty Rogers." I said, "I know who he is, but

I don't know him either! How did that happen?" He says, "Well I called him and said, 'look I need an alto player who plays a little flute. Is there anybody you can recommend?' And he told me, 'Why don't you get that guy from San Francisco. I just heard him on a record date with Charlie Mariano; he might be good for your group.'" And [Red] said, "Oh, what's his name?" And [Shorty] said, "I don't know!" Now if Red hadn't decided to find out my name — I guess he called Jimmy Rowles or Charlie or somebody, and found my name and number and called me — but if he hadn't taken the time to do that, my life... See that record date with Charlie changed my whole life. Not necessarily that it's good or not good: it wasn't even released for eight or nine months later, so it had nothing to do with that, but it was just timing and luck. So I go to Las Vegas, and it's a six-week gig and we keep getting held over and held over. Occasionally we would go into L.A. on a night off and do a little TV thing or something, and it was six months before our "six-week gig" was over. Then we made a little tour, my first time to come east. We made a little tour in cars and Dottie came with me and we put Dottie's drums in the Volkswagen because we knew we were going to play in Detroit. We knew Terry Pollard, who lived there, and Herman Wright, the bass player. We met them when they were both with Terry Gibbs in San Francisco. Terry Gibbs was the guy who would say, "Hey, you got your horn? Come sit in." We played two weeks at Baker's Keyboard Lounge, which was a well-known jazz club in Detroit at that time. I went to hear Yusef Lateef and Terry Pollard was playing with him. Eventually we got together and played with Terry and Herman Wright, and Dottie and me at Terry's house, I think. From there, I think we went to Toronto for two weeks at the Town Tavern, which was a big club in those days. Then we went to Rochester for a weekend and then down into Manhattan to play the Dave Garroway TV Show in the early morning. So that preceded these early morning TV shows. And you had to get there at five in the morning. We stayed at the President Hotel. There were things that I had always heard about, my first time in New York. All the guys that had been on the road through New York would say, "You gotta to stay at the President Hotel, man."

JR: *Where was that?*

JD: 48th. Still there, 48th between Broadway and Eighth. Then we drove down and played the Red Hill Inn for a week. That was a prominent jazz club in those days. That was in Camden. I don't know if Camden is in New Jersey or Philadelphia. I think it is outside of Philadelphia.

JR: *Yeah, it's in New Jersey, right near Philadelphia.*

JD: Oh, okay. Then when we left we went to Buffalo



1960 "500 Club" in Atlantic City, NJ. Red Norvo Quintet (left to right): Red on vibes, Jimmy Wyble on guitar, Frank Sinatra, John Markham on drums, Jerry Dodgion on flute, and Red Woffen on bass.

Photo courtesy Jerry Dodgion

and played in Buffalo for a week at a restaurant. Then we had three days to get to L.A. for a TV rehearsal for The Dinah Shore Show, and there was a blizzard! This the stuff, you know, the stuff that stories are made of! Dottie and I were driving together and we didn't check in until we got to Arizona, we checked in just to get to sleep for five hours. Anyway, we made it!

JR: *Wait, you drove straight from Buffalo to L.A.? Oh my goodness.*

JD: Yeah. I remember coming into Saint Louis on the highway and the car started sputtering but it wasn't out of gas. There was a gas station, so I sputtered right into the gas station —barely — and it stops and won't start. So I said, "What the hell?" So the guy comes over and says, "What's the matter?" I said, "I don't know, it just started sputtering." He said, "Your gas line is frozen." Frozen? Yeah, well we had been driving

in a blizzard for hours, days! He said, "Well you have to put dry gas in the gas tank." So he put some dry gas in the gas tank and put some in the back where the engine is and we took off. We were okay and never had any more trouble, but I mean if that had happened in a desolate spot, oh man! Luck, see? We were blessed with good luck. Anyway, we got to L.A. and then we went back to work at The Sands. At The Sands, we alternated with two other groups and we worked six hours a night. That was like midnight until six in the morning, which is great hours in Las Vegas because the best time of the day in Las Vegas is from six in the morning until noon. Then after that, it's too hot to do anything, so you might as well be sleeping in air conditioning. So, it was okay. We got to hang out a lot in the little coffee shop area there, and the people that were playing the main show, we would meet some of them. Red knew a lot of people because he was an old timer from part of jazz history, so... Amazing, really amazing. And The Sands was the hippest of the Las Vegas places. For example the people that played the main room were Louis Armstrong, Dinah Shore, Sammy Davis, Lena Horne, Nat King Cole. Really the high level acts. The other places had like pop and icon funny people. Even the lounges, there were groups that, you know, they played trombones from trapezes and stuff like that. That stuff was going on. But we actually had very musical groups, and we played opposite Jackie and Roy for three months at one stretch a couple of times. So, we actually played there... and then starting into the next year — that was in '58 — Red said, "Look, we are going to have to change drummers. Can you recommend a drummer?" I said, "There is one drummer I would recommend from San Francisco. He plays small group and he plays big band well too." He said, "Oh, because we may be doing some stuff with Frank Sinatra himself and Benny Goodman as well." So I said, "Well, if you can get this guy..." and I gave him John Markham's number and he called him and he said yes. So we went to L.A. then and had a little gig... Now I was with Red for three years and I always say that Red Norvo was my music school because in the three years, we had such a great variety of stuff to do. The quintet with no piano was great playing and he played some of my songs and it was very enjoyable and challenging. And they could play fast! I mean really! I could never play that fast. I learned though that when you play real fast you have to not play very loud.

