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**Maple Leaf Jazz Band
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PLEASE NOTE:

The deadline for contributions to the next AJazz is 15th April 2025



Australian Jazz Museum

Established in 1996

A fully accredited Museum run entirely by volunteers.
Home to the largest Australian Jazz Collection.

All items catalogued to Museum standard and stored in archival conditions.

Patron: James Morrison AM

Location

AJM
"Koomba Park"
15 Mountain Hwy
Wantirna 3152
Melway Reference 63C8
Open Tue & Fri, 10am-3pm

Membership Options

Regular \$75
Student \$25

All with a range of benefits

AJM Jazz Ambassador Paul Grabowsky



President's Report

By Ian Rutherford

2024

As the new president of the Australian Jazz Museum, may I start by acknowledging and thanking our former president Terry Norman. I came on board as Digital Collection Manager over two years ago and worked closely with Terry on the "digital" or "virtual museum" concept and we've linked the idea to "cloud" storage as our offsite backup (and retrieval) strategy.

Since then, we've been digitising print and audio with, at times, up to six volunteers on the task. A measure of our progress is that of the estimated 100,000 audio tracks in the collection, more than 20,000 are now preserved in the "cloud" – that's from a base of effectively zero. This supports a range of other changes that AJM has been implementing. Next time you're in the museum ask someone to demonstrate how the catalog now retrieves **audio** and **images** from "the cloud" or scan a QR code.

You may have noted two AJAZZ articles by me covering our digitising efforts and publishing the audio from our group tour bands as "Live at the Australian Jazz Museum" on YouTube, Spotify, iTunes etc. – now a regular feature in our member newsletter, as are the frequent "jazz radio" appearances by our volunteer team. Increasingly, new additions to the collection arrive as digital submissions, replacing or accompanying the CD.

The really big event this year has been linking our recent Open Day to the Melbourne International Jazz Festival and including an outside broadcast from 96.5 Inner FM. Crowd numbers were up and young folks were seen walking around with vinyl under their arms.

The Grand-Piano image on our home page has been fueled by the available 20,000 tracks to **stream**. This is a licensed approach and allows us to showcase the enormous variety of jazz we house. You'll also note our Web Shop has added digital downloads, such as the recent Maple Leaf Jazz Band album which had streaming and downloads before the CDs arrived!

For the next few months the team will be focused on our upcoming Museum (re) Accreditation, and combined with "virtual museum" initiatives and new instrument additions to the collection, will give us a new look.

Behind the scenes, volunteers continued to develop relationships and press our case for an **AJM Gallery** in the **Melbourne Arts Precinct** and we've reengaged with Parks Vic. on the lease footprint.

The AJM "Future Fund", another topic close to Terry's heart, has progressed and we'll bring that to fruition in 2025.

On behalf of the Australian Jazz Museum, I thank all our members, committee, volunteers and supporters. ■

In the spirit of reconciliation the Australian Jazz Museum acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, water and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

NEW AJM DOUBLE-CD

Also available as a Download

IN the creation of this double CD set the Australian Jazz Museum consulted with Bob Whetstone, former trumpeter with the Maple Leaf Jazz Band. During the research many excellent unreleased recorded examples of the Maple Leaf Jazz Band were unearthed.

The band had its origin in the 1970s when a ragtime trio played Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" at the Canada Hotel in Melbourne. They were later joined by Kim Rushworth who became leader.

As well as the Maple Leaf recordings, also included are the John Ansell All States Jazz Band recorded at the Forbes AJC in 1980 plus a track recorded in London in 1973 with the John Mason Jazzmen, both with Bob Whetstone on trumpet. The selected tracks feature the Maple Leaf Jazz Band at its best from 1975 to 2007.

Many of the musicians, including the leader Kim Rushworth, are no longer with us, but their music lives on. More details can be found on the AJM website.

The physical CD set, \$25 with a discount for members, is available from the retail shop, from the AJM website www.ajm.org.au or email enquiry at info@ajm.org.au.

The Download version, including a PDF of the booklet, is \$15 at this link: <https://www.ajm.org.au/?product=maple-leaf-jazz-band-ajm055-2> (Or from "Purchase Here" on the AJM Web site.)



BAND VOCALIST, Music Historian, Archivist, and creator of Lyric Records, Geoffrey Orr, dropped in to the AJM recently and kindly donated some more of his rare collectable recordings. These will be entered into our database and preserved. Geoffrey is pictured here on the left with the AJM's Collections Manager Mel Blachford.

In Surfers Paradise with the Graeme Bell All Stars

By Loretta Barnard

When my father, Bob Barnard, joined Graeme Bell's All Stars in June 1962, our family moved from Melbourne up to Sydney, where we rented a flat in Bondi. My mother Pat loved Bondi, because it was a great place for their two small children. The skies seemed to be consistently blue, we lived close to the beach, and there was always something to do, something to experience. Bondi was a different place back then, a bit wilder, a bit laissez-faire, a bit bohemian, a bit 'other'. It's a difficult ambience to define, but Bondi today is not the Bondi I grew up in.

Dad was invariably busy, because the Bell band was always busy: Graeme was very famous, and the band was never out of work. They played all over the place, and for two solid years, the All Stars did seven shows a week in the rather posh Silver Spade Room at Sydney's Chevron Hotel in Potts Point, one of the hottest nightclubs in Sydney at the time. They toured widely, including to New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. So things were constantly happening – newspaper articles, magazine spreads, radio interviews and appearances, television. As many of *AJazz's* readers know, the All Stars often appeared on television's top-rating shows many times, such as *Bandstand*, Johnny O'Keefe's show, Graham Kennedy's tonight show, and a national weekly program on Channel 7, *Trad Pad*. It was a halcyon time for traditional jazz, and these musicians, Graeme in particular, were pretty well known by the general public. It also helped that Graeme had excellent PR skills, and, according to my father, an uncanny instinct for creating striking publicity shots. Perhaps the most well-known image from this period is the iconic photograph, taken by Val Sowada, of the All Stars in the surf at Tamarama Beach, the small beach next to Bondi.

Then in 1966, things changed once more for our family. Graeme had secured a residency at the Surfers Paradise Hotel and we moved from Sydney to the Gold Coast. It was, I believe, meant to be a six-week residency, but became eight or so months, and it's this period I want to tell you a little about. Our family rented a flat in Enderley Avenue, and my brother Tony and I were enrolled in school. Harry and Nancy Harman's two youngest kids, Diane (who was a few years older than me) and Greg (roughly Tony's age), went to a different school from us. School surprised us a bit, as there were distinct variations in how things were taught, even down to how to form our letters; and it was in Surfers Paradise that I learned that Queenslanders sang a different melody to 'Waltzing Matilda' than we did in New South Wales and Victoria. I was told years later that the standard of education was

lower in Queensland than in other states, but that seems unlikely, and it's hardly something that, as a then-nine-year-old, I could possibly assess.

Our flat was literally a couple of hundred metres from the front door to the surf, and we kids spent a lot of time running wild around the dunes, swimming, exploring, just having the most marvellous time. But it was also very common for us to go to the Surfers Paradise Hotel, a very family-friendly venue, when the band was playing. Tony and I would sit with Mum, who usually shared a table with Nancy Harman and her kids, and Dorothy Bell who always brought little Jason, who was maybe 18 months old. The band members at this time were Graeme Bell, Bob Barnard, Harry Harman, George Brodbeck (who'd replaced Ken Herron), Graham Spedding and Lawrie Thompson. They were all lovely men, always happy to chat with the kids and to share a laugh with us, so we loved accompanying Mum to the gigs.

The All Stars did two shows every day, six days a week. As well as jazz, the evening shows featured some comedic entertainment pieces, which audiences loved. The band had developed a range of floor shows while at the Chevron, some with a distinct vaudevillian feel – that really slapstick humour that never fails. Among them were the Roaring Twenties, and the much-loved Poet and Peasant Overture.



From left: Graham Spedding, Bob Barnard, Ken Herron, Lawrie Thompson, Graeme Bell, Harry Harman, at Sydney's Tamarama Beach, 1964. Photograph Val Sowada.

