

REHEARSAL VOL. 1

WITH

MARY LOU WILLIAMS

FRANK NEWTON
EDMOND HALL
VIC DICKENSON
AL LUCAS
JACK PARKER

in

LITTLE JOE

HYLTON JEFFERSON

DAVE RIVERA
MILTON HINTON
JONAH JONES
J. C. HEARD

in

I CAN'T GET STARTED



FOOTNOTES TO JAZZ, VOL. 3

Notes by Frederic Ramsey, Jr.

FOLKWAYS RECORD & SERVICE CORP., N. Y. FJ 2292



Rehearsal Vol. 1 (Footnotes To Jazz. Vol. 3)

Illustrated Notes are Inside Pocket

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INTRODUCTION AND NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS
BY FREDERIC RAMSEY, JR.

BACK OF EVERY RECORDING OF JAZZ (OR SWING, OR BOP) IS THE MUSICAL "TRYOUT SESSION" WHICH HAS PRODUCED THE FINAL MASTER. IT IS A SESSION THAT PROCEEDS ALONG LOGICAL MUSICAL LINES, ALTHOUGH EACH MUSICIAN WOULD PROBABLY DENY IT AT THE TIME; IT'S SO HARD FOR HIM TO TELL JUST HOW HIS INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENSEMBLE WILL SOUND IN RELATION TO WORK OF HIS FELLOW ARTISTS. IN PART, THIS EXPLAINS THE NEED FOR RECORDING SEVERAL "TESTS", WHICH CAN BE HEARD BY ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP AS A SESSION PROGRESSES.

BUT THERE IS MORE TO A SESSION THAN THESE "PLAY-BACKS." FOR TO MOST MUSICIANS, A SESSION, ANY SESSION, IS WHAT GIVES LIFE TO JAZZ. IT IS THROUGH THE INFORMAL, UNREHEARSED SESSION THAT THEIR MUSICAL IDEAS FIRST COME INTO EXISTENCE; AND IT IS THROUGH CONTINUATION OF SUCH A SESSION FOR AS LONG A TIME AS POSSIBLE THAT THEY ARE DEVELOPED. AND AS SMALL-BAND JAZZ MUSICIANS FIND THAT MOST MASS MEDIA ARE DENIED TO THEM (RADIO, TELEVISION NETWORKS, AND MOVIE PRODUCERS, ARE OUTSTANDING FOR THEIR SHUNNING OF WORTHWHILE JAZZ, PARTLY BECAUSE OF COLOR LINES, PARTLY BECAUSE OF IGNORANCE OR INDIFFERENCE), THEY HAVE POURED MORE OF THEIR TALENT INTO RECORDING SESSIONS THAN INTO ALMOST ANY OTHER PHASE OF THEIR CREATIVE ACTIVITY. THAT IS, PROVIDED THE RECORDING SESSIONS GIVE THEM TIME TO DEVELOP THEIR IDEAS.

WITH BIG BANDS, A DIFFERENT SET OF RULES HAS PREVAILED. A CRACK ARRANGEMENT IS REPEATED FOR HOURS IN A REHEARSAL HALL BEFORE ANYONE DARES TO GET WITHIN PICKUP RANGE OF A MICROPHONE. THEN THE BAND REMOVES TO A RECORDING STUDIO, WHERE THE WHOLE BUSINESS IS RUN THROUGH AT A BRISK PACE. IN THIS MANNER, A LARGE BAND CAN KNOCK OUT FOUR TUNES IN A RELATIVELY SHORT SPACE OF RECORDING TIME. THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH THIS SYSTEM, WHEN THE VALUES INVOLVED ARE PURELY COMMERCIAL; THE MEN ARE PAID ACCORDING TO THE TIME THEY SPEND IN THE STUDIO, AND SO ARE THE ENGINEERS. IT DOES REQUIRE THAT EVERY NOTE BE PRE-ARRANGED, AND THAT NO ONE DEViate FROM A WRITTEN SCORE. IN THE HANDS OF SKILLED ARRANGERS, THIS IS QUITE EFFECTIVE -- IN SOME CASES, IT HAS BEEN WARMLY PRAISED BY PERSONS WHO HAVE SAID THAT IT ACHIEVED SOME OF THE LOOSE, EASY QUALITY OF INFORMAL, SMALLBAND JAZZ.