JR: You have to play light.

JD: Yeah, you gotta play light. So you know when I heard saxophone players that are playing fast, even Sonny Stitt, when they are playing fast they aren't



1989 1st Annual World Tour of Three – Gene Harris' Philip Morris Super Band – Jerry on a camel sight seeing excursion outside of Cairo.

Cary Smulyan

playing loud. He could really articulate. It was great. The only guy that could play really fast and full was Johnny Griffin. He was better than anybody; he could play full tone and articulate. It was unbelievable!

JR: Fastest tenor in the west!

JD: Yeah! Man, and then he and Lockjaw together were dynamite.

JR: I'm curious, by this time who would you say had been your main influences? Or where were you coming from?

JD: Well, I would say Charlie Parker was my main influence definitely. I was starting to hear Cannonball. And I always enjoyed Duke Ellington to hear Johnny Hodges. Total individual. Just unbelievable! The guys played like no body else. Wow! And I always appreciate the tenor players, but I never had any desire to play the tenor. Success for me was, when I joined Red Norvo, selling my tenor, because to me playing the tenor was never good music. It was lousy and painful.

JR: I found the liner notes to that album you did with Charlie Mariano and the guy writing the liner notes said something about in one of your choruses it sounded like you had checked out Phil Woods. Had you checked out Phil by that time, or was he sort of just...?

JD: Well, I heard him on the radio. I didn't have any of his records. And I thought, I gotta get some records of him and that's when I started traveling with Red and I just didn't get around to it. I had heard the Monk...

JR: The Town Hall...

JD: The Town Hall, I guess, the first one I'd heard.





Douglas Purviance

Tommy Flanagan, Jon Faddis, Dizzy and Jerry April 1991. Carnegie Hall Centennial NYC.

And then I had met Pepper Adams at John Marabuto's house one time. We used to get together and play. John Marabuto played piano; Eugene Wright was there because he was — then he was with Brubeck. And then we're playing one day — I remember we were playing in the afternoon — we were playing "Pennies From Heaven," and as soon as I finished my chorus, I hear something. "Holy shit what is that?" and I look and it is Pepper, and I don't know him yet, and he is standing there in his t-shirt and his pajama bottoms playing "Pennies From Heaven" on the baritone sax like something I never heard before in my life, ever. The first time you hear him play it is like...Oh my god, where did he come from? What is this? That was the beginning of a long friendship. He was just amazing! Just amazing!

JR: What year was that?

JD: He was with Stan Kenton, so it was a long time ago. He did one little tour with Stan Kenton, I think. Well, it had to be before I went with Red Norvo, so it had to be '57... '56 or '57. Wow, that's amazing. Anyway! Where were we... The reason I say Red Norvo was my music school is because we had so much variety. When we worked for Frank it was just us and Frank's piano player, which made a six-piece group, and we played for him. Bill Miller was his name, and he had written out some of the scores, you know, the same formats, and some of the things, so Red could play the violin parts, because he could play good with five mallets or six mallets. So you had a little semblance of — we would do the war horses... you know, "I've Got You Under My Skin" — of the same kind of things so the audience would know it and it would sound like when Frank would sing it. Anyway, during those times, the house bands were not very good lots of places, and

we ended up doing Frank Sinatra's personal appearances, playing for him for a year and a half. But it was not a drag because it wasn't a lot: he wasn't working that much in person and he was doing movies and stuff then. So we went to Australia with him, that was my first time to Australia, and we had never been to Europe yet. We had been to Canada and New York, and now we are going to Australia for a week. There was a bootleg of that that came out later. Then Blue Note eventually bought that. They bought it from Will Freidwald. I asked Bill Miller, "How are we going to get paid for this?" He says "I don't know. I have done everything I can do here in L.A. and I can't get shit with it." I said, "okay," so I go to the Union in New York and there was a guy that did that sort of thing working there and I took him the CD, and he says, "I'll get on the case." A year later, he had gotten stonewalled and didn't know what to do. Then I ran into Bob Belden. I said, "Bob, I am trying to get Red Norvo paid for something we did 20 years ago or 30 years ago now. What do I do?" So he says, "This guy at the Union, I forget his name right now, have him call me." So I told him, "Look, Bob Belden says call him." He called him and a couple of weeks later we get paid. Blue Note is owned by Capitol. Then I find out that Capitol is the cheapest record company in the world.

When I am trying to do it on my own, I call Bruce Lundvall of course, because he's the guy that told me it was going to be released. "I've been listening to you all day," he said. "Doing what?" He says, "Playing with Frank Sinatra." I said "No shit!" and he said, "Yeah." So, I call Bruce and I say, "How do we get paid for that?" He said, "Ooo. Here, I'll give you the list — the name — the phone number of the guy in L.A. who does that stuff." So I called him, and I got pissed off. I mean, he sounded like a 14 year old executive telling me,