I wonder what composer Franz von Suppé would have thought of these musicians dressed in tails, wigs, fake moustaches and the like, playing his overture exactly as written, while engaging in all sorts of silliness. Musicians appeared to be snoring, or playing cards, or someone's trousers would fall down. There were klaxons, smoke, water pistols, rubber chickens. The total absurdity of it all made it one of their most loved routines.



Bob and Pat Barnard, with their kids, Loretta and Tony, at the Surfers Paradise Hotel, early 1967.

I will remember another song the band performed, called 'She Wears 'Em' (sung to the melody of 'Ja-Da'), which was about a pair of women's underwear that ended up in Graeme's possession. A song about knickers? We kids thought this was hilarious, because it was so very naughty. That song, with accompanying high jinks, was always popular with crowds, and I think it was even released on a promotional single, which no doubt sold well. (It's not likely a song like that would be performed today!)

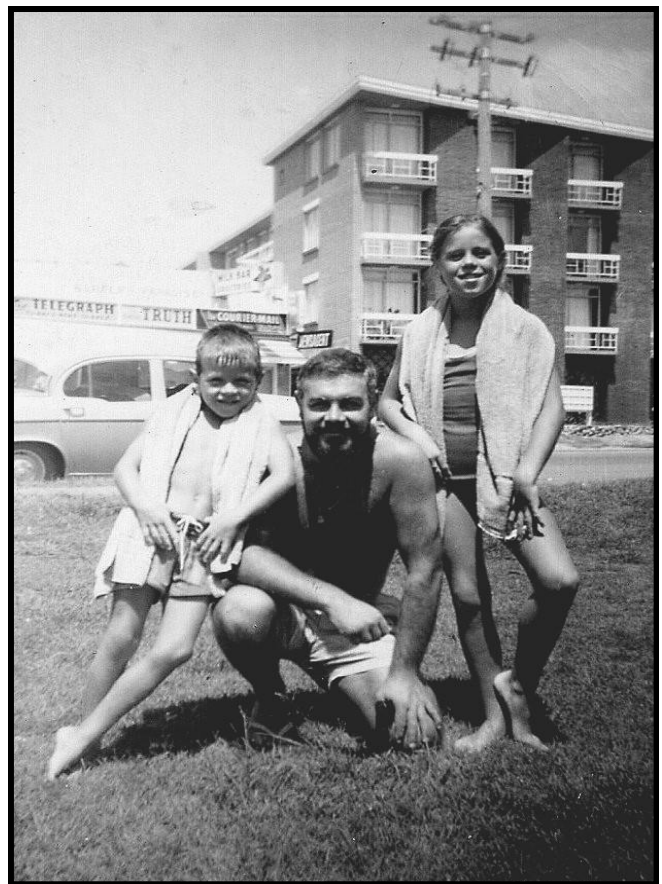
I also remember one occasion when Dad came down to our table and asked me if I wanted to go backstage, and from there, take Harry's banjo and give it to him on stage. Well, of course I did! I'd steal the show, or so I thought for about thirty seconds. It was so ridiculously nerve-racking I thought I'd faint; and apart from the episode related below, I've avoided the stage as much as possible ever since. Ha-ha, I'm just not cut out for it. But decidedly, the favourite family story is the time my brother Tony, then aged about seven or eight, went up on stage as a so-called unsuspecting stooge in one of the routines. One of the guys threw a 'custard pie' (actually shaving cream) right in his face, which was kind-of-but-not-really unexpected. I remember Mum and I, along with the entire audience, going completely hysterical, watching this little kid being both shocked and delighted in equal measure. Tony has dined out on that story for many years.

One time, in early 1967, I decided that we'd put on a show of our own, we being Tony, Diane and Greg Harman, and a couple of our friends. Between us, we came up with what we felt was a sensational and varied program. There was singing, dancing, a stand-up routine, and god knows what else. We advertised at our schools and around the neighbourhood hoping to attract a big crowd. We charged an admission fee, maybe 10 cents or something like that, and planned to donate the takings to the Spastic Centre (as the Cerebral Palsy Alliance was then known). The performance took place in the open-plan lounge room of our flat in Enderley Avenue.

Gratifyingly, our show was well attended – all the band and their partners came; so did our teachers, neighbours, other kids. We thought we were pretty hot entertainers, but good lord, what were we thinking? Of course, the adults kindly indulged us, and we raised a few dollars for our worthy cause. I remember how happy I felt when a thank you letter from the Spastic Centre arrived in the post.

As far as we kids were concerned, things were great, but the band's Gold Coast contract finally ran its course. It was the end of a rather unique adventure for Tony and me, and we both have fond memories of our time in Surfers Paradise. We had plenty of opportunities to see our dad at work; we spent time with all sorts of eccentric and fascinating people; and we even had our own on-stage moments. And between us, with all the freedom we had, we enjoyed a few exploits that we laugh about to this day.

Our family returned to Bondi around April 1967, and a few months later, my youngest brother Adam joined the family. Not long after his birth, we moved into a house in Watson Street, the first home my parents owned. It was about this time that Dad left Graeme's band. I know what his time as part of the All Stars meant to him, but it was time to move on. We continued to see Graeme and his family socially for many years, because they lived nearby. Graeme and Bob had the utmost respect and admiration for one another.



Tony, Bob and Loretta Barnard, returning from the beach, 1967.

And so ends my tale – such as it is – of the Surfers Paradise period. But please allow me a small postscript. My brothers and I grew up in the Watson Street house, which was always full of visitors. Musicians, writers, artists, actors, journalists, dancers, comedians, and an array of offbeat characters were constantly dropping in, to listen to music, have a chat, or a jam, stay for dinner, spend time in Mum's garden, or nod off on the couch after over-imbibing. This continued even after my parents parted ways around 1987. A happy house, my mother Pat lived there for the rest of her life. ■

Loretta's latest book *Imagining Australia: a history of our nation through music, film, literature & art* is available online (print or ebook) from all good online retailers.

Bebop!

The Development that Dramatically Changed the Direction of Jazz

By Ken Simpson-Bull OAM

Bebop, Rebob or Bop is a style of jazz developed in the early to mid-1940s in the United States. The style features performances characterised by a fast tempo, complex chord progressions with rapid chord changes, numerous changes of key, instrumental virtuosity, and improvisation based on harmonic structure with only occasional references to the melody.

Bebop developed as the younger generation of jazz musicians experimented with the creative possibilities of extending jazz beyond the popular, dance-oriented swing music with a new style that was not as danceable and demanded careful listening. Bebop groups used rhythm sections in a way that expanded their role. Whereas the main component of the swing music era was a big band playing in a tuneful ensemble-based style, the classic Bebop group was a small combo that usually consisted of saxophone, trumpet, piano, guitar, double bass, and drums playing music in which the ensemble performed in a generally non-melodic way.

Some of the most influential Bebop artists, who were typically composer-performers, were sax players Charlie Parker, Dexter Gordon, Sonny Rollins, and James Moody; clarinet player Buddy DeFranco; trumpeters Fats Navarro, Clifford Brown, Miles Davis, and Dizzy Gillespie; pianists Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk; electric guitarist



Dizzy Gillespie

that the original title "Bip Bop" for his composition "52nd Street Theme", was the origin of the name Bebop.

However Dizzy Gillespie stated that audiences coined the name after hearing him scat the then-nameless compositions to his players. "People, when they'd wanna ask for those numbers and didn't know the name, would ask for Bebop. The terms Bebop and Rebob were used interchangeably. By 1945, the use of Bebop or Rebob as nonsense syllables was widespread e.g. Lionel Hampton's 'Hey! Ba-Ba-Re-Bop'".

The above-mentioned Bebop combo of saxophone, trumpet, piano, bass, and drums was the format used by both Parker (alto sax) and Gillespie (trumpet) in their 1940s' groups and recordings, sometimes augmented by an extra saxophonist or guitar, occasionally adding other horns (often a trombone) or strings (usually a violin) or dropping an instrument leaving only a quartet.

Musical style

Bebop differed drastically from the straightforward arrangements of the swing era. The music itself seemed jarringly different to the ears of the public, who were used to the danceable arrangements of Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller. Instead, Bebop appeared to sound racing, erratic, and fragmented.

