

SWINGING HOUSES

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Leverett House Faculty Dean

“Jazz will constitute the basis of the musical future of America”, said Dr. Darius Milhaud the leader of the modern school of Paris which sponsors the newer musical tendencies, when interviewed by a CRIMSON reporter.” The Crimson, February 2, 1923. [Editors note: shortly after he moved to Mills College in CA, Milhaud trained a young Dave Brubeck, who would play at Harvard in 1961: see below.]

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Arts @ Lev. Leverett House continues to welcome jazz into the House through providing rehearsal and performance spaces for the new *Jazz Combo Initiative* led by Don Braden and the *Learning from Performers* Program of the Office for the Arts at Harvard.

<https://ofa.fas.harvard.edu/jazz-harvard-combo-initiative>

Background. The following compilation is largely centered on jazz events in the Houses, particularly Leverett, but including some notable jazz highlights elsewhere at Harvard as well. It begins with excerpts from Ken Murdock's printed volume of recollections of the first ten years of Leverett, *Hutch History from 1931-1941, containing an account of the first decade of Leverett House*.

Following the notes from Murdock (the first Master of Leverett House) is a chronological array of jazz reports from the *Crimson* written by, among many others, Mike Levin '42 (to become Jazz Editor of *Downbeat* in Chicago, leading and re-shaping the jazz magazine through the forties) and CNBC's Jim Cramer '77. Also included are transcriptions of some *Crimson* ads for dances.

Appended to this compilation of texts are photos, including some of the original newspaper clippings from the Leverett House scrapbooks begun by Murdock, plus others of the Leverett Dining Hall dances that are available online from the Library of Congress and the Massachusetts Digital Repository.

Brief History. The first decade of the Harvard Houses opened in 1931, two years before the end of Prohibition which would spur the Swing Era. By mid-decade, swing dances has become regular in the House Dining Halls, featuring nationally- popular orchestras led by Chick Webb (featuring 19 year old Ella Fitzgerald), Roy Eldridge, Artie Shaw (27, with 22 year old Billie Holiday), Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Bob Crosby, Claude Thornhill, Jack Teagarden and Woody Herman among others. Most played at Harvard on nights adjacent to their engagements at the nearby Boston jazz clubs.

All seven original River Houses, Leverett, Lowell, Adams, Eliot, Kirkland, Winthrop and Dunster, hosted swing dances, often lasting until 3 a.m., and sometimes shared them. Music was especially big at Leverett House which had its own FM Radio Station (World Wide Leverett Philharmonic: WLP) broadcasting music from a 5,000 disc collection. In fall 1940, Leverett partnered with NBC and WBZ Radio for a live, midnight broadcast from the Dining Hall of a dance that followed the Dartmouth football game.

These activities were encouraged and enabled by the first Leverett House Master, Professor Kenneth Murdock of the History Department, whose youth, personality and interests were aligned as he built a House culture centered on the arts. The jazz tradition in the Houses continued after Ken Murdock's time, through the decades to the present day. For example, Leverett hosted Freddie Hubbard for a week-long stay in 1975, and Dizzy Gillespie and Betty Carter provided workshops in Mather in 1977.

Harvard College students' perennial jazz interests found their champion in the 1971 arrival of Thomas Everett, founder of the Harvard Jazz Program, and whose teaching, directing, and connections spurred the Harvard Jazz Bands, the *Learning from Performers* Program of the Office for the Arts, the *Visiting Jazz Artists* Program, as well as WHRB's *Jazz Spectrum*, now in its 46th year. Everett took the HJB overseas, and twice to the Dominican Republic, in 1974 and 1990. On the 1974 trip to Santo Domingo, Tom and the band encountered 20-year old Michel Camilo at the National Conservatory and encouraged him to come study in the US. The 1990 trip was also momentous, with senior Joshua Redman's unforgettable saxophone solo at the National Theater.

The Caribbean connection has reached a new plateau when famed Cuban saxophonist and composer Yosvany Terry arrived as HJB Director in 2016 and continues the tradition of travel with the HJB to Latin America. Terry has also fostered with OFA the new Jazz Combo Initiative aimed at supporting students interested in learning improvisation. They are coached by renowned jazz saxophonist Don Braden '85 (a Leverett alumnus!)

Excerpts from HUTCH HISTORY from 1931-1941.

Kenneth Murdock. 1941. *Private Printing, Arlington MA.*

Rabbit Hops

“Just as long as Leverett House has been in existence, the Rabbits have been putting on white tie and tails and giving parties loosely classified as “dances.” The first of these affairs ever held in Leverett’s wedge-shaped Bullfinch Dining Room was given on the night of March 31, 1932. The House had been open only a little over six months, and because of the doubtfulness of success, the dance was held in conjunction with Adams House, a dinner in the latter preceding the “*piece de resistance*” in the form of **Joe Smith’s** Copley Plaza Orchestra.

Highly satisfied with this first attempt, Leverett ventured a dance all on it’s own which was held after the Army game in the fall of the same year. This was an utter failure, very few wanting to drink fruit punch in the Common Room at a dollar a head when they could drink something else in their rooms for less. The lesson did not go unheeded, and the policy was originated of giving late room permission on the nights of House dances only to men who had bought tickets to the dance. The ruling has been retained and has had an excellent effect on the social unity of the House.

The first really big dance the Bunnies ever gave came in the following Spring on March 24. Although the proceeds were largely on the cuff, owing to F. D. R.’s extended bank holiday, the dance was a financial success. **Ruby Newman** played- he was not a big name then—and the affair was such a success that the committee staged a repeat six weeks later.

The second dance was informal, almost Dartmouth style; and when two o’clock rolled around, the dancers were having such a good time that they took up a collection to retain the orchestra for another hour. This unprecedented move gave Leverett a reputation for gaiety which still persists, rivaled only by Adams A entry.

During the next four years, Leverett increased the number of annual dances from three to four. If not financial, at least they were fast-growing social successes. In the fall of 1937, the House held two dances during the football season, one after the Dartmouth and. One after the Army game. Irving

Michelman, '39, was in charge of the decorations for the former and carried the Dartmouth motif so far that Dave, the busboy, was dressed as a chieftain and served ginger ale and coca-cola from a “fire-water stand.” Under the chairmanship of E. D. Hazeltine, '38, the committee garnered a net profit of \$75.25. The subsequent dance was hardly as successful. Lack of understanding between the Houses resulted in the dance being twice cancelled before it was definitely fixed upon, only four days before the Army game. The thirteen-piece **Harrington Orchestra** supplied music for both of these Autumn affairs.

A complete innovation in House dances was originated by Leverett that winter when the committee organized a dinner dance on the evening of the Yale hockey game. **Jim Carmody**'s band from the Hotel Myles Standish supplied the music for the dance which lasted from five until eight, and all House members who had contributed to the House fund were admitted gratis.

Prior to the spring of '38, Leverett had never paid more than \$300 for an orchestra, but the clamor for a big name band induced the committee to sign up **Artie Shaw**'s orchestra at a cost of \$475*. Big names and financial loss—over sixty dollars in the case of Leverett—were common to all the Houses that spring.

The idea of a name band was carried on three years later when this year (1941) the dance committee secured **Claude Thornhill** to play for the Winter Formal before he began a long-term engagement at the Glen Island Casino. With the motif of “wine, women and song,” the dance was held on March 17—a Monday—because of the deadline for senior theses that day. Thornhill's vocalist, a wiry little blond, was the big hit of the dance, which was attended by 150 couples.”

[*Editors note: \$475 in 1938 is equal to \$8,600 in 2020. This was during the 1938 period that 23-year old Billie Holiday was touring with Shaw.]

Adams-Leverett Dance Takes Place Tonight

COPLEY-PLAZA ORCHESTRA WILL PLAY FROM 10 TO 3

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

March 31, 1932

Adams and Leverett Houses are combining tonight to give their first formal dance, which will take place in the Leverett House dining hall from 10 to 3 o'clock tonight.

One hundred ninety reservations have been made for the dinner, at which the University Instrumental Clubs will entertain. Mrs. Baxter, wife of J. P. Baxter 3rd, associate professor of History and Master of Adams House, will be hostess to the patronesses at the dinner.

Joe Smith and his Copley-Plaza orchestra will provide music at the dance. The room will be illuminated by a system of indirect lighting, while panels, bearing the three rabbits and the oak sprig of Leverett and Adams Houses, will be placed over the windows.

The committees in charge of the dance are: Adams House: A. B. Gardiner 3rd '33 and J. F. Ray '34; Leverett House: J. S. Hartwell '32, D. McC. Matthews '32, E. E. Morison '32, G. K. Martin '32, L. A. Francisco '34, and J. E. Beaumont '33. Together with the following residents of Adams House, the members of the committees will act as ushers: A. H. Stebbins, Jr. '32, D. F. Pitcher '33, H. N. Boyle '34, and W. T. Piper, Jr. '34.