“Listen kid, you might as well just forget about it. You are not getting paid for this, and if you do get paid it is going to be 1959 scale. So just go f—.” He almost said, “fuck yourself.” And he got me really pissed off, and so that is when I took it to the guy at the union. And it ended up Bob Belden... I said, “How did you do that?” He says, “I know where some of the bodies are buried.” I guess you do! And Red Norvo got paid before he died. He got paid! And he was so — oh, it was just great! Just great! Unbelievable. But I mean, it’s just, for some things you just have to fight, and it’s so... It has nothing to do with music. It’s just, everything doesn’t come to those who wait either; if you don’t fight, you’re not going to get anything in some situations. But this actually worked. And we didn’t even know that it was actually being recorded. And the sound is better than... And Blue Note — oh, this guy: he has his own system that makes it magic or something. I forgot his name. But if you ever see the CD, it says it has been enhanced by so and so. Jimmy Wyble, the guitar player called and said, “You know, I listened to the CD that’s been enhanced by what’s his name with his magic shit. What do you think’s going on there?” “I don’t know,” I said, “Maybe, he probably charged Blue Note 50 thousand dollars to do that.” And he says, “I compared them.” He says, “The sound is better on the other one. On the 78. [Laughs] Or on the LP. The 12-inch LP or something.” He said, “Red’s vibes don’t sound as good on that.” And it is some kind of bullshit enhancer. When he did it, we were invited over to his uh... Oh, and he also did it to the Carnegie Hall band. We only did one CD in the studio. The studio was too small, and it was the Sony 56th Street there, so it was not very good. He did his stuff on that one too. He’s a hustler. He does fine for himself. [Laughs] That’s so funny I forgot all about that. Anyway! Where do we go from there?

JR: So you were playing with Red?

JD: Playing with Red. The reason I say he was my music school is because we had so much variety in music. We did four tours with Benny Goodman. The trombone players, just for example. Each time we toured, we had four horns and Red’s Group plus a piano, and the four horns were trumpet, tenor, trombone, and alto. Jack Sheldon did almost all the trumpet tours, and the trombone was different on every one. That’s how I remember! The very first tour — we went to Europe and played a little around New York — Bill Harris was the trombone player and Flip Phillips was the tenor player. The second tour was the same group except the trombone was Urbie [Green] and we played a tour of the East Coast and stuff. Then the next tour was to Ciro’s in Hollywood on Sunset Boulevard and Lake Tahoe, and Murray McEachern was the trombone player on that tour, and he also played the alto sax. So when we played the theme song, which was usually trombone lead, he would play his alto. He sounded like Hymie Shertzer. And the fourth time was when we played in Las Vegas, but it wasn’t the Sands. With



Photo courtesy Jerry Dodgion

Jerry (left) with Frank Wess. Carnegie Hall Jazz Band circa 1995 during a concert featuring the two Franks, Frank Foster and Frank Wess.

Benny, we played the Desert Inn, and Charlie Shavers was the trumpet player, and the trombone player was Carl Fontana. It is amazing because I read something that Urbie had written recently that named his favorite trombone players and they were all those guys at that time when I worked with them. It was really a learning experience all the way, it was just unbelievable. And to have so much variety. And there was no music school I could go to then. I got out of high school and went right into the University of California because it was tuition free, and I did one semester and said, “I’ve gotta get out of here. I went in to major in music and I am not going to get any music for a couple of years here, it looks like. And they want me to play in the ROTC band... I don’t want to do that stuff!” And they put me in a sight singing class, and the way they decided which class to put you in, they asked you to write eight bars of *The Star Spangled Banner*. So I had been playing in the municipal band, the high school band, the National Guard band... I knew how to write eight bars of *The Star Spangled Banner*, and I wrote eight bars with a wrong note in it! [Laughs] And I got into sight singing class with voice majors.

JR: Oh no!

JD: I mean, coming down my row and I am going to be next and the guy in front of me that sings, and he’s singing it with vibrato and dynamics and shit, and it comes to me and I go [growling] “aghghgh oooooo aghgh buuuuugh,” and then the person behind me is singing. They were voice majors! I thought, “oh man...” I came from a high school of 2,000 and I go into a college of 50,000, and so I am scared and I just thought, “Let me out of here.” And I talked very nicely to my folks, I said “Look, I know you are going to say that you gotta go through with this because it is free... Look how many people want to go here and they can’t afford it.” I said, “Okay, I promise you I’ll go back, but I gotta learn music first. I am going to take private lessons and see how I do.” Whew, man. [Laughs] I lucked out. I really lucked out without a bad scene. ☺

# Devil May Care

—for *Bob Dorough*

Cherry Hill amber moonshine floating  
over sassafras meadow in the mist – *no one* waiting to be kissed  
and Texas looking better by the minute.

With a twang like the low string on a national steel  
and a Cheshire cat smile that  
would light up a bad scene, Mister Gruff and Ready Teddy  
slippin' and slidin', peepin' and a-hidin'  
brought the hill country downtown and 'round town,  
the word was OUT !

*Nothing like you has ever been seen before*, they said  
and after miles and miles, came Miles, then smiles –  
Dorough grin like bathtub gin, bound to last, sure to win,  
'cause feelin' good just ain't no sin;  
rosin up the bow on the vi-o-lin,  
stomp off the tune, put your *whole* self in !

Lift the glass and signify, sanctify, funkify  
the bounce in your step and devil may care  
'cause you ain't done yet, yeah –  
Devil may care 'cause  
you ain't done yet.