Bebop music highlighted improvisation moreso than traditional jazz. The "head" (usually the main melody of a pop or jazz standard) would be presented at the beginning and the end of each piece with improvisational solos based on the chord structure. The larger part in Bebop style would be the improvisation, the only threads holding the work together being the underlying harmonies played by the rhythm section. Often the improvisation

included only a few references to the original melody or to other well-known melodic lines ("licks" or "riffs"). Sometimes they were entirely original, spontaneous melodies from start to finish.

Chord progressions for Bebop compositions were usually taken directly from popular swing-era compositions and reused with a new and more complex melody, effectively forming new compositions. Although this practice was already commonly used in traditional jazz, it came to be central to the Bebop style. Bebop chord structure often dispensed with the root and fifth tones, creating different possibilities for harmony-based improvised sections that could progress in new ways.

Bebop musicians also employed several harmonic styles not typical of previous jazz. Complicated harmonic substitutions for the more basic chords became commonplace and often included certain dissonant intervals such



Thelonious Monk

as the flat ninth, sharp ninth or the sharp eleventh. Parker once stated, "I'd been getting bored with the stereotyped changes that were being used and I kept thinking there's bound to be something else. I could hear it sometimes but I couldn't play it. I was working over "Cherokee", and I found that by using the higher intervals of a chord as a melody line and backing them with appropriately related changes, I could play the thing I'd been hearing".

Some of the harmonic innovations in Bebop appear similar to innovations in Western "serious" music by Debussy, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky, causing some scoffing comments by Australia's Frank Johnson (see later). Alto sax player Charlie Parker was an admirer of the Count Basie orchestra, especially



Charlie Christian; and drummers Kenny Clarke, Max Roach, and Art Blakey.

The word itself was derived from nonsense syllables used in scat singing. The first known example of "Bebop" being used was in McKinney's Cotton Pickers' "Four or Five Times", recorded in 1928. It appears again in a 1936 recording of "I'se a Muggin'" by Jack Teagarden. "Rebob", appeared in several 1939 recordings. The first known print appearance also occurred in 1939, but the term was little used until applied to the music now associated with it in the mid-1940s. Thelonious Monk claimed

Basie's tenor sax player Lester Young who played long flowing melodic lines that wove in and out of the chordal progression. His phrasing was far removed from the two or four bar phrases that horn players usually used.

The Basie orchestra gained national prestige from 1937, with leagues of saxophone players striving to imitate Young, drummers striving to imitate Jo Jones, piano players to imitate Basie, and trumpet players to imitate Buck Clayton. Parker said he played along with the new Basie recordings until he could play Young's solos note for note.

In the late 1930s the Duke Ellington Orchestra and the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra were playing harmonically sophisticated musical arrangements by Billy Strayhorn and Sy Oliver who played implied chords (i.e. leaving out some basic notes of complex chords) that were to be used by the young musicians in exploring the new musical form of Bebop. The technique and harmonic sophistication of pianist Art Tatum gave inspiration to young musicians like Charlie Parker and Bud Powell.

The 1939 recording of "Body and Soul" by Coleman Hawkins with a small band featured an extended saxophone solo with minimal reference to the theme which would become characteristic of Bebop. That solo showed a sophisticated harmonic exploration of the composition, with implied passing chords. Hawkins made his first formal Bebop recording in early 1944.

In the early 1940s, Parker went to New York as a featured player in the Jay McShann Orchestra. In New York he found other musicians who were exploring harmonic and melodic experiments, including Dizzy Gillespie. While Gillespie was with Cab Calloway, he practised with bassist Milt Hinton and developed some of the new harmonic and chordal innovations. Parker did the same with bassist Gene Ramey while with McShann's group. Guitarist Charlie Christian was, like Parker, also an innovator. Christian's major influence was his uneven phrasing, a major element of the new Bop style.

Bud Powell was pushing forward with a streamlined, harmonically sophisticated, piano style and Thelonious Monk was adapting the new harmonic ideas to his customary stride piano playing.

Drummers such as Kenny Clarke and Max Roach were extending the style set by Jo Jones adding the ride cymbal to the high hat as the primary pace-maker and only using the bass drum for accents. This increased the significance of the string bass which was now mainly used to maintain the music's harmonic foundation, commonly making use of a "walking" bass line. While regular ensembles often functioned without a bass, the new Bop style *always* required a bass.

The players developing the new Bop music performed in sessions at Minton's Playhouse in New York, where Monk and Clarke were in the house band, and

at Monroe's Uptown House, where Max Roach was in the house band. Part of the atmosphere created at jam sessions was an attitude of exclusiveness. The regular bop musicians would often reharmonise the jazz standards, add complex rhythmic and phrasing routines into their melodies, and play them at breakneck tempos in order to exclude those whom they considered outsiders or weaker players. (The outsiders were more often the resentfully regarded better-paid white musicians.)

Bop improvisers also built upon the phrasing of Lester Young's solos. They would often deploy phrases over an odd number of bars and overlap their phrases across bar lines. Christian and some other early Boppers would often begin playing the harmony in their improvised line before it appeared in the melody form. These sessions attracted some top musicians such as Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Ben Webster, and Roy Eldridge. In 1944 the group of innovators were joined by Dexter Gordon, a tenor sax player from the Louis Armstrong band, and the trumpet player a young Miles Davis.

Recordings

Bop musicians did not care about the commercial potential of the new music – it did not attract the attention of major record labels anyway. Fortunately some of the early Bebop was recorded informally. Some sessions at Minton's in 1941 were recorded with Thelonious Monk alongside such musicians as Joe Guy, Hot Lips Page, Roy Eldridge, Don Byas, and Charlie Christian. Christian is featured in recordings from May 12, 1941. Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie were both participants at a recorded jam session hosted by Billy Eckstine on February 15, 1943, and Parker at another Eckstine jam session on February 28, 1943.

Parker, Gillespie, and others joined the Earl Hines Orchestra in 1943 and followed vocalist Billy Eckstine into the Billy Eckstine Orchestra in 1944. The Eckstine band was recorded on V-discs, which were broadcast over the Armed Forces Radio Network and were able to gain popularity for the new Bebop style. Unfortunately the American Federation of Musicians Union leader Petrillo's two-year recording ban prevented the broader public in the U.S., Australia, and other countries from becoming aware of the musical innovation until around 1946. Once recording resumed, Bebop became established, and a movement among New York jazz musicians would go on to contribute to what was to become known as "modern jazz".

Gillespie landed the first official Bebop recording date with a major label for the new music, with the RCA Bluebird label's recording of Dizzy Gillespie and his Orchestra on February 22, 1946 with "52nd Street Theme":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvgXSakcgFo&ab_channel=HotJazz78rpm

plus "A Night in Tunisia", "Ol' Man Rebop", and "Anthropology". Gillespie, with his extroverted personality, glasses, lip beard, beret, and bent trumpet would become the most visible symbol of the new jazz music.

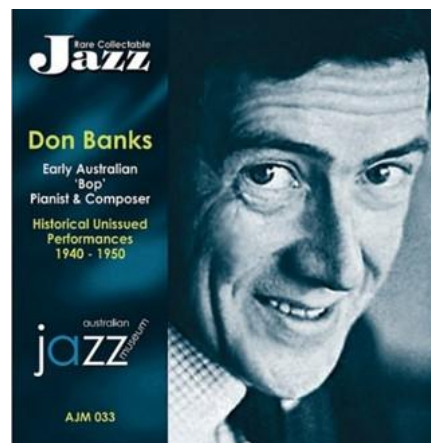
With the slow demise of the big swing bands, Bebop became the new focus of the modern jazz world, with a "progressive jazz" movement seeking to emulate its form. During the early 1950s when Bebop morphed into the "cool" school led by Miles Davis and others, it attracted young musicians such as Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane. Bebop was influential far beyond its original form. Progressive jazz was a category of music that included Bebop-influenced "art music" arrangements used by big bands. Experiments based on Bebop harmonic styles were used by Miles Davis for the groundbreaking "Birth of the Cool" recording sessions of 1949 and 1950:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLzqjmoZZAc&ab_channel=Pep

Bebop also influenced the Beat Generation whose spoken-word style drew on African-American "jive" dialog. The "beatnik" stereotypes borrowed the dress and mannerisms of Bebop musicians, in particular from Dizzy Gillespie's trend-setting beret and lip beard. Fans of Bebop were not restricted to the United States; the music also gained cult status particularly in France, Japan, and Australia.