The patronesses will be: Adams Mrs. J. P. Baxter 3rd, Mrs. N. B. Gardiner, Mrs. R. S. Hillyer, Mrs. R. B. Perry, Mrs. A. M. Schlesinger, Mrs. O. H. Taylor, Mrs. C. K. Webster; Leverett: Mrs. K. B. Murdock, Mrs. D. H. McLaughlin, Mrs. Harold Murdock, Mrs. H. A. Yoemans, Mrs. P. G. E. Miller, Mrs. B. F. Wright, and Mrs. S. E. Morison.

Dorsey Brothers, Weber, and Crosby Will Thrill Kirkland

Members of Other Houses Are Invited to Dance on April 26

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

March 22, 1935

Now at the close of an engagement at the Metropolitan Theatre, the **Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, Kay Weber, and Bob Crosby** have been

scheduled to provide entertainment at the **Kirkland House** Spring Dance on Friday, April 26.

In addition to the quota for Kirkland House members and their guests, a limited number of dance tickets have for the first time been made available in the other Houses. Tickets are \$5 per couple and \$3 stag.

Roy W. Winsauer '36 heads the committee in charge, which also includes Jules Bricken '35, Robert E. Eichler, Jr. '36, James T. Kilbreth, Jr. '36, David MacDonald '36, James C. McNamara, Jr., '36, Branford P. Millar '35, Henry B. Sawyer, Jr. '36, Douglas C. Scott '35, and Edward G. Smith '36.

---*Anon, Crimson May 13 1937*. Eliot House's dinner dance at 7:15 o'clock boasts the music of **Chick Webb's** orchestra, the singing of **Ella Fitzgerald**, and dancing until 2:00 o'clock.

---*Friday March 18th (1938)*. **Leverett House** Spring Dance. **Art Shaw** and his Orchestra. Dancing 10-3. Formal. Couple \$3.50, Stag \$2.00. [featuring **Billie Holiday**]

---*November 6th, (1939)*. This is **Ruth Bates**, vocalist for The Harrington's Orchestra playing at Leverett House Saturday evening. After the Army Game. 9-12. "It's on, it's off...it's on" Couple \$2.50, Stag \$1.50

Swing

By [Michael Levin](#)

March 3, 1939

Harvard, just recovering from a collective cold, seems to be enmeshed in an attack of the blues due to last at least a week. For with **Woody Herman** and "The Band That Plays The Blues" at the **Kirkland House** dance tonight, and **Jack Teagarden**, considered by many to be one of the greatest soloists in jazz, coming to **Dunster House** next Friday, it looks as though we are going to hear lots of the music that Paul Whiteman says "is the basis of all Jazz."

Woody's band, previously discussed in this column, plays excellent jazz, both Dixieland style, has good soloists including Woody himself (clarinet), and in general makes for very interesting listening and dancing.¹

Teagarden has a new band; and since this is to be one of his first jobs, no really accurate information as to the band's performance can be obtained. However, this reviewer heard the rehearsals in New York and thought that it showed signs of being a really great organization. Charley Spivak, formerly Bob Crosby's ace trumpet man, Ernie Cacaes, whose sax playing aroused so much comment in New York at Nick's, and Allan Reuss, formerly with Goodman (guitar) are all playing with the band. And Mr. Teagarden himself, known to the trade as "Big Gate," is going to lead the four man trombone section. Jack was playing hot trombone when Tommy Dorsey was playing licks on a milk bottle. Listen to "Texas Tea Party" (Columbia 31671) of "Moonglow" (Columbia 2927D, all made with the old Goodman band, to hear what Teagarden can do with a trombone. Thus while the quality of the band as a whole is an unknown, inspiring jazz is a certainty next Friday night.

Records: Tommy Dorsey's (Victor) "Symphony in Riffs" might sound a little better if played at a slower tempo. . . Richard Himber's imitation of Basie and other bands is done quite well (Victor) . . . About the Goodman Quintet's record of "Pick-A-Rib" (Victor): It sounds to me as if his brother Harry were the bass player on the record. And brother Harry runs a barbecue on 52nd Street in New York known as the Pick-A-Rib. That wouldn't be an advertisement, would it? The first side is uniformly bad, sounding something like one of Ray Scott's compositions. The second, done in boogie-woogie tempo is better, but shows that Teddy Wilson can't play this style . . . To find why many musicians like Red Norvo's band, listen to "I Get Along Without You Very Well" (Vocation) . . . Teddy Wilson's "More Than You Know" (Brunswick) with Billie Holiday vocal and Benny Carter alto sax has that proper feeling that goes into a real swing record . . . Made three days before she started to sing regularly with the band, Helen O'Connell's first record with Jimmy Dorsey (Decca) "Romance Runs In The Family," is an excellent job, though not nearly up to what she can do . . . The

record of "Fate" and "Deep Purple" is well worth getting, with Jimmy's famed trombone trio taking the former honors and Bob Eberle's vocal fitting the latter.

Notes between the notes: Truly magnificent swing criticism is advanced in a mildly insane article by Robert Benchley in the February issue of Listener's Digest entitled, "Swing: Its Origin and Development." Sample quote: "I feel particularly fitted to discuss swing music, because I can't carry a tune either." . . . Recommended to those swing fans who specialize in trying to find unrecognized good jazz is Al Cooper's Savoy Sultans on Decca's race record series. The band cut Chick Webb and gave Basie a good scare. The second of the Goodman bands to leave the mother organization (Harry James' being the first) is Teddy Wilson's bunch, scheduled to start in late March . . . The height of something is that Doctor Randall, formerly professor of medicine at Columbia University, is joining Red Norvo's band at the Raymor to take over the clarinet chair.

Swing Stars Will Jive For Freshmen

NEAL O'HARA PRESIDES

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

April 13, 1939

Prominent figures in the entertainment and sporting worlds will entertain the Yardlings at this year's annual Smoker on May 1, according to tentative plans of the Freshman Committee.

Headlining the festivities will be **Roy Eldridge, Ella Fitzgerald, Rita Rio,** and **Albert Ammons,** who have been engaged to supply the musical part of the program. Eldridge, orchestra leader from Chicago's "three Deuces" will play his famous swing trumpet to the accompaniment of a local orchestra.

Popular vocalist for **Chick Webb's** band, **Ella Fitzgerald** will be imported to swing several numbers in her accustomed style. Ammons will come to the Yard from the Cafe Society in New York to demonstrate the boogie woogie style of piano playing.

Representing the world of sport, Buddy Hassett of the Bees will speak, according to present plans of the Smoker Committee, while Neal O'Hara, columnist for the Boston Traveler, will be the master of ceremonies for the athletic features of the program.

Other notables who will probably be approached by the Committee include Mary Martin, Milton Berle, Jimmy Durante, Jimmy Walker, and Postmaster-General James A. Farley.

“Word has slithered in that a vile shindig is to be held this Friday; that immoral pastimes such as the dance shall be indulged in; that wild revelry shall shriek through hallowed halls until the first vestiges of dawn. In other words, in an effort to laugh down the sinister smirk of finals, **Leverett House** is throwing a dance. For some trivial sum, you will be able to prance and dance to the music of **Kent Bartlett** and watch a smooth, suave exhibition of what should be (but ain't) done on the dance floor.” **Thornhill** at Leverett house on March 17. Great things are expected of Betty, a newcomer to the 16-piece Thornhill orchestra. She is said to be a smoother vocalist than her sister, Dorothy, now singing for **Glenn Miller**.

---Mike Levin, 5/22/40. The Harvard Crimson

[Editor's note: after graduation, Mike Levin '42 joined Downbeat magazine as writer and editor. “Levin was a superb writer with strong opinions and a nose for intelligent controversy. “He was extremely bright,” says DownBeat colleague Jack Tracy, “and living evidence that the better the writer, the worse the speller. His copy was terrible to edit. You had to look at every word.” From <http://downbeat.com/site/about/P5>.

The Thornhill and Miller orchestras have more in common than just that they draw their vocalists from the same family. Co-featured with Glenn Miller, Claude's orchestra made its debut in January, 1940, at the Pennsylvania Hotel in New York City. Critics on the West Coast, where Claude and his orchestra played until a few months ago, hailed the orchestra as a second Glenn Miller. Then again **Bob Jenney**, ace trombonist now with the Thornhill orchestra, is a former Millerite, and finally Claude and his orchestra go on March 19 for a long period engagement to **Glenn Island Casino**, where Miller, as well as many other famous orchestras, made their start.