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# Bill Holman: A Master of Jazz Arranging and Composing



Helene Snihur

By Bill Dobbins

My first encounter with Bill Holman's arranging occurred a couple of years before I even recognized the name. While in high school, my awareness of big bands was limited mainly to Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Gil Evans (including the collaborations with Miles Davis) and Gerry Mulligan's Concert Jazz Band. The Mulligan recording, which was the debut album of the band, didn't credit the arrangers for the individual tunes. I really loved all of the arrangements, but I was especially drawn toward *Out Of This World* and *I'm Gonna' Go Fishin'*. I was intrigued by the contrapuntal writing, the incorporation of bluesy elements in the melodic content and the way everything swung so powerfully. Many years later I learned that these arrangements were written by Bill Holman.

During the summer of 1964, just a few weeks after graduating from high school, I went on tour with a sacred music group, Thurlow Spurr and the Spurrflows, which had a vocal group of about half dozen singers, a small brass section and a rhythm sec-

tion. I was the youngest person in the group, and the bass trombonist, Dave Ayres, was a Stan Kenton fan. He was especially high on the Bob Graettinger things such as *City of Glass*, but he also had the New Concepts of Artistry and Rhythm and Contemporary Concepts recordings. He had a portable phonograph on the road with him, so I got to listen to some of this music. With my background in classical music, I found Holman's "Invention for Guitar and Trumpet" to be an interesting combination of classical and jazz elements, and I was naturally amazed by Maynard Ferguson's high register dexterity. It was the arrangements of the standards, however, that left me completely spellbound. With *What's New?*, *Stella by Starlight* and *Stompin' at the Savoy*, Holman had fashioned familiar melodies into stunning showcases for the Kenton band and its great soloists. Each of these arrangements had the sophistication and imagination of an original composition, and convincingly integrated one or two of Holman's own thematic ideas with the familiar content of the standard song. They also made use of phrase lengths other than the usual four-bar or eight-bar variety, and the formal designs were usually full of surprises for the attentive listener.

As an undergraduate student at Kent State University in the mid-1960s, some of my fellow music majors and I put together the first ongoing big band at that institution (this was during the days when many university music schools and conservatories still looked down on jazz). At some point, photographic copies of *What's New?* and *Stella by Starlight* (parts only) came into our possession from a source that I've long since forgotten (this was many years before the convenience of the Xerox photocopier). Needless to say, these Holman arrangements became the most often rehearsed and performed in our

repertoire. It was like a dream come true to attempt to play these masterpieces with our own band.

Since those days, I have enthusiastically followed the music of Bill Holman, from his writing for some of the greatest big bands in jazz, including those of Count Basie, Stan Kenton, Gerry Mulligan, Woody Herman, Buddy Rich, Louis Bellson, Maynard Ferguson, and several European big bands and orchestras, to his work for many of the greatest jazz soloists, vocalists and, since the early 1970s, the Bill Holman Band. His arrangements and compositions are also featured on numerous small group recordings, including those of Shelly Manne, Shorty Rogers, Richie Kamuca, Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Maynard Ferguson, Bill Perkins and many other world class jazz soloists and bandleaders. These small group pieces are much more than the usual basic orchestrations of a familiar theme for a few horns and a rhythm section. In fact, his imaginative use of the instrumentation and musical content in his small group arrangements hold my attention more strongly than many big band recordings I have heard. Bill Holman is a truly masterful writer, who can weave a spellbinding story of his own in one piece, and then come up with an equally fascinating personal take on a well known standard tune in the next.

Some of my most rewarding and gratifying experiences have been the opportunities I have had to get to know and collaborate with my musical heroes. I first got to know Bill Holman in 1985 at a jazz workshop in Tübingen, Germany, which was organized by Hans and Veronika Gruber and Advance Music. The workshop included well over a hundred students and about twenty of the world's leading jazz musicians as the faculty, including Louis Smith, Randy Brecker, Dave Liebman, Bobby Watson, Sal Nistico, Richie Beirach,



**Bill Holman at Stoller's Jazz Club, Long Beach, California, 1954.**

(c)Ray Avery-CTS IMAGES

John Abercrombie, Rufus Reid, Ron McClure, Billy Hart and Bill Holman. In addition to small groups and instrumental master classes there were two big bands. Bill Holman was there to direct the first big band and give a master class on arranging and composing, and I was there to direct the second big band and to do a session on arranging and composing for aspiring writers whose understanding of jazz was limited or relatively basic. Because our big bands rehearsed during the same time period, I wasn't able to check out his rehearsals; but I was all ears during his session on jazz writing.

It was interesting for me to learn that Bill Holman was primarily self-taught, although he did take a few courses at Westlake College of Music, where he studied commercial writing with Russ Garcia. It was also refreshing to hear him talk about his arrangements, compositions and the creative process of writing in a simple, easy to follow manner that never got bogged down with technical complexity or pretentious academic jargon. Before the workshop was over I also found out that he was a friendly, no nonsense type of person with a dry and ever alert sense of humor.

I was somewhat surprised when Holman showed up at my session on jazz writing. I think he was, in turn,

surprised to find out how deeply I had gotten into an extended suite he had written in 1957 for an LP by the Australian Jazz Quintet. Most of the session was devoted to an in depth discussion of this three-movement work, *Jazz in D Minor*, and we listened to the 21-minute recording at the end. I originally bought the LP in the early 1960s when I was still a teenager. It quickly became one of my favorite albums, due primarily to the great small group writing of Bill Holman, who wrote all but two of the tracks. Sometime during the early 1970s my curiosity got the better of me and I transcribed the entire suite, determined to find out what was going on in this very involved but irrepressibly swinging composition that I never got tired of listening to.