The Australian Scene

If Australian musicians were able to become aware of developing Bop in the early 1940s it could only have been through visiting American servicemen, short-wave broadcasts from the Voice of America, or from records created for



American troops by the U.S. War Department's Special Services Division whose records were exempt from the AFM recording ban. Alan Saunders, a musician with the ABC Dance Band and a broadcaster, has stated that he often listened to the Voice of America broadcasts to become *au fait* with the latest wartime hits and musical developments, and band leader Wally

Norman in Sydney reported listening to the Bop records of American servicemen before the end of the war.

It wasn't until 1946 that a few Bop records began to trickle into Australia and Bop was occasionally heard on local radio.

In its April 1946 issue, the Australian *Music Maker* presented a full-page article on Dizzy Gillespie, taken from the American *DownBeat*. It mentioned Bebop but didn't discuss the music itself. Soon after, Wally Norman arranged for a number of musicians to gather and hear some Bop records he had obtained,



Don Banks Bopset: Lin Challen, Don Banks, Charlie Blott, Splinter Reeves, Doug Beck.

causing converts to start seriously experimenting.

In Sydney there was Wally Norman (trumpet, trombone), Ron Falson (trumpet), Charlie Munro (reeds), Les Welch (piano), Frank Smith (sax) and Billy Weston (trombone), while in Melbourne Charlie Blott (drums), Splinter Reeves (sax) and Stewart Speers (drums) were among those who inspired the Modern Jazz movement. Charlie Blott started organising sessions at the old Katherina Café in St Kilda and the talented Don Banks (piano) joined him to form the Don Banks Bopset with Ken Brentnall (trumpet), Eddie Oxley (sax), Joe Washington (guitar), and John Foster (bass). Guitarist Bruce Clarke was another who sat-in at the jam sessions at the Katherina and later joined Splinter Reeves' Splintet.

Bop and Modern Jazz was not usually suitable for dancing so the main outlets for this new music were jazz concerts (which were becoming popular), jam sessions, and night-clubs. Because Sydney had a predominance of

nightclubs, Modern Jazz there caught on quite quickly, while in Melbourne the New Theatre became the haven for Bop performers such as Freddy Thomas (trumpet) and Orme Stewart (trombone).

Another Melbourne venue for Modern Jazz was the Plaza Coffee lounge, and later the Galleon, both in St Kilda. From Adelaide came a plethora of Progressives: Bobby Limb (sax), Errol Buddle (sax and bassoon), Sid Beckwith (sax), Jack Brokensha (drums and vibes), Ron Lucas (piano), John Foster (bass), Ron Loughhead (piano), Clare Bail (sax) and Ian Drinkwater (reeds), while Georgia Lee, Edwin Duff and June Carey became the first Bop vocalists.

By 1947, Progressive performers included Ron Lucas and Ted Preston (piano), Alan Nash and Keith McDonald (trumpet), Ron Gowans (clarinet), Lin Challen, Ken Lester and Don McFarlane (Bass), Russell Jones (vibes), Don Harper (violin), and Doug Beck (guitar).

Australia's internationally dominated record industry could see no profits in recording local Bop groups so it took music-store owner Bob Clemens to form his own record label, "Jazzart", so named because Modern Jazz was seen by some to be an art form – "Modern Expression" was printed on the Jazzart label. The first three Jazzart releases were by modernists Errol Buddle (who later went to the USA and formed the popular Australian Jazz Quartet/Quintet), Jack Brokensha (from the original AJQ who in 1994 re-formed the Quartet), and Ken Brentnall. In 1949, American cornettist Rex Stewart visited Australia and recorded for Jazzart with the Oxley/Reeves/Banks/Clarke/Blott group. Bop is quite evident in the Progressive Jazzart performances, however, listening to these modernists' recordings today makes one suspect that some takes were toned-down in the interest of commercialism.

Throughout the late 1940s and into the '50s, Bop was controversial. In the Melbourne periodical *Australian Jazz Quarterly*, created in May 1946 by Bill Miller, Modern Jazz was rarely discussed, and when it was it was treated with derision as an article by Trad Jazz musician Frank Johnson illustrates: "Let us look at the post-war period and consider the musical product that reflects this uncertain era, that most questionable and controversial music Rebob. Regarding this music there are two main schools of thought, one being that Rebob, because



Billy Hyde, Dave Rutledge, Eddy Oxley, and Bruce Clarke.

it is new, it follows that it is 'progressive', concluding from this that Rebob being both new and progressive must be better than anything else. In support of this unscientific train of thought the Boppers invoke the names of Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, etc, linking these mighty men of music to the Boppers' attempt to surround Rebob with an aura of respectability. The Boppers also have a jargon of argument which includes 'intellectual music', 'diatonics', 'whole tone scales' and so on, these terms being bandied around with little comprehension. The seed of Rebob has put out a musical weed which is ... trying to choke off the growth of Real Jazz."

Many of the local progressive groups that formed had rather Boppish names like the Bop Cats, the Beboppers, the Happy Cats, Blott's Boppers, and Three Bops No Beep.

By the 1950s Bop had morphed into the Cool as described previously.

Talented and successful Australian groups in-



Freddy Thomas and Splinter Reeves

cluded The Lindsay Copeland Quintet, the Clare Bail Sextet, the Australian Jazz Quintet, the Eddy Oxley Quintet, and the Brian Brown Quintet.

The Australian Jazz Museum has released several CDs, all currently available, which illustrate Bop and the subsequent development of Modern Jazz in Australia, viz: "Don Banks – Early Bop Pianist and Composer" (AJM 033); "Jazzart Collection – Volumes 3, 4 and 5" (VJAZZ 013, 014 and 015); "The Cool School of the 1950s" (AJM 034); and "Jazz Masters of the 1940s" which includes several Modern Jazz tracks (AJM 038). To sum-up, Bop moved jazz in an exciting new direction. ■

Sources: Geoffrey Ward & Ken Burns – *Jazz*; Bruce Johnson – *Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz*; John Whiteoak – *Early Modern Jazz in Australia*; Jack Mitchell – *Australian Jazz on Record*; William Miller – *Australian Jazz Quarterly*; www.Wikipedia.



Jack Brokensha Edwin Duff, Errol Buddle, Ron Loughhead Ken Lester

LAURENCE PIKE: THE UNDREAMT - OF CENTRE

Album review by Eric Myers

Music written and performed by Laurence Pike

Label: Independent

Personnel: Laurence Pike (drums, percussion, electronics, piano, synthesisers, field recordings); **Vox Sydney Philharmonia Choir:** Hannah Alexander, Josephine Brereton, Amelia Myers (sopranos); Jasmin Borsovszky, Ines Obermair, Hannah Roberts (altos); Josh Borja, Tom Hazell, Ezra Hersch (tenors); Finnian Murphy, Jesse van Proctor, Ziggy Harris (baritones). Soloist on 'Introit' is Josephine Brereton. The choir is orchestrated and conducted by Sam Lipman.



The Undreamt-Of Centre is a beautiful album from the Australian drummer, improviser, composer and producer Laurence Pike. It's his fourth solo album, featuring a work of eight tracks for drums, electronics and chamber choir. The Vox Sydney Philharmonia Choir is conducted by composer Sam Lipman, a childhood friend of Pike's, with the album having been recorded in a 19th century Gothic church. Pike has adopted the format of the requiem mass, which has been in existence and been reimagined many times over hundreds of years. In Pike's hands, the traditional religious ambiances which have long been associated with the mass are subverted, with the introduction of contemporary sounds not usually associated with such masses.

Pike had previously explored what he describes as "the processes and ecstatic outcomes of rituals" in his 2019 album *Holy Spring* so the new album can be regarded as an extension of his concerns in that previous album. Pike's approach in the new album however is not absolutely radical. The use of a choir which sounds traditional suggests that Pike is not totally committed to the new and, as a reviewer who warms to the traditional, the ethereal sound of the choir provides a welcome familiarity which is exceedingly comforting to my ears. On the other hand this more traditional sound is juxtaposed against the very contemporary sound of Pike's electro-acoustic drum kit where, by the way, his virtuosity as a drummer is paramount. Certainly, to my way of thinking, this is essentially a drummer's album.

