REHEARSAL VOL. 1
WITH
MARY LOU WILLIAMS
FRANK NEWTON
EDMOND HALL
VIC DICKENSON
AL LUCAS
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in
LITTLE JOE
HYLTON JEFFERSON
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in
I CAN'T GET STARTED

FOOTNOTES TO JAZZ, VOL. 3
Notes by Frederic Ramsey, Jr.

FOLKWAYS RECORD & SERVICE CORP., N. Y.  FJ 2292
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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 PREVAILLED. 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 PAGE. 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 SCORES -- 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 RE-
HEARSAL 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 1," 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 OUT-
STANDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR BOTH THE BENNY GOOD-
MAN AND DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRAS, THIS WAS HER
FIRST DATE WITH HER OWN PICKED GROUP, HER PRE-
VIOUS 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 GALLOWAY, 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 RECORD-
ED 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 SPILLING 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, TALENT-
ED BANDS OF SIX OR SEVEN MEN SUSTAINED REGULAR-
LY AT CAFE SOCIETY, WHERE MARY LOU WILLIAMS WAS
PLAYING TO A FULL HOUSE EVERY NIGHT. EDDIE HEY-
WOOD PLAYED THERE, AND SO DID EDMOND HALL AND
BENNY MORTON. COLEMAN HAWKINS WAS BLOWING PRO-
LIFICALLY ALONG 52ND STREET. SLAM STEWART, LIPS
PAGE, SLIM GAILLARD, EMMETT BERRY AND JOHNNY
QUARNERI KEPT HIM COMPANY IN BISTRO'S 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.
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Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33-1/3 RPM
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Jazz Rehearsal, 1
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LITTLE JOE
(Mary Lou Williams)
Mary Lou Williams (piano) and her Chosen Five
Frank Newton-trumpet; Vic Dickenson-trombone;
Edmon Hall-clarinet; Al Lucas-bass;
Jack Parker-drums.
Frederic Ramsey, Jr. - Editor
from actual session recorded by Moses Asch
© 1951 by Folkways Records and Service Corp.
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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