The further I got in my transcription and musical analysis, the more amazed I became at Holman's absolute mastery of the basic techniques of thematic development, counterpoint, reharmonization, orchestration and formal design. Moreover, it eventually became clear that the content of the entire piece was developed from just four simple thematic motives and/or rhythms. And many of the techniques were the same I had become familiar with in the greatest classical composers from Bach to Shostakovich. There were two overarching aspects, however, that really drove home Holman's mastery of his craft. The first was that the two up-tempo movements, the first and third, began with the same 30 measures as part of an extended introduction that introduced all four of the principal motives. However, from the 31st measure onward, Holman developed two organically related but completely different pieces of music. The second aspect was that, having begun the outer movements with extended introductions, he balanced the whole suite near its conclusion, with a coda of more than a hundred measures. Furthermore, the coda brought back the most important thematic motives of all three movements, and each motive was transformed by a final brilliant and unexpected twist or turn that left me in a state of complete exhilaration every time I listened to whole piece without interruption.

After my presentation of *Jazz in D Minor* at the workshop in Tübingen,

Holman remarked that he hadn't thought about that piece in quite a while. He said that, although there were a few motivic and formal things that he was aware of, most of the development and underlying unity had occurred spontaneously in terms of where the music seemed to want to go. He also said that he was rather amazed at all the intricate development, motivic connections and formal structure that I had discovered, and that he had no idea that his pieces exhibited such a high degree of creative order. He did have a sense for arrangements and compositions he had written that "had a good form to them," but this came mostly through how he, as a listener, felt after hearing them played. I wasn't surprised by this, because I have long understood that the rational way of "knowing" is just one of several paths to knowledge and understanding. A person with an exceptional or highly developed intuition can know precisely, through direct contact with something, what might take someone with little intuition years of academic study or the time consuming and gradual development of aural attention to know.

In July 1989 Rayburn Wright, the head of the jazz and contemporary media program at the Eastman School of Music and my close friend and colleague for 16 years, was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor and went on medical leave at the end of the summer. For 30 years Ray and Manny Album had taught and co-directed the legendary three-week Arrangers Holiday workshop at Eastman, a unique summer offering for developing and professional jazz writers, capped off with a full concert by an orchestra consisting of the summer personnel of the Eastman Jazz Ensemble (I had the honor and great pleasure of playing piano), combined with winds, percussion and strings from the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. Ray and Manny directed this unique ensemble in a program of music composed and arranged by the participating student writers and featuring an internationally known guest soloist (the soloists included the likes of Duke Ellington, Sarah Vaughn, Dave Brubeck, J.J. Johnson, Thad Jones, Gerry Mulligan, Stan Getz, Bob Brookmeyer, Phil Woods and Marian McPartland). When Ray realized that

he was not going to be able to participate the following year, the first person he thought of to join Manny and continue the program was Bill Holman. Fortunately for all of us, Holman agreed, and we all benefitted enormously from his contribution.

From September 1994 through July 2002 my wife, Daralene and I had the great opportunity of residing in Cologne, Germany, where I was the principal director of the WDR Big Band. Apart from the 12 weeks every year when I was actually rehearsing the band and directing concerts, some of my most memorable hours were those when Bill Holman was in residence for two weeks, preparing and directing a program of his music with guest soloists such as Johnny Griffin, Charlie Mariano and James Moody. I learned a great deal from observing how Holman rehearsed the ensemble and from discovering which general aspects or specific details he focused on in order to get the message of each piece to come through clearly and convincingly to the listener. I also heard how he wrote the music for each project in a manner that perfectly suited the musical strengths and personality of the guest soloist, and that took full advantage of the individual and collective abilities of the band, which he knew very well by that time. Of course, bringing Jeff Hamilton along to play the drums for each of his guest projects was the perfect icing on the cake. Since the passing of Mel Lewis, there's no drummer who better understands what the drums are supposed to do in Holman's music.

In 2000 I did a project with the WDR Big Band that we called "Jazz Masterpieces Revisited." My idea was to take jazz compositions that had originally been recorded by small groups and reorchestrate them for big band. As soon as this idea came to me I knew that a big band orchestration of Jazz in D Minor had to be the grand finale. The title was changed to Jazz in G Minor, because the melodic content worked



Bill Holman directing at the Musicians Union rehearsal hall, Los Angeles circa 1970s.

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much better for big band in that key, especially in putting the climatic sections in a register where the lead trumpet could comfortably make a brilliant and powerful sound. The band loved the composition, and the audience gave us a great ovation at the end of the performance. I sent Holman a copy of the concert recording, and within a couple of weeks I got a phone call from him. He really enjoyed the band's performance and my orchestration. He said, "The piece really sounded good with all the new clothes."

In 2002 Daralene and I had an opportunity to return to the Eastman School just after our son, Evan, had moved back to Rochester from New York to get married and start a family. Once I knew I was going to be directing the Eastman Jazz Ensemble and Eastman Studio Orchestra again, I was thrilled at the prospect of getting Bill Holman back to the Eastman school as a guest artist.