Keeping up with that is now almost a Harvard tradition of sending bands on to the top--remember **Artie Shaw, Tommie Dorsey, and Will Bradley**—Leverett House is proud to present the **Claude Thornhill** orchestra at its Formal Dance on Monday, March 17--two days before its Glenn Island engagement.

----*Anon. The Crimson February 26 1941*

Leverett House Radio Broadcasts From Secret Studio Next Friday

'Good' Music Will Be Featured by Network

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

October 16, 1942

A week from today the voice of a mysterious radio will go on the air for the members of Leverett House. The location of the hidden broadcasting unit has been a carefully guarded secret and is known to very few. The operators will only reveal that their studios are "some-where" in Mather Hall.

Although all technical data is not yet available, it is believed that Station WLP will be tuned to 990 on your dial. After a week of extensive testing, the technicians are still uncertain as to whether all members of **McKinlock Hall** will be able to pick up the station.

Study to Music

It was all started by two Bunny Hutchers who were bothered by those nights on which "you just can't study." They remembered that somebody had said something about doing calisthenics to music. "Why not study to music--the very best of music? As a matter of fact, let's see how many Leverett men we can put on the Dean's List," they mused.

The stage was set. Under cover of war-time secrecy the World Wide Leverett Philharmonic Broadcasting System was born. Free from the horrors of commercials, the network will devote itself primarily to the best classical music, although "exceptional programs of popular music and other

significant broadcasts" will be put on the air. "Music 1 Men will find radio station WLP almost a sure way to a B," claim the sponsors.

Includes 5000 Records

Leverett House listeners will be able to hear the static less broadcasts of frequency modulation stations through the facilities of WLP. Special high fidelity recordings made through the courtesy of the American Broadcasting System, the National Broadcasting System, and the British Broadcasting are among the 5000 records in the Leverett station's library.

If one were to accidentally stumble into either of WLP's two studios he would find himself amid a mass of transmitting equipment. Wires, control panels, dials, knobs, switches, tubes, and microphones--they're all there.

To pick up the frequency modulation broadcasts the network has a Meissner FM All-Wave Receptor. Two special recording machines and amplifiers plus three turntable assure perfect synchronization. In addition to this equipment, the network has two special dual speed turntables which are able to play electrical transcriptions as well as regular recordings.

WLP will inaugurate its career next Friday afternoon by broadcasting a concert by the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, probably under the direction of Eugene Ormandy, from the Philadelphia Academy of Music. Friday night listeners will hear the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Serge Koussevitzky. In the near future WLP hopes to be able to present a recording of Shostakovitch's Seventh Symphony.

---Leverett-Dartmouth Dance. Saturday October 18th, (1941) 8 o'clock **Ken Reeves. Betty Doyle**, Vocalist, 12-piece Orchestra Couple \$2.50, Stag \$1.00

---Leverett House cordially invites you to its Winter Formal from 10 to 2 on March 15 Music by the **Fenton Brothers** (The "Fitch Bandwagon Orchestra") Couple \$2.75, Stage, \$1.75 Tickets Sold at Crimson and Janitor's Office

----NBC will be there...Will you? Nov 16 1940 Leverett House Dance after the Brown Game. **Ralph Burns** and his 14-piece band \$2.50-\$1.50 Informal Tickets at Leverett Janitor's Office. [*"Life Goes to a Party at Leverett House", A half hour of the dance 11:30 to 12:00, was broadcast over the Red network by NBC. Recordings are in the House, according to Hutch History, 1931-1941. K. Murdock]*

---Vocalist **Betty Claire** with **Claude Thornhill** on March 17 1941. Dance Claude Thornhill March 17 1941

----First Spring Formal, Russ Randolph. Couple \$2.50 Stag, \$1.50 Dancing 10-2. April 25 1941

----After the Dartmouth Game. Leverett House will give its Annual Fall Dance Ken Reeves Orchestra. Saturday October 18 1941. Couple \$2.50 Stag \$1.00 8 O'Clock Informal

Leverett Dance Goes Over NBC Saturday

Skip Stahley, Jee Gardella. Brown Grid Captain, Glee Club Featured

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

November 15, 1940

The second in the series, "Life Goes To a Party on the Air," will originate from Leverett House through WBZ on Saturday night and will be carried over a portion of the NBC blue network including WJZ, New York. The "Party" will be that following the Brown game, and will be broadcast from 11:30 to 12 midnight.

When "Life Goes To a Party On The Air" at Leverett House, Paul Wing NBC, and Bob White, WBZ, co-masters of ceremonies will bring to the WBZ microphone such Harvard-Brown football notables as Harvard Coach Skip Stahley, Harvard Captain Joseph Gardella, and Brown University Captain Louis Duesing. The Harvard Glee Club will entertain with several of their most popular numbers, while dance music will be supplied for the celebrating Collegiates by **Lou Bonick** and his orchestra, Feminine interest at the party will hail from Smith, Wellesley Vassar and Radcliffe.

"Life Goes To A party On The Air" is written and produced by George Ludlam of NBC and Lester O"Keefe, who produces the Rudy Vallee and Eddie Cantor radio shows.

Miller Salutes Harvard

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

March 27, 1942

Glenn Miller's 10 o'clock show tonight will feature a salute to Harvard. The popular band leader will serenade Cantabridgians with Crimson songs over a coast-to-coast hookup in his nightly session this evening.

[Editors note: Six months later, Miller presented his last show on Sept 27 1942, from the Café Rouge in the Hotel Pennsylvania, NY, NY before joining the Army]

Brubeck Quartet Will Present Jazz Concert This Afternoon

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

March 31, 1954

Dave Brubeck's Quartet will present a special jazz concert this afternoon at 3 p.m. in the Freshman Union Common Room. The concert, featuring Paul Desmond, is sponsored by the Harvard New Jazz Society.

The Brubeck Quartet, one of the top jazz groups in the country, performs regularly at Boston's Storyville. Tickets for today's concert are priced at \$1.20 for general admission, but purchasing them in advance will save 20 cents.

Brubeck to Jazz Up Jubilee

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

February 11, 1961

Dave Brubeck and **Paul Desmond** will provide the smash opening for the Freshman Jubilee weekend beginning April 28.

On Saturday the Yardlings will picnic by the Charles, with **Schneider's Band** providing music to drink by. That evening a candlelight banquet in the Freshman Union will precede four hours of dancing to the music of **Harry Marshard** in a subtly disguised Memorial Hall.

Jazz

MUSIC

By **Jim Cramer**

July 11, 1975

The **Duke Ellington Orchestra** without the Duke? O.K. so you can't have everything. But **Mercer Ellington**, the Duke's son, is making a gallant attempt to recreate some of his father's stuff and from what I have heard, he is doing a good job of it. Check them out for \$3 and \$4 tonight at Sanders Theatre.

Common sense at least dictates that you won't to drive two hours to see Dave Brubeck and his kinds play a couple of old numbers down at Lennox, Mass it you the whole Brubeck collection, consisting of "Take Five" and "Blue Rondo, a la turk" and I'll throw in a Stan Getz album, all for less than you'll be paying to hear this fabled pianist, Don't be taken in.

A terrific singer, **Mercedes Hall**, will be at Sandy's Jazz Revival on Sunday and Monday. Sandy's is only 30 minutes from the Hub, on 54 Cabot ST. in Beverly.

McCann, Live at Lowell, Instructs and Improvises

By **Robert T. Garrett**

November 5, 1975

Les McCann inched up towards the front of the room, past a hundred tapping feet and a slightly smaller number of rhythmically bobbing heads.

He was supposed to be teaching, or "coaching," the nine Harvard jazz musicians who were jamming yesterday afternoon in the front of the Lowell House Junior Common Room. It was the third installment of the Office of the Arts's new program, "Learning from Performers."

But actually, McCann--the program's first artist-in-residence--was itching to play some himself.

He disappeared behind a curtain, circled past the portrait of a lifeless Harvard Classics professor and for a few moments leaned up against a portion of the battlefield mural on the south wall of the room.

McCann's hands were restless at his sides while he listened to his second group of students--the "Funky Butt Band," as he had dubbed them a few minutes before--play a few more choruses of a simple melody he had given them to play to a funky beat.

Finally, the 40-year-old jazz pianist could sideline-sit no longer. He sidled up to a grand piano in the corner and began forking out some chords.

Ten minutes later, after taking Stan Dorn's place at the electric piano, leaning back and orchestrating one solo after another by the students around him, McCann had the somewhat stale after-lunch crowd on its feet.

"My first group [of eight students] just didn't play together," McCann said afterwards. "But this second group, that didn't feel like it had as much talent, or could play together as well as the first, they decided they were going to play together and communicate."