THERE IS NO NEED TO STATE THAT ONE METHOD IS BETTER THAN THE OTHER; EACH HAS PRODUCED GOOD RESULTS. YET OF THE TWO, THE INFORMAL, PLAY-AS-YOU-GO SYSTEM HAS ALWAYS APPEALED MOST TO JAZZ MUSICIANS. IT IS SURPRISING, THEN, THAT NO ONE HAS DEEMED IT WORTHWHILE TO PRESERVE A RECORD OF THIS CHOSEN WORKSHOP-METHOD OF JAZZ.

CERTAINLY THE "REHEARSAL" IDEA HAS BEEN ACCEPTED IN THE FIELD OF CLASSIC MUSIC, WITH BROADCASTS OF THE BOSTON SYMPHONY REHEARSALS SPANNING OVER TWO SEASONS OF NETWORK PROGRAMMING. THERE HAVE BEEN QUITE A FEW INFORMAL, "REHEARSAL" CONCERTS IN NEW YORK, TOO, AT TOWN HALL AND AT CARNEGIE RECITAL HALL. IF A REHEARSAL OF A CLASSIC WORK IS SIGNIFICANT AS IT UNFOLDS TO LISTENERS, THEN A JAZZ REHEARSAL SHOULD BE DOUBLY SO -- FOR IT IS IN SUCH SESSIONS THAT THE MUSIC ACTUALLY EVOLVES, AND A FINAL RECORDING MASTER IS "CREATED." HERE THERE ARE NO NOTES, NO PRECISE SCORINGS -- THE WHOLE BUSINESS IS ENTIRELY UP TO THE MUSICIANS, AND THEY "MAKE THE MUSIC" AS THEY GO ALONG.

IT WAS WITH THESE CONSIDERATIONS IN MIND THAT THE RECORDING DIRECTOR, MOE ASCH, DIPPED DEEP INTO HIS SUPPLY OF EXTRA ACETATES, EVEN IN THE DAYS WHEN ACETATES WERE HARD TO GET, AND BEGAN TO CATCH SOME OF THE ELUSIVE YET SIGNIFICANT MUSICAL MOMENTS OF ACTUAL JAZZ REHEARSALS. OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS, THESE ACETATES WERE SET ASIDE. THE MASTERS THAT WERE PRODUCED AT THE RECORDING SESSIONS WERE USED, BUT THE REHEARSAL MATERIAL WAS STORED AWAY IN A BIG — AND WEIGHTY — TIN BOX.

RECENTLY, THE TIN BOX CAME TO LIGHT, AND WAS OPENED. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF A GENIE HAD BEEN RELEASED — AS THE RECORDS CAME OUT OF THE BOX, THE PILE SPREAD AND GREW. THERE WERE 66 SIDES IN ALL, AND MOST OF THEM WERE 16", GLASS BASE ACETATES. THEY HAD TO BE CATALOGED, SEPARATED ACCORDING TO DATES, SESSIONS, MUSICIANS. NOT ALL THE ACETATES HAD BEEN KINDLY TREATED, AND THAT WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT. BUT OUT OF THIS MATERIAL, IT HAS BEEN POSSIBLE TO PIECE TOGETHER, WITH THE AID OF TAPE, A SEQUENCE THAT MIRRORS THE CHALLENGING, CREATIVE MOMENTS OF JAZZ GESTATION. THUS "JAZZ REHEARSAL, I," WHICH IS THE SECOND LONG PLAYING RECORD TO APPEAR IN THE "FOOTNOTES TO JAZZ" SERIES, IS FRANKLY EXPERIMENTAL, AND AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THE FIRST OF ITS KIND.

LITTLE JOE

FOR HER FIRST SESSION IN THE STUDIO, MARY LOU WILLIAMS CHOSE FIVE MUSICIANS: FRANK NEWTON, TRUMPET; VIC DICKENSON, TROMBONE; EDMOND HALL, CLARINET; AL LUCAS, BASS, AND JACK PARKER, DRUMS. ALTHOUGH SHE HAD BEEN DOING SOME OUTSTANDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR BOTH THE BENNY GOODMAN AND DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRAS, THIS WAS HER FIRST DATE WITH HER OWN PICKED GROUP. HER PREVIOUS RECORDINGS DATED BACK FOUR YEARS.