Since then Bill Holman has visited the Eastman school five times, and we're now discussing the next visit, to be in February 2016. Every visit has been a revelation, with a completely different program each time, from all recent material to retrospectives, plus master classes on jazz writing and discussion sessions with the students about everything from the creative process to the music business. A particularly special time was February 28 through March 4 of 2011, when Bob Brookmeyer and Bill Holman were both in residence

at Eastman for a whole week, with Brookmeyer directing the Eastman New Jazz Ensemble (normally under the direction of Dave Rivello) and Holman directing the Eastman Studio Orchestra. I can still feel the vibes in the classrooms, rehearsal room and concert hall from that week!

Immediately following the studio orchestra concert in 2011 I asked Holman if anyone had ever gotten together with him for a number of consecutive days to record conversations about his life in the music and his ideas about writing. When

he said that no one had made such a request up to that time, I immediately got his permission to request some travel money from the school, and I set up a week during the following August to go out to Los Angeles and record a series of conversations about Holman's early years, his musical career and his thoughts on composing, arranging, musical cohorts and the creative process. While I was in L.A., I got together with an old college friend, saxophonist Rusty Higgins, who had subbed from time to time in the Bill Holman Band since moving there in the early 70s. It was during our dinner conversation that I first learned that all of Holman's friends call him Willis. By the end of that week I got used to calling him Willis, too. I'll always have fond memories of the graciousness with which he and his wife, Nancy, opened up their home to me for those conversation sessions.

I consider Bill Holman to be one of the most important jazz arrangers and composers after Duke Ellington's generation. Throughout his career, his personal evolution has always maintained a connection to the music that first took root in him, that of Count Basie, Lester Young, Duke Ellington, Mel Lewis, Zoot Sims and other jazz giants who have made an indelible imprint on the music. Willis has certainly made his own imprint. His music continues to evolve, while always embodying the essence of jazz.



# David Liebman



Matt Vashlishan

## Smithsonian Institute NEA Jazz Masters Project: Bill Kirchner with David Liebman Part 2

The following is the Smithsonian Institute interview between Bill Kirchner and David Liebman following his acceptance of the NEA Jazz Masters Award, and took place in January of 2011. This interview is incredibly extensive and is presented here in its entirety via several installments. This is the second “episode.” If you missed the first portion, it was printed in the Spring/Summer 2015 Issue.

*Bill Kirchner: When you went to college, you went to NYU, right?*

**David Liebman:** I went first year to Queens College. I stayed. I didn’t want to leave New York, because of the music. By then I knew that there’s no way to go anywhere else and still do anything to do with this. I got into a couple schools. I was on the waiting list at Brandeis, I remember, and I said to my mother, even if it comes through, I don’t want to go there. Queens College, at that point, the major was going to be music. What else am I going to do? Because, in the back of your mind – first of all, it was expected of me to go to college. There was no question about it. The back of my mind, straight job, real world. Parents, right? Okay, music teacher, play on the weekends, like my teachers had been, all of them. So, Queens College. A very good music department, even then, known, really is well-known, blah blah blah. So I’m living in Brooklyn, my home, driving in and out, commuting to Queens College.

*Kirchner: Rudi Blesh was teaching at Queens College, right?*

**Liebman:** I don’t remember anybody. I’m a freshman. So I certainly didn’t get close to music. The only thing I do remember is the first day, the orientation, they handed us a music major, a list of four years required listening. It went from Palestrina to Stockhausen. I certainly was not equipped for classical music at all. This would have – this is like me walking into a complete new – a foreign country, not knowing the language. I diligently tried to catch up in the first semester. I stayed after school in the music library. I listened for hours to Palestrina, Vivaldi, and all these – I couldn’t stand it. I’m trying to transcribe Miles and Trane and whatever, at home. I’m starting to get more serious about it, because all these events are coming together at 18 years old. I said, I’m not going to – this music major shit, that’s not happening. So I switched to psychology, because in those days, English lit., psychology, they were the go-to, when you had nothing else to do. I don’t know what it is now, but there’s always like, I don’t know what I’m going to do. I’ll major in that.

That didn’t work. I don’t know how we picked NYU, but I went to NYU uptown division, University Heights. It was the arts and science up there. I don’t know why I went up there, but anyway, it was great. It was a campus in the middle of the Bronx, off the Major Deegan highway. Decided I was going to take a major that’s something I liked. I loved history and was always very good in it. I was in advanced placement in high school. I won some contests. I liked American history. The reason is because I had a great teacher in high school. In the end, if you have a great teacher, you probably – that makes you like the subject. He was Mr. Feldman. He was an amazing teacher. I still see him now. He was great. I just loved history. So I

majored in American history and decided that I'm going to have two lives. I'm going to do school. I'm going to get through school and get my degree, bachelor, B.S. in this case, bachelor of science, and I'm going to live downtown when I don't have to be in school. So that was the beginning of two lives, 19, 20, 21, Charles Lloyd, that whole thing. This is that period.

*Kirchner: When you were in college, who were the peers in your peer group that you were playing with at that time, besides Moses?*

Liebman: Moses. This is just about – not yet. I'm not meeting [Steve] Grossman and those guys yet. No, I am, because he was 16 and I'm 20, 21, through Mike Garson, who went into the Army and then found guys were playing. There was a guy named Jimmy. He played like Elvin.