"And," McCann said, "You know I couldn't miss out on that."

The Lexington, Ky., native had said before he led 21 students in three groups, through half-hour improvisations, that his gospel music background and tendency to experiment put him among those jazz musicians who "play to communicate, not to play for themselves."

In the eaves, Thelma Massey, a dining hall worker for Lowell House was among those standing and applauding.

"I love all kinds of music," Massey said. "But I really love Les McCann."

"Even Bill Bossert [professor of Applied Mathematics and Master of Lowell House] was on his feet clapping," Jerold S. Kayden '75, the coordinator of the Learning from Performers series said afterwards.

Yesterday's two-hour workshop was the first of two seminars McCann will lead while living at Lowell House this week--the next one is tomorrow at 2 p.m. at the Lowell JCR.

Jazz musician **Anthony Braxton**, who conducted a similar workshop last Thursday in Adams House, was the series' first artist to come to Harvard.

Although the full schedule for the series will not be announced until later this week, Kayden said, and although that schedule will include resident artists from other areas of the performing arts besides jazz, the series' next guest will be another jazz musician, **Freddie Hubbard**.

Jazz

By **James Cramer**

November 20, 1975

I was just sitting in the newsroom minding my own business when Freddie Hubbard walked over to my typewriter. **FREDDIE HUBBARD**--one of the greatest trumpeters alive. My God, and he's staying at **Leverett House** all week.

I don't care what you are doing this afternoon--drop everything and head over to Leverett House old Library at 2 p.m. to see this man play and coach Harvard musicians. Only a limited number of observers are allowed.

Wow--Freddie Hubbard.

If you miss him today, okay, pay the five bucks and see him at Paul's Mall (two shows nightly: 9:30 and 11:30).

There's more jazz coming up at Harvard this weekend--when **Phil Wilson** and the Uptown Dues Band play Let the Knowing Speak, a suite for a jazz ensemble and chorus. It's sponsored by Phillips Brooks House.

[Editors note: Jim Cramer '77 is a well-known investor and CNBC host. He was Crimson Editor and contributed many articles on jazz as well as on education policy at Harvard.]

Jazz

BY JIM CRAMER

April 14, 1977

It is one of those weeks where it does not pay to stray far beyond the borders of Harvard if you want good jazz. What more could you ask for than **Betty Carter** and **Dizzy Gillespie** playing in the friendly confines of Mather House? They are here as part of the Artists in Residence program of the Office of the Arts. The program presents a great opportunity for musicians and music lovers to listen to Carter and Gillespie teach, sing and play. They will be conducting a master class today at 2 p.m. in the Mather House dining room, and again tomorrow at 1 p.m. at the same place.

Don't expect a concert--Gillespie and Carter are here to help Harvard musicians learn about the music. But do expect to gain some insight from these two great veterans about a number of jazz eras.

If you are not familiar with the work of either musician, Dizzy gained prominence with Charlie Parker-inspired bebop about 30 years ago, and Betty has been singing some of the sweetest ballads since the early 1950's. Dizzy is a funny guy, who teaches a class in the manner you wish that most of the stuffed shirts around here would teach: breezy, anecdotal, and educational. Betty Carter, is by her own admission, a worker--someone who did not have the natural vocal abilities of a Sarah Vaughan. But she worked

at it, and accomplished as much. (I know I'm sounding like a p.r. man for these master classes, but you have to admit this is a great opportunity to catch two masters).

The pickins aren't as good around town. Unless, that is, if you are into the sellouts. Why be euphemistic? Donald Byrd used to play with Coltrane. Now he's playing with a bunch of no-talents and he's beginning to take after them. If you are so inclined you can see trumpeter Byrd and his Blackbirds at Paul's Mall tonight through the 20th. I guess Byrd is making a lot more money these days, but musically he is nowhere.

It may be worth it to take the trek out to Sandy's in Beverly this week (about a half hour from here via Route 128) to see Buddy Guy and Junior Wells. Sandy's has been having some good acts lately--especially booking trumpeter Woody Shaw for that one night stand last Monday. Herb Pomeroy moves in their next Monday with his 16-piece jazz orchestra.

Locally, the 1369 Jazz Club is featuring Interface and Animation through the weekend. The 1369 is what the Jazz Workshop should be. It is low-key, as is everything else in Inman Square, homey, and cheap. A fifteen minute walk on a nice day.

Upcoming is the Chick Corea concert, May 15, at the Orpheum. Tickets are \$7.50 and \$6.50. It might be wise to purchase them now. Corea is a big Boston favorite. It's good to see that the advertisements for this concert feature bassist Stanley Clarke. Poor to see that reed man Joe Farrell is not featured, however. Clarke and Farrell are top-flight musicians who should be doing more stuff on their own.

Next Tuesday jazz and blues singer Joe Williams begins a six day stint at Sandy's. Further in advance, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, the man who used to play three instruments at once better than most can play one, will be in for a week May 10-15 at the jazz workshop.

Also Norman Connors comes to town Sunday, April 24 and the Charles Mingus quintet stops in on Saturday, April 30 at Morse Auditorium. More details on those later.

Jazz

BY JIM CRAMER

April 21, 1977

For some reason, Harvard continues to be the place to stay for good jazz this week. Next Wednesday alto saxophonists **Phil Woods** and **Lee Konitz** join forces with the **Harvard Jazz Band** for an 8:30 p.m. Sanders Theatre concert. Woods is a pretty established name, who has been making it big with the jazz orchestra scene. Konitz has been around for a while but has never quite received the press that he seems to deserve. Konitz arrived with Miles Davis way back in 1949. Somebody once asked Miles Davis why he had hired a white man to play in his band, the white man being Konitz. Miles's answer: "I don't care if he's **orange**, man, just so he can play."

The program has some real gems including Monk's "Well You Needn't" and "Straight, No Chaser," and Weill's "Lover Man," a personal favorite. Also localite (what an ugly word) Baird Hersey's "From the Tower" will be performed. (By the way if you are really into alto sax, get a listen to what **Jackie McLean** is into today. The Source and The Meeting are two albums that feature some of the best alto ever played--no apologies to the master).

Tickets for the jazz band concert are in the \$2 vicinity (new journalism for \$2) for students. Tickets will be available at the door.

Friday night the Quincy House Music Society is sponsoring an informal jazz coffeehouse. The **Amphion**. Berklee piano student Peter Drescher is the featured act. Amphion's got its own coterie of student performers including Joe Reed, Hugh Burrow and Peter Fraenkel, who welcome you to sit in with them if you play a rhythm instrument. The Freebop Quintet is also on the

bill. This week the session will meet in the Adams House JCR at 8. Thereafter Amphion will be held in the Quincy JCR.

The best jazz group in the country, bar several other best jazz groups in the country, **Weather Report**, will be playing at the Berklee Performance Center this Friday, at 7 and 10 pm. Tickets are \$7.50 and \$6.50. Actually, I'm not kidding about Weather Report. The **Wayne Shorter**-inspired group plays some of the most revolutionary, albeit plugged-in, jazz today, and it famous for giving a great live performance. Some jazz musicians I know in Philadelphia caught this concert last week and each acclaimed it as the finest night of jazz in years.

Saturday the **Berklee Big** Band ensemble takes over with an 8:30 concert.

Paul's Mall is booking **Al Dimeola**, formerly of Chick Corea's "Return to Forever" through the weekend with shows at 8:30 and 11. Good back-up man, of dubious front-line talent. Be thinking about **Chick Corea** coming to the Orpheum for a 7 pm. concert May 15, Tickets are \$7.50 and \$6.50.

Gary Burton occupies the Jazz Workshop through May 1. **Rahsaan Roland Kirk** won't make his appearance there until May 10. At Sandy's through this Sunday is jazz and blues singer **Joe Williams**. Joe must be getting pretty ole, I figure. Die-hards won;t mind.

I guess **Dizzy Gillespie** has really found a home in Boston. He'll be appearing at the Rise Club May 3, 4, and 5, which is a real break because the Rise Club gives you the best shows for nice prices. It's close by too, smack in the middle of Central Square at 485 Mass. Ave.

Really locally the 1369 Jazz Club features the **Cambridge-port Jazz Ensemble** this weekend. A great place to go.

Harvard Jazz Band Will Tour Dominican Republic in March

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

March 4, 1981

The Harvard University Jazz Band will tour the Dominican Republic over Spring break to raise money for the American Field Service (AFS), a non-profit international exchange organization, Thomas G. Everett, the band's director, said yesterday.

Everett added that AFS will pay for most of the trip, financing students' plane fares and arranging for free room and board in Dominican Republic hotels.

The nine-year old band, which traveled to the Dominican Republic in 1974 in a similar tour for the Association for Blind Children, hopes to raise approximately \$10,000 for AFS, Everett said.