IT WAS A TIME OF EXPERIMENT IN JAZZ; A GROUP OF YOUNGER MEN WAS CHALLENGING THE STANDARDS SO RIGIDLY MAINTAINED OF NEW ORLEANS JAZZ. THEY WERE DEMANDING THE RIGHT TO EVOLVE, AND TO PLAY, A STYLE OF THEIR OWN. FOR THIS REASON, MARY LOU, WHO IDENTIFIED HERSELF WITH THIS REVOLT AGAINST THE OLD, ESTABLISHED SCHOOL, HAD CHOSEN MEN OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION. FRANK NEWTON, A YOUNG EXPERIMENTER WHOSE TIES WITH THE OLD JAZZ WERE CLOSE (IT WAS NEWTON WHO CONTRIBUTED THE FINE SOLO PASSAGES TO BESSIE SMITH'S LAST RECORDS, NOTABLY TAKE ME FOR A BUGGY RIDE AND GIMME A PIGFOOT), YET WHO NIGHT AFTER NIGHT IN JAM

SESSIONS IN GREENWICH VILLAGE WAS SHOWING THAT HE COULD THINK AND INVENT ALONG DIFFERENT LINES, WAS A NATURAL CHOICE FOR LEAD TRUMPET. VIC DICKENSON, OF XENIA, OHIO, A TROMBONE MAN WHO HAD BEEN A BIT OF EVERYTHING IN JAZZ (BLANCHE CALLOWAY, CLAUDE HOPKINS, BENNY CARTER AND COUNT BASIE HAD KNOWN HIM AS SIDEMAN; SO HAD ONE SPEED WEBB OF MADISON, WISCONSIN, IN THE MIDDLE TWENTIES), WAS REALLY COMING INTO HIS OWN AS MASTER OF A REMARKABLY CONTROLLED, "SLOW-DOWN" TECHNIQUE OF TROMBONE PLAYING. ED HALL HAD INHERITED MUCH OF THE FLUID CLARINET TRADITION OF HIS NATIVE NEW ORLEANS, YET HE LOOKED ELSEWHERE FOR INSPIRATION; HIS WAS THE MOST TRADITIONAL STYLE, YET HIS MUSICIANSHIP WAS FLEXIBLE. JACK "THE BEAR" PARKER HAD RECORDED WITH SEVERAL STARS OF THE NEW SCHOOL OF FIFTY-SECOND STREET, INCLUDING DON BYAS, SLAM STEWART, AND EDDIE HEYWOOD. LUCAS HAD BEEN TRAVELING WITH THE SAME SCHOOL, HAVING RECORDED WITH HAWKINS, BEN WEBSTER, LIPS PAGE, AND OTHERS.

ALONG WITH NEW TALENT SPIRALLING ONTO JAZZ TURN- TABLES AT THIS TIME, SOME ECONOMIC CONDITIONS FAVORABLE TO SMALL-BAND RECORDING HAD COME ABOUT, NOT ALTOGETHER BY BLESSED HAPPENSTANCE. MANY RECORD COMPANIES, ESPECIALLY THE MAJOR PRODUCERS, HAD BEEN INACTIVE FOR MONTHS BECAUSE OF REFUSAL TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT PAYING ROYALTIES TO THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE DEMAND FOR RECORDS, BECAUSE OF WARTIME SPENDING AND THE GENERAL RENAISSANCE OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES THAT FOLLOWED THIS PERIOD OF GOOD WAGES, HAD INCREASED SHARPLY. SEVERAL INDEPENDENT RECORD COMPANIES BEGAN TO MEET THIS DEMAND, AND THEIR ACTIVITY COINCIDED WITH THE EAGERNESS OF MUSICIANS TO GET THEIR NEW IDEAS ON RECORD.

ALMOST EVERY NIGHT SPOT IN NEW YORK WAS JAMMED, PROVIDING WORK AND A PLACE FOR MUSICIANS TO EXPERIMENT. EVERY MONDAY NIGHT, JAM SESSIONS AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD WERE MEMORABLE AFFAIRS; DICKENSON AND NEWTON CONTRIBUTED CHORUS AFTER CHORUS TO SMALL, INSPIRED GROUPS — NEW, TALENTED BANDS OF SIX OR SEVEN MEN LUSHROOMED REGULARLY AT CAFE SOCIETY, WHERE MARY LOU WILLIAMS WAS PLAYING TO A FULL HOUSE EVERY NIGHT. EDDIE HEYWOOD PLAYED THERE, AND SO DID EDMOND HALL AND BENNY MORTON. COLEMAN HAWKINS WAS BLOWING PROFILICALLY ALONG 52ND STREET. SLAM STEWART, LIPS PAGE, SLIM GAILLARD, EMMETT BERRY AND JOHNNY GUARNIERI KEPT HIM COMPANY IN BISTROS THAT LINED THAT NOW FORGOTTEN THOROUGHFARE.