For the last ten years or so, we have been in an era in which Australia's jazz composers and improvisers go to great lengths to articulate what has prompted their music. In this spirit Pike's inspirations are extensive, fascinating and unique. He dedicates the album to his father-in-law Tony Lake who died in July, 2012 after a decline in health which took place during the COVID lockdown, a sombre period which prompted Pike to feel that he was "witnessing the transition from life to death in slow motion." This also prompted him to revalue his connection with nature, and he disputes the conceit that humanity exists separately from the natural world. "We are in fact part of nature," he declares. To some extent the bushfires and climate-related disasters on the south coast of New South Wales where his father-in-law lived, and which Pike explored on his 2020 album *Prophecy*, are also part of his consciousness, testimony to the continuum of Pike's concerns in his music over some time.

Looking for a narrative for the choir, Pike read the poems of the Austrian writer Rainer Maria Rilke, in particular his "Sonnets to Orpheus", inspired by the classical Greek myth of Orpheus. (It is Rilke who provides the album's title). According to this myth Orpheus, the son of Apollo and considered to be the greatest of all poets and musicians, travelled to the underworld to make a plea to Hades, the god of the dead, after the death of his wife Eurydice. Hades agreed to return her to life, on the condition that Orpheus did not look back at her until they returned to the realm of the living. However, as they reached the exit from the underworld Orpheus, fearing he'd been tricked, turned back to see Eurydice whereupon she disappeared forever.

The album's second track "Orpheus in the Underworld" is a graphic representation of the mood established by this myth. The music on *The Undreamt-Of Centre* takes one on an extraordinary journey, at the end of which the listener is likely to arrive at a different headspace. If I have spent most of this review on what has inspired Pike, rather than a blow-by-blow description of the various tracks, this is because for me the music came to life the more I internalised the extremely interesting intellectual substructure which underlies Pike's music. If the foregoing is not enough, Pike has somewhat more to reveal: the album, he says, "draws on the sounds of modern classical music, Japanese environmental ambient music, fourth world electronics, free jazz and the choral traditions of Estonia, with particular influence from Tallinn-based composer Tõnu Kõrvits."

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Alma Quon

An interview with Ray Quon

by Dr Nat Grant



Dance instructor, drummer, pianist, band leader — Alma Quon

BELOW is an edited transcript from episode 20 of broadcaster Dr Nat Grant's **Prima Donna Podcast**, a series of sonic portraits of Australian artists from all creative disciplines. In this episode she spoke with Alma's nephew, Ray Quon of Blue Echoes fame, about Alma's life and music, her incredible persistence and drive, and the wonderful connection they had through a shared love of music.

In 1995, an exhibition at the Performing Arts Museum titled "Sweethearts of Rhythm" paid homage to bands such as the Merry Makers and Alma Quon and her Joy Belles. Alma and Lorna's Chinese ancestry was referenced with Chinese style lettering on the drum kit, and their musical set occasionally included a popular Chinese song played on Western instruments.

Born in 1911 in Rutherglen, Alma Quon was one of seven children, with all the girls in the family taking music lessons from a young age. She moved to Melbourne in the 1930s and performed in the all woman jazz band the Merry Makers with her sister Lorna. The Quon sisters played with the Merry Makers up until the Second World War. In 1941, Alma formed her own band, the Joy Belles. A group of women from mixed cultural backgrounds also featuring Lorna. With Alma on drums, the Joy Belles played for several years at dances and functions in and around Melbourne, and were still performing up until the 1990s.

Alma gave dance lessons to children at state primary schools all across Victoria and was known for her hard work, focus, and no nonsense approach to both teaching and performing. She passed away in her 90s.

Ray Quon: I really appreciate the past, especially when there's a bit of history that people, like yourself, are very interested in. But it wasn't until she passed away that the real interest came out. She initiated ... She wasn't a follower. I think after (The Merry Makers) then she formed her own band, 'cause she realised that the war was gonna go on I think. That's the way I think that she would've thought, that the war was gonna go on for a while, so I think I'll get in on the ground floor.

She got taught up at the convent up there at Rutherglen, and then she came down and I don't think she had lessons (after that), but there was another sister called Amy who lived in New South Wales. She was probably the best piano

player. She's the best one of the lot. She used to come down from Sydney and they used to play duos and all the rest of it. To my knowledge, she didn't get taught. She wasn't taught anymore. She just learnt it herself.

Alma and I were always on the same level. For example, you know, we'd go over and see her and I'm 10 or 11, she had no time for my other members of the family, even her own brother and my younger sister because they didn't play music. So she used to usher them out the back and she said, she used to talk to me like, "Come on Raymond" she said, "We'll go and talk some music. The others can amuse themselves in the back room reading some magazines", you know. And so we'd sit down, and we'd talk for ages and ages on music. She was interested in what I was doing, and of course I was interested in what she was doing.

And it got to one stage when our band, the Echoes, were very popular. You know, we were on radio, we were on TV, you name it. And she rang me up and whenever she rang me up, I knew that there was something happening. So I'd drive over to her place. She lived in Kew, lived there for years, and she'd call me in, sit me down and she'd say, "Now, Raymond, I need some information from you". She says, "We're not getting the work that we used to", and they were in their seventies then, you know, and let's face it, they'd probably seen better days as the band. A lot of them had passed away. She said, "I need to get into this music that you're doing, this rock and roll music".

And I said, "Oh, okay". She said, "I'll do a deal with you". And she was a very astute businesswoman. She says, "I'll teach you how to do all the proper intros and dance tempos", which came in handy to me later on when I was doing the old time dances, you know, like the, the modern waltzes all the six eights as they had to be right spot on. So she taught me those and I taught her how to rock and roll. And she was so grateful. And I was so grateful too. So we had that type of relationship and then she said, "I'd like you to take over the band". And, well, it was a bit of an awkward situation.

She said, "Well, you are the only one with the Quon name". She said, "No one else can (do it), and I want it to go on". Anyway, her memory started to go at that stage, so it never eventuated.

Well, she learnt piano. And they (the two girls, that's Lorna and Alma – Iris wasn't born at that time) lived at Rutherglen and their Mum and Dad, my grandparents, they came out, well my grandfather did, from China and they set up the general store in Rutherglen. They had that for years and there were seven kids.

They were taught the music at a convent up there. And then when they came down to Melbourne, I think Alma then sought to learn the drums. And that's when she played at these big ... teaching the kids at school. She would play the drums and of course she was out there in front of the kids and she'd also play piano sometimes.

And you know, there's something up to about 800 kids at these schools and I was one of those kids that got taught too at school, we all did. Anyway, just to give you an example of where she was at: if one of the kids started crying, you know, the seven or eight year old kids, the normal (person) would say, "Now don't cry. You'll be, you'll be right. What's wrong? Do you want a hanky dear?" But not Alma. She'd say, "She's crying. Please, can we replace her?" And it was so embarrassing, but then I realised that ... the show must go on.

I think that her work escalated when the Second World War came along because all the guys went overseas. The only bands there were really was Alma's band plus a couple of the others. So they got a heap of work and I remember when I was very small in the early fifties ... They were one of the few female bands that kept going (after the war). A lot of them just fell by the wayside. But she was a professional.



That was her income and she was right into it. They did all the balls ... Before my time, at Myer Music Hall, that's where all the big functions were, probably like the equivalent of the Arts Centre, I suppose, now.

So they used to do all those big private functions. They didn't record, unfortunately, to my knowledge. I've got no recordings of them, even at home here, playing music, which is a shame.

They didn't tour overseas or anything like that, but there was just so much work, especially during the war years and everything, that's where they made their mark. And I used to look forward to going in on the train with my mother. Alma played at a place called the Gay Paris, which was a French orientated eating place with the spiral staircase that used to go down and Alma could see me coming. She'd say over the microphone, "Now my nephew Raymond is coming down" (didn't mention my Mum). "And if he's in a good mood, I might get him to play piano". And I freaked out because I was learning classical and when you're learning classical, you know, your repertoire is very minimal. But she knew what she was doing and that sort of made me comfortable in front of strangers from about 18 years of age. That would've been in the mid fifties

When I was a bit older, they used to have functions, big functions that they'd play at once a year, being of Chinese extraction, for an organisation called the YCL, which was the young Chinese league, and all the Chinese used to go there. And Alma had the band set like that, you know, with the yellow outfits. And they'd play there and she'd get me up to sing. And also she used to play at the Cheltenham Repat Hospital. It was a hospital for all the returned soldiers from the second World War. Huge place on the corner of Warrigal and Kingston Road in Cheltenham. And there'd be lots and lots of people there. There were quite a few private functions and occasionally she used to ring me up ... well not me, but my parents and say, "Look, I think you should take Raymond to this job that I'm doing". She said, "I think he'd be very interested in it". And they might've played a little bit of rock and roll or something.