Juan Llado, chairman of AFS's Dominican Republic chapter and coordinator of the 1974 visit, invited the band to return because of the first tour's success. AFS officials in New York were not available for comment.

"AFS should make a substantial profit on the trip," Everett said, adding, "It's pretty unique to pull down a college group from another country to help a local cause."

The band will perform in La Romans, Santiago, and at the National Theatre in Santo Domingo between March 21 and 29.

The National Theatre did not invite the band to perform during its 1974 tour because the theatre normally features only classical music. But the good reviews the band drew from the last tour prompted the theatre to invite the group this time, Everett said. He added, "The National Theatre is equivalent to our Symphony Hall."

Band members will also sightsee, spend a day at the beach, dine at the American Embassy, and talk with other jazz students at the University of Santiago. "It will be a good vacation," said Donald H. Perlo '83, a saxophonist.

All That Good

Mood Indigo II: An Original Jazz College Directed by Patrick Bradford Music Direction by Adam Gorgoni At the Agassiz Theatre Tonight, 8 PM. Tomorrow, 2 PM, 8 PM.

By [Stuart A. Anfang](#)

February 8, 1985

"**JAZZ IS MORE** than music--it's a way of life." It is with this theme in mind that Patrick Bradford and his cast of 10 female singers and seven musicians have created Mood Indigo II Within the elegant music box of the Agassiz Theater of Radcliffe Yard, they had sought to reproduce the atmosphere and intimacy of a Greenwich Village Jazz club. Although the illusion is and does not hold the spell for 90 minutes, both the effect and the effort are superior. The result is a rather uncommon evening of Harvard theatre.

The project seeks to blend music, poetry and prose into a "fusion" of jazz aiming to explore what Jazz (with a capital J) as a medium expresses, and what it could potentially express. Using the music of Ellington, Gillespie, Waller, Monk and other greats coupled with selections from both Black and white authors. Mood Indigo II examines the meaning and the masters of Jazz in paying homage to the most distinctive origins and its fascinating evolution into a sophisticated cross-cultural genre, the performers (also both Black and White) note that "the Jazz transcends race." The message gets a little heavy handed at times, but the point of its universality is made carefully and thoughtfully. Indeed, Bradford and Gorgoni deserve credit for the well-crafted design and orchestration evident throughout the evening.

Mood Indigo An Evening of Jazz was originally presented in December in the Leob's Experimental Theatre with a mixed cast. In this incarnation the 10 women cast adds a feeling of warmth and history, reminding us of the important role that female artists played in the development of the medium. The use of the semicircle of performers around a circular stage, to the musicians, helps to recreate the closeness immediately of a Blocher Street nightspot. Most extensive use of the Agassiz's facilities, particularly in terms of lighting effects and movement off the stage would have added to the illusion.

AMONG, THE PERFORMERS Heather Johnston's mellow and throaty gave depth and emotion to her excellent renditions of Monk and Holiday Christina Wheeler as particularly strong and energetic in her powerful solos. Both Andrea Burke and Belle Linda Halpern gave vibrant performances exploring the sensuality of the music; especially memorable was Halpern's sassy "Wild Women Don't Get the Blues" Finally, there was Stephanie Wilford-Foster, who maintained the most compelling presence throughout the evening, drawing the subtle meaning out of the prose selections in a superior performance. In her closing number, evoking the Southern Baptist spirituals from which jazz sprung, Wilford-Foster was nothing less than inspirational in her preacher-like solo. In the band, Paul Brusiloff provides a hot trumpet, while Leon Greunbaum is fine on the piano. A Don Braden solo on the tenor saxophone, a la Stanley Turrentine, was very good once he warmed up and hit his groove.

Mood Indigo II: An Original Jazz Collage, for all its slight problems, remains an exceptionally well-conceived performed creation. As an exposition of jazz past and potential, it provides a stimulating. If not entirely satisfactory, study into the power of must easy to listen to, but difficult to completely understand. As one of the company notes, pondering the mystery. "As long as it's swinging and feels good, it's Jazz." This weekend, the Agassiz Theatre may be the best place between the East River and the Charles to find some answers.

[Editors note: Dr. Stuart Anfang is a practicing psychiatrist in Springfield MA].

Take Live: Jazz in Lowell

By [Yelena S. Mironova](#), Contributing Writer

December 7, 2006

When the Harvard Jazz Band presents an evening entitled "Jazz With a Latin Tinge" on Saturday, Dec. 9 at 8 p.m., featuring guest artists **Bobby Sanabria** and **Brian Lynch**, Lowell Lecture Hall will come alive with a medley of traditions.

Percussionist Sanabria and trumpeter Lynch have each made a distinctive mark on the jazz community. The two share a passion for the fusion of jazz and Latin motifs, and have performed together at a variety of venues.

This motivating theme of fusion is consistent with the 2006-2007 jazz band's exploration of Afro-Cuban music.

Thomas G. Everett, Director of the Harvard University Band (which includes the jazz band), says that the band typically looks to invite "entertainers with... a sound based on their place in history and their development of an original voice."

Sanabria's background is primarily in Afro-Caribbean and Latin jazz. Everett describes him as a "premier Latin percussionist, educator, and historian."

Indeed, Sanabria's diverse recording and performing experience includes work with such legendary figures as Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, and "Godfather of Cuban Jazz" Mario Bauzá, according to the artist's Web site.

Along with these inspirational figures, Sanabria worked to explore the tonal connections between Cuban rhythms and American jazz. Sanabria is as passionate about his music as he is about educating; earlier this fall, he served as a lecturer during Harvard's Office for the Arts Learning from Performers program.

Sanabria, along with **Bauzá**, performed at Harvard with the jazz band in the early '90s, and looks forward to "keeping Mario's legacy alive" during this performance.

Lynch's background is in bebop and jazz; his interest in Latin music came as an "outgrowth" of his passion for jazz, he says. According to Everett, he is the trumpeter of choice for Eddie Palmieri, a pioneer of Afro-Caribbean

music.

“Jazz and Latin really go hand in hand—they’re like two rooms in the same house, to use Dizzy Gillespie’s expression,” said Lynch.

The Harvard band will perform “E.P.’s Minor Plea,” one of Lynch’s original compositions, dedicated to Palmieri and arranged for the big band.

Director Everett hopes that listeners will leave the concert with a newfound—or perhaps merely reinforced—“enthusiasm for the music.”

Tickets are available through the Harvard Box Office. Prices are \$10 for general admission; \$5 for students and seniors.

[Editors note: Dr. Yelena Mironova-Chin is a practicing Psychiatrist in Madison, WI]

Along Came Benny: Golson Talks Jazz

Renowned saxophonist recounts five decades of jazz

By **Noël D. Barlow**, Contributing Writer

April 25, 2008

Savvy on the saxophone and just as smooth at storytelling, **Benny Golson** charmed a small audience last Thursday at the New College Theatre. Those who attended the two-hour interview were privileged to have stumbled upon one of the jewels of the jazz industry. With tales from his boyhood spent in Philadelphia with John Coltrane and his successful years of touring with Dizzy Gillespie, Golson passed on stories and advice to the next generation of aspiring jazz artists.

When jazz was still young, Golson was busy playing tenor saxophone whenever he could. “We were trying to figure out what this thing called ‘jazz’ was,” Golson said. “We didn’t know where we were going, but we

wanted to get there as soon as possible.”

Golson wasn't stopped by the fact that there was no guarantee that his efforts to be a part of the up-and-coming musical genre would result in financial security. “There was no money, no direction, no promises,” Golson said. “But it's an art form that refuses to die, because all of us who are engaged in it are driven.”

As a 15-year-old kid in Philadelphia, Golson and pianist Ray Bryant started off in a 15-piece band that had a simple, rough sound and played some gigs on the weekends. Golson recounted the story of their first gig: the leader of the group called and told Golson and Bryant the gig was cancelled, but in reality he had replaced them with other musicians. The two boys were devastated. “My mother took each of us in her arms and said ‘One day you'll be so good they won't even be able to afford you.’” Golson said. “And sure enough, years later the two of us were at the Newport Jazz Festival, and we were saying to each other, ‘Those guys are still in Philadelphia and we're here.’”

When Golson's career began to pick up and he was playing more and more dates in Philadelphia, his attention strayed beyond the city. “I wanted to go on the road so bad, I would have gone with a circus band,” Golson said, chuckling. Luckily for him, Bull Moose Jackson, an already successful jazz musician at the time, came to Philadelphia, auditioned Golson, and launched his professional career.

While playing in Jackson's rhythm and blues band, Golson met famous pianist and arranger Tadd Dameron. “He was an open book, and he let me pick his brain,” Golson said. With advice from Dameron, Golson began composing music, which would become his primary lifelong passion.