IT WAS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT MARY LOU WILLIAMS BROUGHT HER CHOSEN FIVE TO THE STUDIO. WHAT HAPPENED AS THEY WORKED WITH HER COMPOSITION, "LITTLE JOE", THE TUNE SHE HAD RECORDED SEVERAL YEARS BEFORE WITH A BIG BAND, CAN BE HEARD AS THE SESSION EVOLVES ON THE FIRST SIDE OF THIS LONG PLAYING "JAZZ REHEARSAL".

I CAN'T GET STARTED

PERSONNEL: HILTON JEFFERSON, ALTO SAXOPHONE; DAVE RIVERA, PIANO; MILTON HINTON, STRING BASS; JONAH JONES, TRUMPET; J.C. HEARD, DRUMS.

ON THE DAY HE CAME IN FOR THIS JAZZ REHEARSAL, ALTO SAXOPHONIST HILTON JEFFERSON COULD NAME WITH PRIDE THE LONG LIST OF JUMPING JAZZ BANDS HE'D PLAYED WITH; IT READS LIKE A DISCOGRAPHY, A LITTLE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAZZ, AND INCLUDES KING OLIVER, CHICK WEBB, FLETCHER HENDERSON, BUBBER MILEY, RED ALLEN, AND CAB CALLOWAY, WITH WHOM HE PLAYED REGULARLY FROM 1940 TO 1947. WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CALLOWAY BAND, HE GOT TOGETHER TO IMPROVISE A FEW CHORUSES ON THE SWING CLASSIC, I CAN'T GET STARTED WITH YOU.

MILTON HINTON, WHO PLAYED WITH JEFFERSON ON THIS JAZZ REHEARSAL, AND WHO CAN BE HEARD TALKING WITH HIM, HAD PLAYED WITH EDDIE SOUTH, ERSKINE TATE (AN ERSKINE TATE RECORDING BY AN EARLIER BAND CAN BE HEARD IN JAZZ, VOL. 5, CHICAGO), AND, OF COURSE, CALLOWAY. HE HAD RECORDED WITH TEDDY WILSON, CHU BERRY, AND CALLOWAY.

THE MOOD OF THE MEN AWAY FROM THE CALLOWAY BAND, WHICH AT THAT TIME WENT IN FOR TIGHTLY ARRANGED SECTION WORK, WAS ONE OF RELAXATION AND INFORMALITY, AS THESE RECORDINGS SHOW.

INSTEAD OF PLAYING ARRANGEMENTS WRITTEN OUT FOR LARGE SECTIONS THAT ADDED UP TO A TOTAL OF EIGHTEEN MEN IN THE BIG CALLOWAY ORCHESTRA, THESE MEN COULD FORM A BAND-WITHIN-A-BAND OF THEIR OWN. NOT LONG BEFORE, THEY HAD BEEN SITTING ALONGSIDE SUCH BOP PIONEERS AS DIZZY GILLESPIE IN 1940 AND 1941; IN 1945, THE CALLOWAY BAND BOASTED SUCH SIDEMEN AS IKE QUEBEC, J.C. HEARD, TYREE GLENN, AND DANNY BARKER. IT IS NOT SURPRISING, THEN, THAT THIS PARTICULAR REHEARSAL CAUGHT THEM IN A MOOD OF EXPERIMENT, REFLECTING TRENDS THEN CURRENT IN CONTEMPORARY JAZZ.

EDITOR - FREDERIC RAMSEY, JR.
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FOOTNOTES TO JAZZ, Vol. 3

Jazz Rehearsal, 1

SIDE 1

FJ 2292 A

LITTLE JOE

(Mary Lou Williams)

Mary Lou Williams (piano) and her Chosen Five
Frank Newton-trumpet; Vic Dickenson-trombone;
Edmond Hall-clarinet; Al Lucas-bass;
Jack Parker-drums.

Frederic Ramsey, Jr. — Editor
from actual session recorded by Moses Asch

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FOOTNOTES TO JAZZ, Vol. 3

Jazz Rehearsal, 1

SIDE 2

FJ 2292 B

I CAN'T GET STARTED WITH YOU

(Ira Gershwin & Vernon Duke)

Hilton Jefferson, alto saxophone; Jonah Jones,
trumpet; Dave Rivera, piano; Milton
Hinton, bass; J. C. Heard, drums.

Frederic Ramsey, Jr. — Editor

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