*Kirchner: Strassburg?*

Liebman: No, not Jimmy Strassburg. I'll talk about that. The guy lived out on Long Island. I forget his last name. A piano player, Larry Schubert. Completely disappeared. He played like McCoy. Lanny Fields was the bass player. I think he's still up in the Catskills. And Grossman. It was a little crew. Eventually Lenny White and this whole thing. That's where I met George Cables and Lenny. This was all Queens guys, a little crew. Steve lived in Queens then, on Long Island. They were the people that I started associating with, besides Moses, going downtown and playing with Moses. That was another circle, Jim Pepper, those guys. That was a different thing. And also some of the free guys. So there's these two communities that I was trying to hang with, get on with.

In certain ways Steve was my first guy – Steve could really play, because he was great at 16. He was already good. I was seeking jam sessions, playing. Even in high school, I had already played at hospitals and whatever. My mother had always set up concerts. I played at Bellevue. I did all that stuff. So any time there was a concert at NYU, I always had a concert. Larry Coryell through Moses, Jim Pepper through Moses. Then the other side was this Grossman crew and all those people. So these were two cliques that I was circulating in.

*Kirchner: When did you start playing with Pete LaRoca's band.*

Liebman: Pete is '69, through Moses again. Moses heard from Swallow that they were looking for a saxophone player, and Pepper couldn't make it, because I guess he was up for it. I don't know who told me, if it was Swallow. I had met Swallow through Moses. That's right, because me and Swallow go back with Moses to before Pete. He said "We're playing in my house," so-and-so, "Come, and we'll hear you play." It was on 19th, 20th, or 18th and Ninth Avenue, a brownstone. I remember it. That's where Steve was living. It was Chick [Corea], Steve, and Pete. I walked in and set up. He said, "What do you want to play?" First time I'd

met Pete. I'd seen Pete with Charles, but I didn't know him. I said, Softly as a Morning Sunrise. We played like eight bars. He stopped. He said, "Let's rehearse." That was the beginning of my time with him, '69, which was very important for me, because he was the first mentor I really had.

*Kirchner: Let's talk more about that.*

Liebman: Pete, when I talk about Pete, I always go like this [Liebman exhales], with a sign of resignation. He's still alive.

*Kirchner: He's still playing.*

Liebman: Not really, unfortunately. That's the sadness of it all. Brilliant cat, smartest guy probably I've ever met, almost too smart. Became a lawyer. It's more – he's got a whole story. But anyway, he was – the band was every bass player and every piano player in New York, and me, because I could see, this was it. As soon as I got with him, I could see, this is a heavy guy. I didn't really know him. I knew he'd been with Trane. I knew the story, etc., etc., but I really didn't know how he played until he played. It was magical, and with Chick and him and Swallow, the rhythm section, it was unbelievable. I have tapes of it. It's still unbelievable. We're playing tunes – not standards, maybe one or two standards, but everything was Pete's music. Chick would play Straight Up and Down, play a couple tunes like that. Normal tunes, but these guys, what they could do with time and changes. Steve's on an upright bass, and sometimes Dave Holland, who had just come over and hadn't met anyone, before he was with Miles. George Cables, JoAnne Brackeen, Jimmy Garrison, [Charlie] Haden, Larry Willis. Everybody came through, because what happened is, we took a gig at a club called La Boheme. Do you remember La Boheme?

*Kirchner: Yeah.*

Liebman: 69th and Broadway. \$5 a night. I mean, \$5 a night. Pete became – I don't know if it was the house band or what, because Jimmy Lovelace used to play there a lot. He used to go up and jam there a lot. Anyway, we worked there somehow for six months. I don't know if it was every night or every week, but we worked a lot there, and it was an ever-changing cast of bass and piano players, because, you know, a \$5 gig. But I was there every night. I was there. That's when I'm out of school already. I'm substitute teaching to make a living. Pete was – he was magical. He was the best drummer – he was among the best musicians I've ever known. Unfortunately he's not playing. He could be playing. Over the years – to digress, over the years, he would come out. In the '80s we played a little. I'm sure you saw it, because there was some press about him.

*Kirchner: You even did a record, right?*

Liebman: Did a record. Then he would go back in his hole and did his law thing. He's retired. I don't know what he does now. I was supposed to play with



him a couple months. He's a problem child. I don't know how to explain it. With all due respect, he's just a very obstinate and difficult person, not socially or anything like that. Just, he's a perfectionist, idealist. I've never met a more – what's the word? – frustrating personality who you just absolutely love and respect. Anytime I'm with Swallow, we talk about it. It's the same. This is just his persona. But he was a great teacher and an incredible drummer. This guy – that's why I wish he was playing, because I wish drummers could hear him, because nobody ever played like this guy. He's probably the greatest of all time, so slippery, so loose, so natural, so musical. He could sing anything. He would sing the bass parts. He would sing the melody. It's the first time I ever understood what it was to really phrase, because he would say, I'm the only one. So he would sing the melody to me, of the tune. It would be his tune, or whatever. He'd say, "Like this," and he would put these little nuances to it, like everything you would ever want to play, and make it swing and feel so great, just singing it to you. I said, "God, Pete, I can't . . ." – "No, no, no, just" [Liebman hums]. I said, "I can't play like this." "Just listen." He was very cool with me. He was, of course, because he was my first, and I'm completely a basket case of nervousness and not-good-enough-ness and all that stuff, never feeling I was good enough, getting off the stage with these guys and trying to get up the nerve to come back the next night. He was cool with me. I've got to say, he was patient with me, because he could see I wasn't out of my mind. He said, "You wouldn't be here if you weren't doing it." I learned something, that, which is, you're not going to get gold stars. It's not the second grade. If they don't give you a demerit, you're in. If they don't fire you, you're in. If you expect them to say, "You're the greatest thing since apple pie," you're in the wrong place. I was used to getting, "You're good." You say, "I'm great." The guy didn't say nothing to me. So I was always going home feeling frustrated. This is simple communication, but those days – not those days – in general, you don't talk to musicians like that. They're not your friends. You don't say, "Do I sound good, man?" You just got to go home and wonder.