“I wrote the song ‘Stablemates’ while in the middle of a divorce with my wife,” Golson said. “We were playing in a town near her town and when there was a break in the set I pretended to be busy writing so she couldn't

talk to me. What I was writing turned out to be ‘Stablemates.’” His composing talent made him a hot commodity in the jazz business.

In 1956, Golson began working with Dizzy Gillespie’s band, performing at acclaimed venues such as the Apollo Theatre in New York. In the same year, a car accident claimed the life of young trumpeter Clifford Brown, and the loss was devastating to Golson and his contemporaries. Golson and Brown had played together with Dameron in the early 50s, and in memory of his friend’s death, Golson wrote the song “I Remember Clifford.”

“Dizzy Gillespie asked me if he could record my song. Little did he know that I had his picture on my wall in high school,” Golson said. “My hero had come down off the wall and asked to record my song.”

While playing with Tadd Dameron in Atlantic City, Golson met Art Farmer. Farmer’s music amazed Golson, and he became yet another source of inspiration for the aspiring artist. “I had never met anyone with such a warm sound,” said Golson. These two pioneers began a jazz sextet—an arrangement that had not been attempted before. The Jazztet, as it was eventually called, included other big-name musicians such as pianist McCoy Tyner and trombonist Curtis Fuller. This group was yet another successful step in Golson’s remarkable career.

After spending the week at Harvard, the jazz legend said that he was reminded that there’s always new music to find. “I should always keep listening because I’m always going to hear things I have never heard before,” Golson said. “That’s just the way it is.”

Practicing His Passion: Joshua Redman '91

2008 Harvard Arts Medal winner finds success where he never thought he would

By [Jillian J. Goodman](#), Crimson Staff Writer

April 29, 2008

Joshua Redman '91 is positively infuriating. The winner of the 2008 Harvard Arts Medal, he was that guy: the quintessential Harvard student,

the one who cures rare diseases and can whip up a mean soufflé—or, in Redman’s case, solves the world’s social problems and plays a mean saxophone. Now, he is one of the world’s foremost jazz musicians, with a style that is at once poised and loose, technically excellent and creatively free. But technique and creativity haven’t always been easy for Redman to reconcile.

While he was an undergraduate at Harvard, Redman led a double life. There was Redman the Phi Beta Kappa student who graduated with a summa cum laude degree in Social Studies and a spot at Yale Law School. And then there was Redman the saxophonist, who listened to jazz constantly and supposedly only practiced when he jammed with his friends at the Berklee College of Music or the New England Conservatory.

And as far as Redman was concerned, his two selves were too different to interact. In his words, “Never the twain shall meet.”

“I kind of had constructed this myth for myself that, in order to be creative, I couldn’t be analytical,” Redman says. “In order to feel I couldn’t think too much. In order to be expressive I couldn’t be focused and disciplined. I think I always recognized that it was a myth, but it was a convenient myth to buy into. It was a great excuse for not practicing.”

It’s easy to see where Redman’s story might have led: he easily could have fed his mind at Yale Law School and only occasionally nourished his soul with his saxophone. It would have been a carefully balanced life, successful but average.

Instead, less than six months after graduating and moving in with some Berklee grads in Brooklyn (he deferred his acceptance to law school), Redman entered the fifth annual Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition for saxophone on a whim—and won. What had once been “an escape” was suddenly business, and Redman the academic was suddenly forced to meet Redman the music lover.

Redman never intended to be a jazz musician. At the time, he told the Chicago Tribune, “If I really had my way, I wouldn’t even consider a record contract now, because I don’t think I’m really ready. There’s just too much focus on young people in jazz these days and there are older musicians who deserve the recording deals a lot more. But I guess it’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so you’ve got to take it.”

He never really intended to be a lawyer, either. Until he got to college, Redman was sure that he wanted to be a physician, but by the end of his four years he doubted whether he was really cut out for medical school. As academically successful as he was, Redman was no stranger to anxiety. Although he says he enjoyed himself here, he refers to a sense of relief after leaving Harvard and says that “as the years have gone by, every time I come back [to Boston] I get a better feeling.”

“Like a lot of people coming out of college, I was interested in the social problems of the day and how some of those things could be addressed, alleviated,” Redman says. “Obviously, to get anything done in society, you need to know the law, so I was interested in it from that standpoint.”

“Like lot of people who go to law school, I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do, and law school seemed like the place to go if you don’t know that,” he continues.

He had spent years treating music as a release and consciously shirking the fundamentals. “I wish I were 10 percent as focused and studious with music as I was as a student at the university,” he says. “I have a lot of conditioning against that.”

Little by little, discipline has crept into his music. When he decided to pursue music as a career, Redman realized that it was time to fill the holes in his technique and started to buckle down. Until that point, Redman had been almost entirely self-taught. He grew up in Berkeley, Calif. with his

mother, a dancer named Renee Shedroff. His father, though, was legendary jazz saxophonist Dewey Redman.

Dewey was more a musical influence on Redman than a parental influence. Redman grew up listening to his records and seeing his father's gigs when he played in San Francisco. When Redman decided to go into music, it was his mother who was supportive and his father who told him to stick with law school.

Dewey played on Redman's latest album, "Back East," which they recorded four months before the father's death in August of last year. In the very beginning, though, the two Redmans used to play gigs around New York.

"What were big deals were the opportunities I was getting, almost immediately, to play with these incredible musicians, people I grew up idolizing, like my father, Charlie Haden, Elvin Jones, Jack DeJohnette, Paul Motian, Roy Haynes, Pat Metheny," Redman says. "I got a chance to play with all these people within six months of moving to New York, and more. I was invited to play with these musicians, and then I was invited back. I couldn't really understand it, but I went with it."

"Going with it" seems to be the theme of Redman's interactions with jazz. It may not be the pure release for him now that it was in his college days, but it hasn't lost its ability to carry him up and away.

"I am the least freewheeling person you will meet," Redman says. "I don't have any of that in my day-to-day, the way I navigate the world, interact with people. In music I think I have that, and maybe have that in a different way than a lot of my peers. I had no expectations, no agenda I had set for myself. I don't even want to say that served me well, but it served me in some respect."

Redman will receive the 2008 Harvard Arts Medal at a ceremony on Thursday, but though Harvard has honored him in the past for his intellect,

it is now honoring him for his passion. And in that respect, he's unlike a lot of people coming out of college. In fact, he's like very few.

“I was familiar with some of the artists who had received [the Arts Medal] in the past, and they're some of the greatest artists of our time, so I was like, ‘What? Have you guys run out of ideas? Is this charity for me?’” Redman says. “But hey, I'm thankful.”

—Staff writer Jillian J. Goodman can be reached at jjgoodm@fas.harvard.edu.

An Interview with Herbie Hancock

Settled in an armchair and mutely dressed in a grey fleece half-zip and black jeans, Herbert “Herbie” J. Hancock, the 2014 Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry, exuded pure calmness. The legendary jazz pianist, known for leading fearless, searching electric and acoustic projects (Head Hunters, Mwandishi, his Trio) as well as his tenure with Miles Davis’s seminal “Second Great Quintet” in the ’60s, was charmingly low-key but coolly energetic. Hancock, who turns 75 next month, showed absolutely no sign of his age, save for when he stood up and a slight paunch quietly emerged.

BY KEVIN SUN March 27, 2014

Video by Madeline R. Lear '17

Settled in an armchair and mutely dressed in a grey fleece half-zip and black jeans, Herbert “Herbie” J. Hancock, the 2014 Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry, exuded pure calmness. The legendary jazz pianist, known for leading fearless, searching electric and acoustic projects (Head Hunters, Mwandishi, his Trio) as well as his tenure with Miles Davis’s seminal “Second Great Quintet” in the ’60s, was charmingly low-key but coolly energetic. Hancock, who turns 75 next month, showed absolutely no sign of his age, save for when he stood up and a slight paunch quietly emerged.

Over the course of a half hour, we talked about his thoughts on the lectures, the epistemic status of the word “jazz,” the difference between composing and improvising, his feelings about being named the first African-American Norton lecturer, and his impression of the Harvard scene.

The Harvard Crimson: How did you find the process of writing these lectures?

Herbie Hancock: Well, I’ve been working on them for almost six months. I’ve been working with a woman who has written speeches for me before over the past few years. The majority of them were for functions having to do with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz; some were for keynote addresses for graduating classes, and there were some cases of me receiving an honorary doctorate or something like that.