My auntie on the violin was an exceptionally good player and she played at a couple of the festival hall shows that came out. When she passed away I found a couple of programs in the case which are worth a bit of money now, from when Bill Haley came out. Her name is Lorna. Lorna played violin. They've all passed away now.

Nat Grant: So Alma was married but didn't have any children?

Ray Quon: Yes. And Lorna was married also and never had any.

Nat Grant: And were their husbands supportive of their music?

Ray Quon: Supportive but not involved. Probably the only involvement would be that Lorna never drove anywhere. So her husband Glen would take her, or I think in the early days they used to catch public transport.

And I can remember my Dad (my dad's got two brothers, and the last one passed away a couple of years ago at 101, Dennis) loved music too. And I said, "Dad, why didn't you get taught music?" And he said that none of the boys got taught music because Mum and Dad couldn't afford it, and their parents wanted the girls to get a good grounding, which they did, but all the boys did was help them get on the tram and bus and accompany them on public transport.

And my Dad really would've loved to have learnt music. So that's why they insisted that I was, and Alma would say, "You know, Raymond must be taught music!" I was a pretty good golfer when I was about 13, you know, school boy runner up golf champion in Victoria. And I found out, that was in 1960, that my Dad didn't have long to live. So Alma lined me up with a job but I (already) had a job offered to me in the golf club, you know, learning all the ropes. But Alma said, "No, Raymond will make more money playing music than he will playing golf". Now, initially, she was right, but the golfers now, they earn much more than most musicians.

Listen to the full episode at:

<https://primadonna.podbean.com/e/alma-quon/>

You can see Alma's drum and photos of the Joy Belles in the Chinese Museum in Melbourne.

*With thanks to Arts Centre Melbourne and Ray Quon for the images included here.

ade ishs

By Con Pagonis OAM



Image: Fitriah Usman

ade ishs is an accomplished Indonesian Australian composer and pianist with a playing style revolving around contemporary jazz, as well as classical and meditational music.

In addition to performing on the piano, he also plays the melodica (pianica), rebana (an Indonesian-style riq/tambourine), and djembe (a rope-tuned skin-covered goblet drum played with bare hands).

He is a musician with over two decades experience of performing, both solo or as a member of ensembles and bands, and he has recorded solo and as a sideman. He specialises in composition and piano performance (both jazz and classical).

ishs's compositions stand out as well-constructed and tuneful.

— Michael Prescott, *Dingo Australian Jazz Journal*, October 2021

After living his formative years in Indonesia, ade migrated to Melbourne at the age of 24. He has

performed with Dung Nguyen (Way Out West — Australia), Geoff Kluge (Australia), Daigo Nakai (Germany), Benny Likumahuwa (Indonesia), Candra Malik (Indonesia), Reyharp (Britain), Zamil Idris (Malaysia), and many other musicians in Australia and Indonesia across various genres. He pushes back on being categorised; he sees music as "one big thing".

... the pianist radiates as he stretches along the harmonic progressions.

— Barry O'Sullivan, *Jazz and Beyond, Australia*, July 2021

ade ishs was born in 1978 with perfect pitch. His first instrument was the organ and his early music education was classical. The first jazz tune he learned on the organ was "Mack the Knife" (Kurt Weill). His early music learning was by ear, often from movie soundtracks.

Early classical influences were J. S. Bach and Debussy. Initially ade ishs saw himself primarily as a composer; he became a performer almost by accident – as a means of having his work heard. He composes without necessarily being mindful of performing it.

ade got his first jazz club gig in 1997 at "Jamz", a (now-defunct) popular jazz venue in Jakarta. He has been invited to play at such prestigious festivals as Melbourne International Jazz Festival, Ubud Village Jazz Festival, Wangaratta Festival of Jazz & Blues, and the St Kilda Festival.

In this strange, uncharted time that has us all so off-balance, this album is a place of refuge offering sustenance for our souls – as music should.

— Mandy Stefanakis, *Loudmouth, Australia*, February 2021

He also served as the musical director of *Celebration of Indonesia 2017*, a musical depicting various Eastern Indonesian cultures in the forms of music, dance, and drama showcased to a packed crowd at the Melbourne Town Hall. In 2017–2021, Melbourne's Radio 3ZZZ Indonesian program had him on air as a regular guest music expert.

With over ten albums and EPs bearing his name, ade ishs celebrates stylistic diversity as reflected in his eclectic repertoire.

ade ishs arrived in Australia as an International Student in 2002. He graduated with a Master's Degree in *Information Technology*; and went on to complete a PhD. His academic focus was on

music retrieval through IT. Since mid-2021, ade has lived in north-western Tasmania.

I first saw *ade ishs* perform at early Port Fairy Jazz Festivals, just after the event relocated from Hall's Gap; and again, at the 2018 Australian Jazz Convention in Ballarat.

(The ishs/Allen Project) the cutting edge contemporary jazz in Melbourne today, and the Inverloch Jazz Festival is so proud to have you here.

— Gary Russell, *Inverloch Jazz Festival, Australia, March 2016*

I approached him to perform "pro bono" for a series of on-line concerts targeting migrant communities during the pandemic lockdowns which he generously agreed to without hesitation. This state-government funded project was not just about engaging vulnerable people through difficult times, but also a vehicle for delivering COVID health messaging to 'hard to reach' communities.

More recently my partner Julie and I have gone along to see ade perform at Melbourne's iconic jazz venue – *Paris Cat* – where he and his eMotion Band are regulars.

The ishs/Allen Project has the ability to bring new listeners into the world of jazz and unite them with veteran lovers.

— Sharni White, *cargoART Magazine, Australia, July 2015*

On a Sunday morning in September last year, following a sold-out show at *Paris Cat*, he visited the Australian Jazz Museum at the invitation of AJM President Ian Rutherford. Ian opened the museum specially to host a tour for ade, who instantly displayed his professional Information Technology background by recognising that our catalogue was playing one of his tracks from "the Cloud" – *Amazon Web Services*. The connection between being both musician and technologist wasn't lost on Ian, who also has an IT background.

Both band leaders, pianist ade ishs and drummer Chelsea Allen, hailing from Melbourne, Australia, are very accomplished players, honing their techniques of their principle instruments through this contemporary/traditional jazz-fueled collaboration.

— Lola Johnson, *Tom Tom Magazine, USA, April 2015*

The highlight for Ian and other members of the AJM team present was ade's rendition of his 2016 tune "Glad You're Here" delivered on the museum's Graeme Bell piano. For Ian it was one of those spine-tingling moments and prompted him to remark "indeed we were 'Glad You're

Here". If that wasn't enough, ade took a request from another AJM volunteer who was there that day – Hilton Vermaas – for *Blues For Chelsea*, a catchy but tricky riff he and Ian had been attempting to master the day before – ade made it look so easy!



It was very clear to ade's AJM hosts – Ian, Hilton and Dan Kellett – that ade felt strongly about playing Graeme Bell's piano and he expressed much gratitude for the experience. The meeting also provided the AJM with an opportunity to expand our ade ishs collection to include his extensive back catalogue.

The visit was captured on video by our "Facebook" man Dan, who also makes a mean cappuccino which ade (politely) compared favourably with those of his barista wife.

For the AJM team, this was an exciting visit and an important step towards ensuring that contemporary Australian jazz is preserved for future generations.

Two tracks were contributed by ade to AJM's new digital album, our first on *Bandcamp* – 'Tiny but Wild' (*The Bat* and *Da Lovely Obliging Luderick Enthusiast*). They were performed by ade on the Yamaha piano at the Australian Jazz Museum and recorded by AJM President Ian Rutherford.