*Kirchner: What's the musicians' joke?: "You sound great. How do I sound?"*

Liebman: There's no reality there. So you're guessing everything, and you're not good enough to know. You're young. Nobody knows who you are. And you're up there with the heaviest guys on the planet, and Sonny Rollins is walking in. I'm out of it. But he – until he decided to give it up – what happened was, we played the [Village] Vanguard. We played Thanksgiving weekend. This is 1969. It's the first time I played the Vanguard, and it was Chick and Swallow. We played three nights. I don't know how it was a split booking, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday – four nights – opposite Novella Nelson, who I don't think I ever heard of since, two bands.

*Kirchner: Yes, you did.*

Liebman: Did I? Singer, right?

*Kirchner: Singer. I'll tell you this later.*

Liebman: She became somebody else? I don't know.

*Kirchner: No, she became – she's an actress.*

Liebman: She's an actress?

*Kirchner: Yeah.*

Liebman: I only remember her name. That's all. We were opposite her. We played those four nights, and Pete, who had been gunning for this gig, bothering Max [Gordon]. "We going to be playing the Vanguard. We're going to be playing the Vanguard." Max finally gave him a gig. Then, the night after, he says, "I'm finished." He says, "That's it. They don't want me back. I'm not playing anymore. I'm going to become a lawyer." I said, "What?" And sure enough, the year later I saw the guy at NYU. He had books up to the ceiling.

*Kirchner: As I heard it, he was driving a cab for a living.*

Liebman: He was driving a taxi. Yeah, that's what he was doing. He said, "I don't want to work." He wouldn't be a sideman. He had decided – this is what I mean by his obstinance. Herbie [Hancock] wanted him, when Herbie did Speak Like a Child. He wouldn't do it. He said, "I don't want to play anything but 4/4." He's very – what's the word? – he wants it the way he wants it.

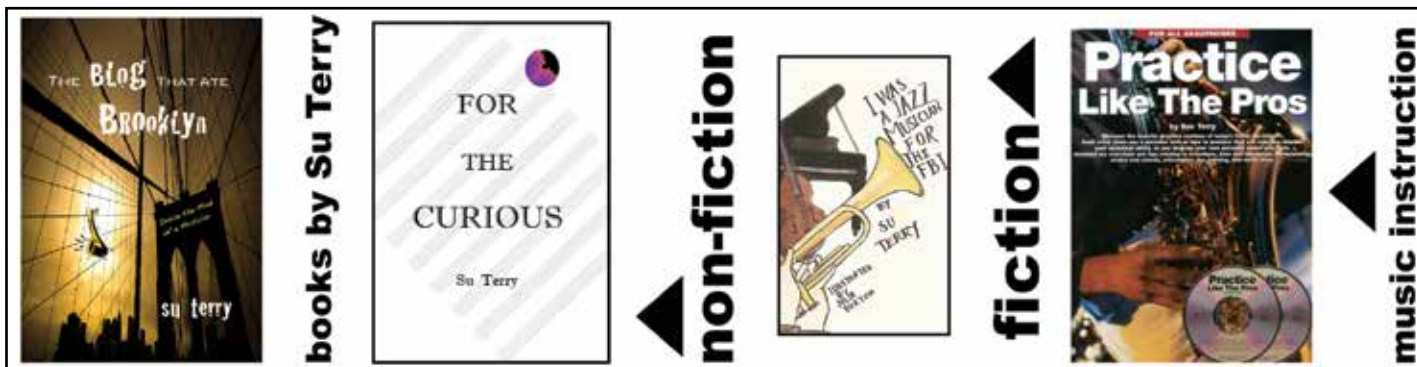
*Kirchner: Doctrinaire?*

Liebman: Very doctrinaire, and even now, when I want him to play – this gig that was supposed to happen a couple – it was supposed to be this spring, with [John] Abercrombie. "I'm not playing any eighth notes." I said, "Okay, Pete." So, very doctrinaire is the word. For whatever, he wouldn't be a sideman. He wouldn't do anything. He was only going to be a bandleader and didn't meet with success. I don't know what happened. He became a lawyer. He became – in some things, he was my lawyer over these next – what? – 30, 40 years, until he retired. Very frustrating, but, to finish this part of the story, he is definitely my first jazz mentor, no question about it, outside of friends and things we've been discussing, peers or older peers. He's the first heavy guy that I was with on any kind of basis that imparted knowledge to me, both verbally and musically, because he was verbal. He was very, very intelligent. He also introduced me to the Sufis. He was into the Aranchia. This guy was – he was the smartest guy. He was a great lawyer, because he was so clever and so good with words. I love the cat. He's why I'm here, really.

*Kirchner: You know his one Blue Note album, right? Basra.*

Liebman: Oh, yeah. Of course. We played Turkish with him, Turkish Women at the Bath, and we played Eider Down. We played those tunes. He was some musician. ☺  
To be continued . . .

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