In a lot of cases, she did interviews with me and she would just take my words and my ideas and perfect the construction of them, and that’s kind of how we worked on these lectures. Over the years she’s learned a lot about how I think, my style—more than how I express myself: how I feel about things. She knows I’m Buddhist, and there are certain ways I look at things that have to do with my perspective because of my practice of Buddhism. As a result, she’s learned a lot about that perspective; as a matter of fact, she is now interested in Buddhism! **laughs**

THC: How do you think about the relationship between composition and improvisation? Do you think there’s a difference between the two?

HH: Yeah, for me there is. Improvisation is composition—it’s spontaneous composition—but it’s without consideration of any time except the moment, whereas what we call composition is done at a particular time, but you’re not restricted to the moment. There’s a kind of unconscious realization that composition is purposely structured for continuous play, or listening. I mean, you’re not conscious of it in those concrete, detailed terms at the time that you’re composing, but inherently you hope that people are going to want to hear it over and over again! **laughs**

THC: It seems that jazz is gaining respect within higher institutions of learning, since improvisation isn't necessarily being thought of as below composition, as it sometimes has been in classical music departments.

HH: I hear people say things to me—people from the classical world (not necessarily here, I don't think they'd necessarily say it to my face)—but they say stuff like, “Oh, I hear you're getting back into classical music!” They say it with such glee, you know! “Oh, you're coming back into the real, fine art of classical music,” as though jazz isn't, and that just goes in one ear and out the other.

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I don't pay attention to that because I have a great deal of respect and admiration for the art of improvisation—especially jazz, because it has solid roots that come from the people, come from ordinary people, and it's not stuck in any attempt to aspire to some kind of hierarchical placement. The only hierarchy is within the individual musician himself: to become better, that's all.

THC: Before your first lecture, you went into why you chose the word “Ethics,” but I was also curious about the word “Jazz,” since the term has come under fire in recent years. Do you have an opinion on that whole debate? What does the word “jazz” mean to you?

HH: Well, I do have a perspective on that: we can make jazz mean anything we want it to mean. I'm not so concerned about changing the word as I am about defining, by our behavior and by our focus on establishing a meaning in the eyes of the public, a music that's one of respect and one that's worthy of adoration.

THC: Hence initiatives like International Jazz Day.

HH: I mean, you don't have to change the word! To me, that's like—I don't know why this popped into my head—but a guy that gets married to one woman, divorces her and marries another one, divorces her and marries another one, and now, he's got five wives and a big alimony.

This is a very broad and dangerous generalization to make, but, in general, I think in a lot of cases the fault isn't the wife or the marriage itself—it's how you perceive the relationship and the stuff that you throw into the relationship that destroys it! It's more that you have to deal with yourself; that's kind of where I'm at. It's up to us to define what jazz is.

THC: At the first lecture, I was surprised when Professor Homi Bhabha announced that you are the first African-American Norton Professor of Poetry. Was that a surprise to you?

HH: Yeah, it was a surprise to me. On one hand, I felt honored; on the other hand, I felt like, “This is 2014 and you never had any other black Norton professor? Like, what's wrong with you, Harvard?” **laughs**

Well, Homi Bhabha said the same thing, like, “Well, what took them so long?” But I've moved past that. Next! That's how I felt: “What took you so long,” “Okay, next,” and now you're past it, so that's good.

THC: This is a bit of nerdy question, but there's a story about the infamous 1965 *Live at the Plugged Nickel* recordings that drummer Tony Williams, on a plane to Chicago, suggested that you and the rest of Miles Davis's band play “anti-music.” Is that a true story?

HH: Yeah, that's true. Well, we didn't know anything about them recording. What had happened was that we got so good at being able to make the music work—to make it happen—because we kind of knew what each one was going to do based off of what each one was going to play. It just became too comfortable and, to us, it was like stagnation. We had grown to the point where we could do that. Now, what's next? We needed to push the envelope in some kind of way. It was the idea that came from Tony, but as

soon as he said it, I totally agreed with him. We needed to break the rules and play against everything we had done before. The idea was: whatever somebody expects you to do at a certain musical idea, do the opposite.

THC: Did you tell Miles?

HH: No! **laughs**

THC: But he caught on.

HH: He never said *one word*. He never said one word. But one thing we knew was that Miles always told us to always be working on something, and this was working on something. But the worst thing was, we walk into the Plugged Nickel and we see a bunch of tape recorders! We didn't know we were going to be recorded and we were like, "Oh...we decided to do anti-music on the day we're going to record, so maybe we shouldn't do this...maybe after the record."

But we kind of made that vow—almost in blood!—so we gritted our teeth and we said, "We're going to do it now," because otherwise it was like now or never. I think inside we were thinking, "Okay, the idea came, so we better do this idea while it's hot instead of being swayed," so we did.

And after the first night they said, "You want to hear some of the tapes back?" Well, none of us wanted to hear anything back because we thought it was awful. We knew that this was like growing pains or something, and we didn't expect it to sound like anything, you know.

THC: Did you ever end up listening to it?

HH: It was I guess months later; they didn't put the record out for a while. I read that they had put one out—this was before they did the whole collection—and I didn't want to hear it. Somebody called me up and said, "Have you heard the stuff you guys did at the Plugged Nickel?" and I said, "No, and I don't want to, either!" So whoever called me—I don't remember—they said, "I think you should listen to it." And I said, "Why? You know, that stuff is really bad." And he said, "No, I think you should

listen to it.” And then I listened to this record...and it sounded really raw, and there was a certain honesty in the rawness that I was happy about, and everything wasn't perfect and all—the i's weren't dotted and the t's weren't crossed - but...

THC: But the spirit was there.

HH: Yeah. And Wayne was *killing!* And Miles, too, and Tony, and...I mean, there were things in there—not moment to moment, but just in general. It's not my finest piano playing, but it's all searching, you know, and it had a value that I never expected.

TAGS

The Futurist

Milhaud Sees Jazz As Basis Of Future Music In America And Europe

SUGGESTS A JAZZ SYMPHONY IN FORM OF SONATA

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

February 2, 1923

"Jazz will constitute the basis of the musical future of America", said Dr. Darius Milhaud the leader of the modern school of Paris which sponsors the newer musical tendencies, when interviewed by a CRIMSON reporter.

"It is my desire and my purpose to infuse a new spirit, the spirit of jazz, into the classic art of music. Despite the universal execration and condemnation of jazz, the tendency today is along the lines of diatonic music as against chromatic music, the vehicle of expression which Wagner employed. While the Viennese school is still adhering to the chromatic motif, the diatonic tendencies are experiencing a rapid development under the eager minds of Parisian composers.

"This new style of music is being well received in this country", continued Mr. Milhaud; "indeed, it has been accorded an enthusiastic reception; but

in Europe, where conservatism is the characteristic attitude, it is not viewed with favor. This difference in opinion can be accounted for only on the basis of the American temperament. America is susceptible to new influences; it has a younger spirit. But the French are under the influence of the impressionistic school, and this new music involves a radical departure from the accepted standard of classicism. The new music of Paris has in a certain sense derived a real impetus from American jazz, and I am firm in my belief that jazz will constitute the basis of the future schools of American and European music. Jazz has many redeeming features, for in it there is a certain warmth, an enthusiasm, a dissonant quality, a vitality of rhythm, which is not foreign to the newer musical tendencies of Paris. My hope and my reasonable expectation is that some young American composer will produce a jazz symphony, in other words, jazz in sonata form. If America does not develop this musical concept, I will do so myself. So far no exponent of this evident trend has appeared in this country--not even Cyril Scott, who is not as far advanced as the new French school.

"We may believe," declared Mr. Milhaud in conclusion, "that the music of the future will digress from the conservatism of the past, and the essence of the new element will be jazz."

Ticket to the Huddie Ledbetter (Leadbelly) concert!

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Wednesday, March 13, 1935

8.00 p. m.