To learn more about ade ishs, visit his website at www.adeishs.com

Helen Matthews

WA's First Lady of Jazz

By our WA Correspondent Elaine Curtis



Image: Phoebe Matthews

BORN in Guildford, Western Australia in 1943, Helen Matthews, often referred to as "WA's first lady of jazz", was inducted into the WA Music Hall of Fame in 2015 in recognition of her contribution to jazz in Australia.

Her prodigious achievements culminated in her being named the Western Australian State Cultural Treasure for Music in 2022, as "an immensely adored and respected artist ... whose career and legacy undoubtedly transformed the way we listen to jazz" and for her tireless "encouragement of many Western Australian musicians to find their own unique voice".

Helen died on Sunday, June 23rd 2024. At her funeral service, her son David described her as a "Professional singer, Arts Administrator, Teacher and Mentor". Hers had been a life that transcended her official occupations, filled with innumerable experiences brought about by the beauty of her voice and the remarkable way in which she was able to use it. The international jazz artists she has supported or played with is impressive, including Stephane Grappelli, Rod McKuen, Ronnie Scott, Red Rodney, trumpeter (at The America's Cup, Fremantle) and pianist Dave McKenna as well as some of Australia's finest jazz artists, including James Morrison, Judy Bailey, Don Burrows and Kerrie Biddell.

Above all, hers was a life which had made a difference to the many musicians she had mentored and to the development of world class jazz events in Western Australia. Her obituary in *X-Press* magazine, wrote that Helen "was responsible for some of the most innovative jazz projects and festivals that WA has ever seen". RTRFM paid tribute to Helen's contribution and legacy, stating that "Helen's love and commitment to the world of jazz and the musicians who make the music in WA was unsurpassed". Helen had been a regular presenter on ABC and RTRFM Saturday Jazz for many years.

As a diffident child, Helen sought refuge in music, in the safety of home or in a choir, where she could sing without attracting any attention to herself, where she could "hear harmony all the time" and found herself "filling in all the gaps" harmonising. Aged nine, at the Willie Weeties talent show for kids at Boan's department store in the city, Helen began her musical journey, singing "Heart of my Heart". Helen's self-confidence grew through lessons with her music teacher Phyll Frost, which helped her overcome her shyness. Phyll Frost, being blind, had made Helen less self-conscious, "I just wanted not to be seen ... Ironically because she could not see me, she was just listening to what I was doing, you know, the tone and she fed me like a hungry bird."

Helen began singing professionally at 16, her first paid job at the Morris Hotel in Innaloo. Whilst working as a telephonist at the PMG (Postmaster General), a chance conversation with John Thornton of JT & the Jazzmen led to an invitation to audition for the band, resulting in Helen singing with JT & the Jazzmen in the early 1960s. By 1971, Helen had her own show, *With A Little Help From My Friends*, broadcast nationally on the ABC TV Music series and modestly recalled, "I'm not necessarily the star, you know. I just liked to sing. I'm just part of the group."

Helen joined the Perth Jazz Society (PJS) committee in 1985. With manifold roles, she became an integral part of the society – Treasurer, President in 1987–89, Program Coordinator 1996–2001 and newsletter Editor 1993–2001. She was awarded the PJS "Most Outstanding Jazz Contribution Made By An Individual Award" in 2002 and Life Membership that same year. Harry Gresham, PJS President

in later years said of her, "Helen was very much the focal point of the Jazz Society, being involved from the very early days, helping to build the society into what it is today." She energised jazz in WA, making it relevant, exciting and attractive to musicians and audiences alike.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Helen was the front-woman for some of Perth's most memorable bands, including JT & The Jazzmen, A Slight Diversion, Nova Dreams and The Helen Matthews Quartet. She performed regularly, at the Perth Jazz Society, the Quarry Amphitheatre, PICA, the Regal Theatre, the



Image: Phoebe Matthews

York Jazz Festival, the Effie Crump Theatre and many other venues. She also performed twice at the Bridgetown Blues and Jazz Festival.

In 1992, she co-founded "The Jazz Divas", six female singers "with their own constitution", consisting of Sue Bluck, who performed at her tribute concert in 2021, Annie Neil, Jenny Wren, Kerry Byrom-Carter and the late June Smith. Throughout the 1990s, they travelled extensively, including tours of regional Western Australia, where the Jazz Divas memorably performed in the back of a truck in the Goldfields.

Besides WA, Helen performed at the Soup Plus and Jazz Action Society in Sydney and Adelaide. She also appeared at the Montsalvat Jazz Festival Melbourne, Kiama Jazz Festival and Bennett's Lane Jazz Club in Melbourne in 1994/97/2003. The Helen Matthews Quartet toured Indonesia in 1991 "under the auspices of

Musica Viva and was also invited to perform in Mumbai, India, with acclaimed jazz pianist Louis Banks in 1996, on behalf of the Western Australian government."

Resolutely left-wing and a single-minded and determined champion for the interests of musicians and women, Helen worked tirelessly for the causes she believed in throughout her life. Her career was not confined to showcasing her gifted voice but also to mentoring and teaching, promoting the advancement of musicians, particularly women, in Western Australia. As Artistic Director/Manager of Fremantle International Jazz Festival (part of PIAF 2001–02) and Jazz Program Producer (PIAF 2003–06), Helen's visionary thinking made the jazz festivals she curated an important and inspirational part of WA's jazz history. Between 2002 and 2008 Helen produced four international jazz festivals, the inaugural Fremantle International Jazz Festival in 2002 and 2003 and the inaugural Bunbury International Jazz Festival in 2007 and 2008. The Australia Council for the Arts, where she had represented WA so passionately, stated, "Over her 50 years in music, Helen was at the helm of some of the most influential and innovative jazz projects and international festivals in Australia."

Helen's productions "brought together artists of all genres, including dancers, poets and actors and broke down barriers between art forms, placing Perth, Western Australia as an international performance playground." The funding Helen gained for WA jazz enabled her to commission numerous large-scale jazz works, "the benefits of which still reverberate through the Australian jazz community."

Her enthusiasm and productivity resulted in a plethora of music projects: There was *A Tribute for Lena Horne* amongst other productions for Perth Jazz Society in 2010, several for the Effie Crump Theatre, The Quarry Amphitheatre and many other venues. She also wrote and produced *The Billie Holiday Music Story* in 2000 and *Imagine* with a ten-piece ensemble in 2003 for Country Arts Tours. Visiting musicians to WA enjoyed her warm welcome and she presented jazz in WA at its best.

Her legendary organisational skills were such that even perfect weather conditions were attributed to Helen's meticulous arrangements. For an outdoor event at Fremantle Arts Centre, visiting American jazz vocalist Kurt Elling had observed the full moon rise above the audience and famously declared, "I think it is entirely possible that Helen Matthews ordered that moon for us".

WAYJO Artistic Director & Musical Director

and PIJF Artistic Director Dr. Mace Francis remembers Helen with respect and warmth. "Helen was on the board of WAYJO for a short time but she brought a level of experience and demand for quality that we hadn't had on the board in my time. I was still very young and learnt a lot from her about standing up for what I believe in. She did ruffle a few feathers because of her ideas but she didn't let that get in the way of the pursuit for what she believed in and what she thought was best for the organisation ... I miss her no bullshit attitude and drive to make great things".

Guitarist Ray Walker, recently named one of the WA state cultural treasures for 2024, had shared with Helen, "many a musical highlight together over a period of 50 years". They had first met in 1962, on a locally produced TV show

Her ability to scat was legendary

called *Club Seventeen*. In 1979, Helen approached Ray to form a quartet called "A Slight Diversion". Ray recalls, "We started playing on Sundays at the Highway Hotel in Claremont. After a slow start, the gig became one of the most popular in Perth, with crowds lining up long before starting time." "A Slight Diversion" performed together for 5 years until 1984.

Ray believes Helen's impact on jazz in WA to be significant. "She was a real 'mover and shaker' in the Perth jazz scene and fostered many young graduates from WAAPA, creating opportunities for them". In 2010, they had completed an album together (Helen's third and last) called "A Slight Diversion". Helen's first CD had been recorded in 1993, late in her career and with Helen's trademark humour aptly named "A long Time Coming" and her second in 1997, "Raising the Standard". Helen was also a guest vocalist on ABC label "Manteca Black Album".