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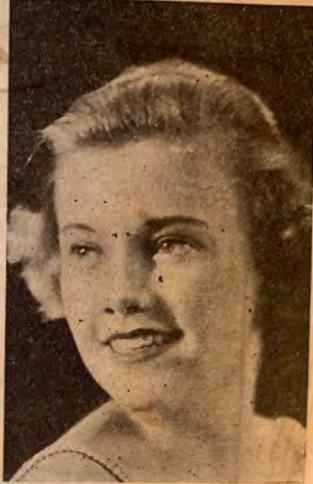
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Vocalist with Claude Thornhill on March 17



Miss Betty Claire is the attractive vocalist appearing with

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ART SHAW
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DANCING 10 to 3

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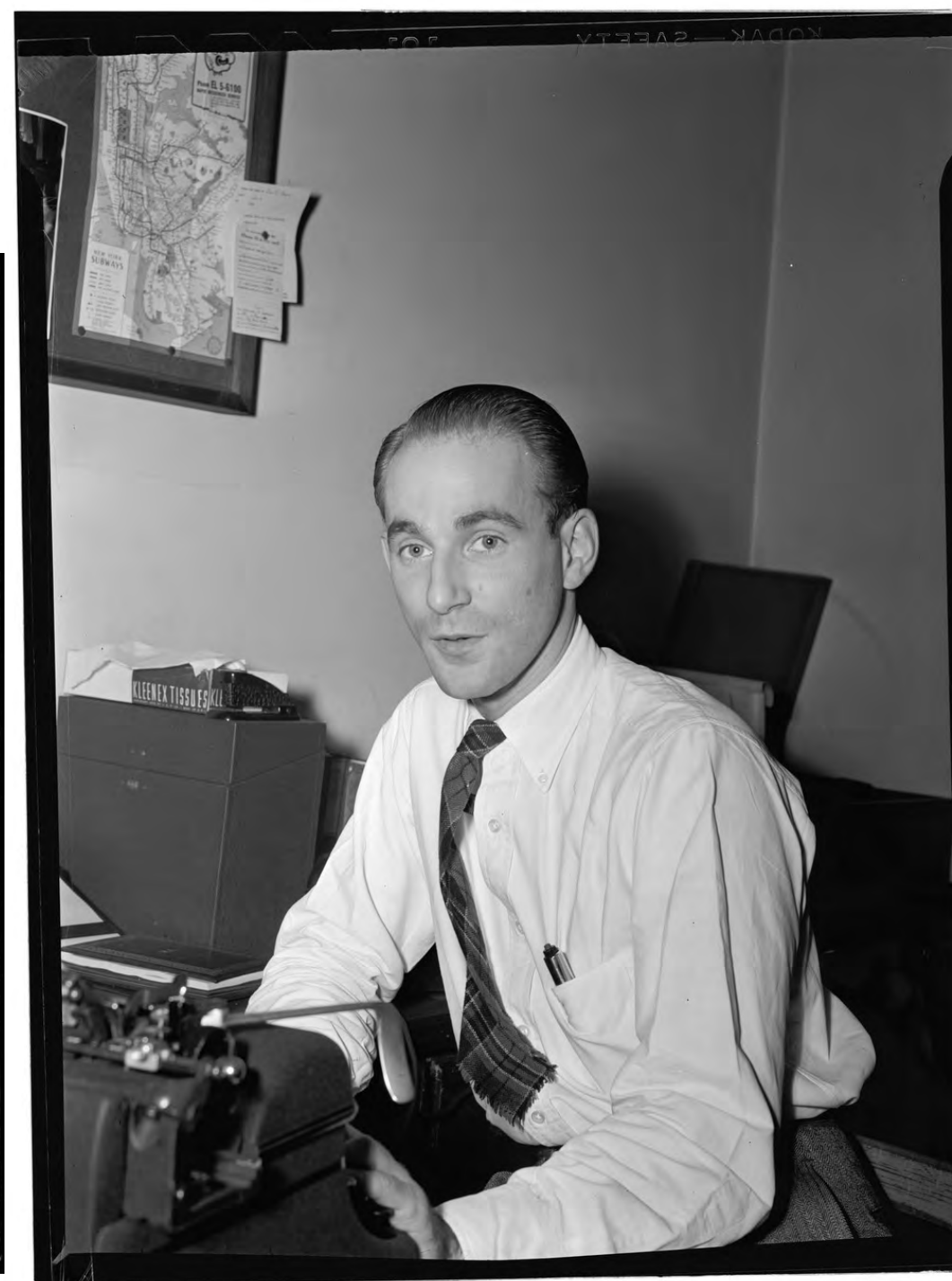
Claude Thornhill
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Former *Crimson Swing* Writer Mike Levin '41
Jazz Editor at *Downbeat* 1947

Leverett Dance November 16th, 1940





NBC Broadcast from Leverett Dining Hall 1942



Fall 2018

Learning from Performers In the Library Theater

Famed Saxophonist Bill Pierce

Saxophonist Bill Pierce: Harvard University Jazz Master in Residence



A master of the saxophone and esteemed teacher of performance on woodwinds, Bill Pierce will offer an open workshop on Oct. 30 to a Harvard jazz ensemble of student musicians and then will be in conversation with **Ingrid Monson** of the Harvard Music Department. Presented by the Office for the Arts Learning from Performers program **4 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 30 at Leveret Theater, 28 DeWolfe Street**, this free public event is part of a residency that culminates in a ticketed concert at **8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 3** at Lowell Lecture Hall, featuring Pierce Jazz Bands, led by Yosvany Terry and Mark E. Olson.

Raised in Florida, Bill Pierce has performed and recorded with Freddie Hubbard, Tony Williams, Art Farmer, James Williams, Hank Jones, Art Blakey, Branford Marsalis and Wynton Marsalis. He is the former woodwind department chair at **Berklee College of Music**, where he landed at age 18 during the late 1960s, studying jazz during the day and gigging at night.

For two years, he played steadily at the **Sugar Shack**, a now defunct club on Boylston Street opposite the Boston Common where all of the top R&B acts used to play. He interrupted his studies to tour with Stevie Wonder, and then returned to Berklee, graduated and became part of the faculty in 1975. He was **recently celebrated** at Berklee with a concert produced by drummer, composer and bandleader (and fellow Berklee alum and educator) Terri Lyne Carrington.

Listen to Pierce perform at the Cambridge Jazz Festival in 2016.

Listen to Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers Live at Seventh Avenue South (1982) with Art Blakey (drums); Wynton Marsalis (trumpet); Branford Marsalis (alto sax); Bill Pierce (tenor sax); Donald Brown (piano); Charles Fambrough (bass).

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2019: Afro-Cuban stars in the Library Theater!



The DRCLAS CUBA STUDIES PROGRAM and ART, FILM AND CULTURE, together with LEVERETT HOUSE, present

MUSIC WORKSHOP ft. SÍNTESIS: UNA VISIÓN DE LA HERENCIA MUSICAL AFRO-CUBANA

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4
@12pm

SÍNTESIS is one of the emblematic ensembles of contemporary Cuban music, due to the richness, variety and conceptual structure of their sonic style. Síntesis music pioneered the fusion of Afro-Cuban musical traditions with contemporary jazz and rock in the late 1970s. They are among the most recognized and popular musical groups of the island. Síntesis' albums ANCESTROS I, II and III are part of the Cuban rock-fusion classics.

SÍNTESIS will be sharing with the students their creative process to fuse and integrate Afro-Cuban musical traditions with various styles of music including Jazz, Funk, R&B, Rock and other music genres. This will be a unique opportunity for the students interested in music making and production to learn from one of Cuba's leading group working within this musical boundaries.

This Music Workshop will be held in Spanish with consecutive translation and moderated by **YOSVANY TERRY**, Senior Lecturer on Music and Director of Harvard Jazz Bands

Presented in collaboration with ALARI and Instituto Cervantes at Harvard University

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Contact Information: **Marcela Ramos**, mvramos@fas.harvard.edu



DAVID ROCKEFELLER CENTER
FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
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April 2019

Learning from Performers:
Piano Master Chucho Valdez
Converses with Yosvany Terry
in the Library Theater



Office for the Arts at Harvard and Harvard Jazz Bands present

Puente Musical:
Celebrating Chucho Valdés
2019 Harvard University Jazz Master in Residence

In concert with
Harvard Jazz Bands
and **Yunior Terry**, bass
Yosvany Terry and
Mark Olson, conductors

Friday, April 12, 2019, 8pm

Sanders Theatre, 45 Quincy Street, Cambridge
Free Parking (Broadway Garage)
Tickets: \$15 general admission;
\$10 Outings & Innings; \$8 students and seniors
Harvard Box Office, 617.495.2222;
boxoffice.harvard.edu

With support from the Cuba Studies Program
at the DRCCLAS

Office for the Arts at Harvard

Spring 2019
Community Night in
The Lev Dining Hall



Spring 2019

Conway Concerts in the Junior Common Room





The Jazz Combo Initiative
Debut recital in the
Library Theater, 2019

Our coach:
Don Braden '85
Leverett alum,
has recorded 20 albums
as leader, and toured
with the greats!



The Harvard Jazz Combo Initiative presents
jazz&cookies
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Tuesday, Dec 3

7:30-9:30pm

Leverett
Library
Theater

25 Mill Street,
Cambridge



This program is made possible through the Thomas G. Everett Jazz Innovation Fund, Office for the Arts at Harvard and Leverett House.

December 2019

The Jazz Combo Initiative
With Coach Don Braden '85



2019
Holiday Dinner
Jazz!



Bria Skonberg visits the
Jazz Combo Initiative in
March 2020!