Through numerous professional collaborations. Ray found Helen an extraordinary talent, "She was a wonderful interpreter of a song's lyrics and put her own stamp on everything she sang ... Her ability to 'scat' on the changes of a tune were legendary ... As a jazz vocalist, she had no peer in this city and was reviewed by the Melbourne Jazz Festival as one of the finest jazz singers this country has ever produced." They played together one last time at Helen's final gig in 2010 at the Ellington Club, shortly after their album was released.

Lindsay Lovering, former WA State Manager for Musica Viva, praised Helen's outspoken

honesty in his eulogy at her funeral service, "She was never afraid to call out hypocrisy or ignorance". He recounted how he had witnessed Helen take to the stage on more than one occasion, take the microphone and tell the audience "how disrespectful it was to talk during a performance of jazz music".

Helen's love of jazz energised and inspired her to strive to bring positive changes and benefits to everyone and everything to do with jazz in WA. She sought to adapt and implement new trends for Perth, which she saw as the most isolated city in the world. Renowned for her generosity of spirit and practicality, she would invite new singers in the audience onto the stage to perform alongside her, providing them invaluable exposure and experience.

Perth jazz vocalist Libby Hammer, whose memories of Helen provide an intimate insight, described her late mentor as "phenomenal". On seeing a song title on the chart, Libby still feels Helen's presence, "my mind would start singing the song, and in so many instances, I realised that the voice I heard was Helen's."

Libby and fellow jazz vocalist Ali Bodycoat (also taught and mentored by Helen) have been great champions of Helen's memory. Following a visit to Helen, then 77 and with Alzheimers, in a care facility in Margaret River, both determined to show their appreciation for her during her lifetime. Their tribute concert at the Rechabite Hall, in Northbridge on the 6th



Libby Hammer, Helen and Ali Bodycoat

November for the 2021 Perth International Jazz Festival, celebrated the music of living legend, Helen Matthews. It captured the essence of what Helen had achieved for jazz in WA and was a loving journey featuring the life and achievements of "Perth's hardest working jazz singer in the 1970s and 80s, a complete stylist

with a brilliant scat technique and one of the finest vocalists this country has ever produced and a driving force behind so many developments in the Perth jazz community." The Ellington Jazz Club in Perth renamed its premier function room for "the wonderful Helen Matthews", citing "Helen has done more to pave the way for our jazz community than can be articulated in words".

Helen's surname remained Matthews after she married, both her father and husband having shared the same surname. Helen's daughter Phoebe describes her mother as having been "incredibly special and dynamic and incredibly generous with her time ... a deep thinker and prolific weeper, devoted to her craft and what she could do for the jazz community."

Phoebe has seen first-hand the Helen Matthews effect on others, "I think she was a pioneer of her time, she had an amazing ability to play with music, she was very respected for her ability to scat, she would say that her favourite instrument was vocals. She had humility, she always underestimated how incredible she was and equally valued other artists and nurtured their potential. She was also very funny and engaged and valued her audience.

"Trying to get out of the door after a gig would take hours as she always had time for everyone!" Renowned for her humour, Helen

closed her shows with "if you liked this concert, my name is Helen Matthews, if you didn't, my name is Wendy".

Helen's life is best presented through the words of the people who had known her, by the striking number of accolades that accompany any mention of "the late, great Helen Matthews". Those who heard her sing found it a memorable experience. She is regarded as a cultural treasure and immortalised in WA Music's Hall of Fame. She stayed true to the principles of her school days which were the Sisters of Mercy's values of compassion, justice, excellence, integrity and service.

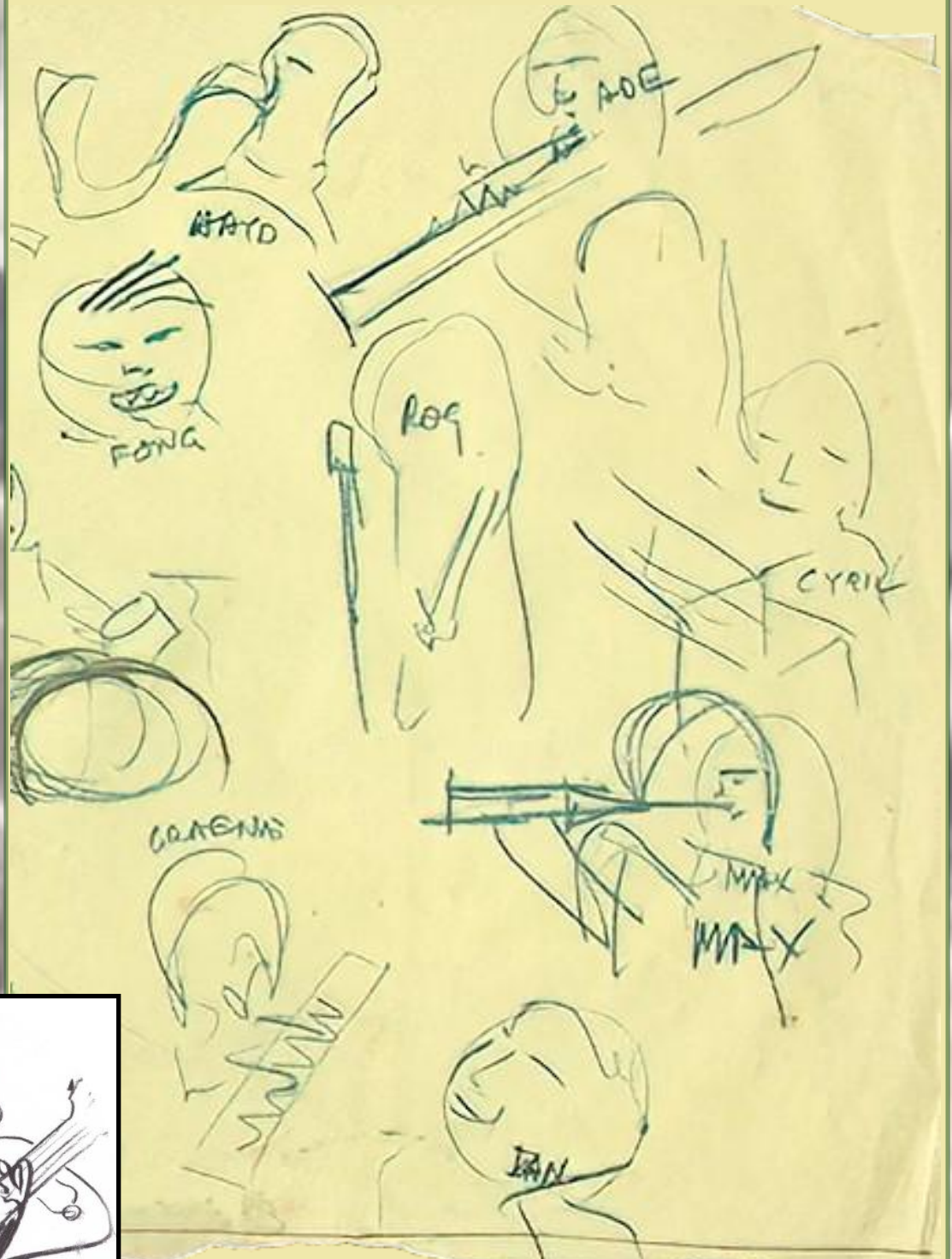
She is remembered with respect and affection by so many. Her son David had said to the mourners at her funeral service, (her last gig!), "Her curiosity about the world was as vast as her musical repertoire ... she instilled the need to question everything, find humour in the absurd and taught us to look at the world and each other with fresh eyes and open hearts ... Heaven just got a whole lot wittier, more musical and a whole lot more loving ... honour her by living with laughter, love and a healthy disregard for propriety ..." To his mother, he spoke for all, "your song might have ended but the music lives on in us". Helen, though, has the last word, from her farewell to Perth Jazz Society, "to jazz - Long may it flourish". ■



Image: Ray Walker

Guitarist Ray Walker at the Ellington Jazz Club with Helen in 2010

Reminiscing



*A portrait of guitarist
Joe Washington also attributed to
Graeme Bell*

*An early 1940s drawing attributed to Graeme Bell with
caricatures of notable jazzmen of the period .
Haydn Britten, Ade Monsborough, George Fong, Roger
Bell, Cy Watts, Graeme, Max Kaminsky and Ian Pearce*