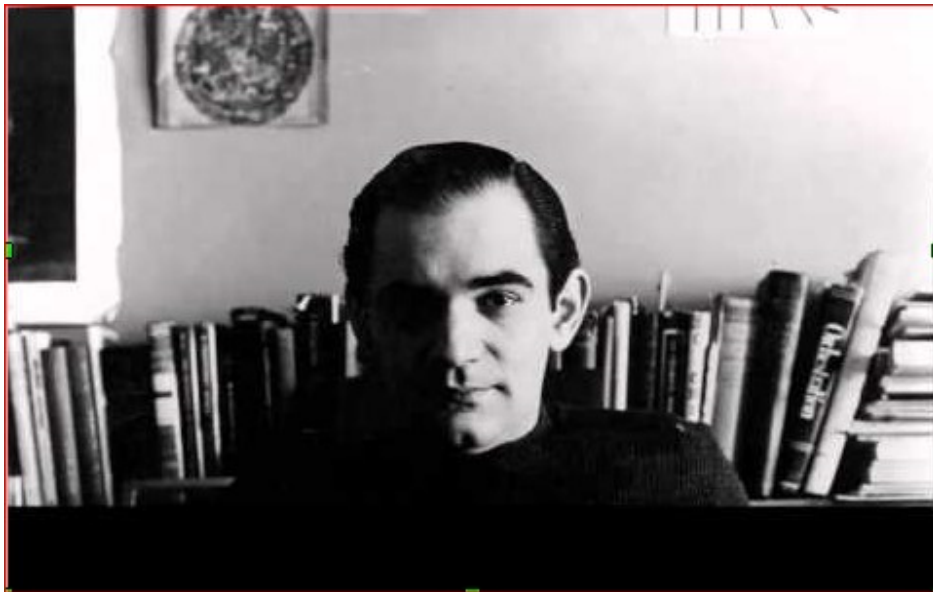


The "Crusaders" of Music
From Jazz to Classical & from Classical to Jazz

WILLIAM BILL RUSSO

(25.06.1928 - 11.01.2003)

Master Orchestrator and Brilliant Theoretician



(Photo : Facebook)



Maurice Creuven 2024

Talking about music is good; listening to it is better !

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THE LENOX SCHOOL OF JAZZ.

During his time in New York and despite his many activities as a composer-arranger, conductor, lecturer and recording sessions, Bill found time to teach.

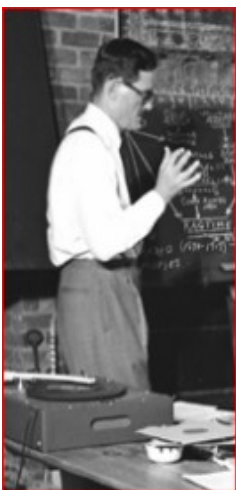
At that time, the 50s and 60s, perhaps the most exciting and passionate in the history of jazz, with the return of prosperity and the massive use of the very young LP, the great schools, the new styles, the strong personalities rubbed shoulders in all sympathy, but in a marvellous surge of creativity and imagination.

The world of jazz is particularly active and dynamic, offering the music lover an extraordinary abundance of recordings of a quality and duration far superior to what was obtained with the 78 rpm.

Musically, all styles are present: Blues, New Orleans, Dixieland, Swing, Bop, Cool, West Coast, Hard Bop, Mainstream, Third Stream, Modal, Free, so many aspects of jazz that quickly give rise to debates, a little vain, between supporters and opponents of one or the other form.

From 1957 to 1960, Bill Russo was part of an impressive group of eminent professional musicians who, for three weeks during the summer, came to share their experience and vision of jazz for the benefit of the students of the very influential Lenox School of Jazz in Lenox, Massachusetts (West), a town located halfway between New York and Boston.

These summer courses were organized in 1957 on the initiative of Marshall Stearns (1908 - 1966), professor of English at Hunter College, specializing in English literature of the Middle Ages and founder of the Institute of Jazz Studies.



Marshall Stearns 1951



(Photos : Clemens Kalischer/Music Inn)



John Lewis 1959

The goal is to fill a gap, especially a technical one, in the teaching of jazz music, a daring and non-profit project.

Kenny Dorham says:

"When I arrived in New York at a very young age, the elders didn't tell me anything, no advice, even Bird. I hope that the students at Lenox realize that they are very lucky ! »



Philip and Stephanie Barber 1951
(Photo : Clemens Kalischer/Music Inn)

It was Marshall Stearns who, as early as 1950, had led the debates on jazz and folk music organized by Philip and Stephanie Barber in their peaceful Lenox home called the Music Inn, and in 1956 it was the Modern Jazz Quartet that played in residence. In 1959, it was the turn of the Dave Brubeck Quartet.

The teaching staff of the Lenox School of Jazz is led by John Lewis (of the M.J.Q.) and includes personalities with sometimes very different, not to say opposing, musical orientations.

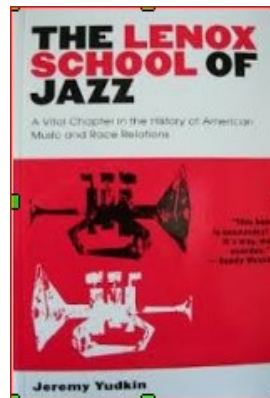
Michael Fitzgerald, musician, musicologist, author, educator and documentalist, says:

"Before the Lenox School of Jazz, there was the Berklee College of Music, created in 1945 by Lawrence Berk, but the quantity, quality and stature of the teachers at the Lenox School have never been equalled. »

According to John Lewis:

"We don't come here to be tested... We are not professional teachers... We are mainly interested in the approach to jazz... The students will keep a very enriching musical experience from their stay. »

But it is the famous and charismatic musicologist Jeremy Yudkin who speaks best and most eruditely about the School of Jazz, in his magnificent and well-researched book "The Lenox School of Jazz - A Vital Chapter in the History of American Music and Race Relations", (157 p.) published by Farshaw Publishing, 2006:



(Photos : Jeremy Yudkin)

"The Lenox School of Jazz was born from the imagination of the Barbers and John Lewis, the jazz composer and pianist who led the Modern Jazz Quartet for more than forty years. Although it was only a short summer program that lasted only four years, the School attracted many of the most important musicians of the day who came to teach there: John Lewis, Milt Jackson, Percy Heath, Connie Kay, Dave Brubeck, Jimmy Giuffre, Dizzy Gillespie, Freddy Hubbard, Kenny Dorham, Booker Little, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Jim Hall, Herb Ellis, Ray Brown, Chuck Israels, Ralph Peña, Art Davis, Bob Brookmeyer, J.J. Johnson, Lee Konitz, George Coleman, Don Heckman, Ed Summerlin, Ray Draper, Max Roach, George Russell, Bill Russo, and Herb Pomeroy.

Large concerts were also held at the Music Inn with jazz stars such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Dave Brubeck, Stan Kenton, George Shearing, Sarah Vaughan, the M.J.Q. and Sonny Rollins.

Over the four years of its existence, the School trained more than one hundred and fifty students, many of whom went on to successful careers in jazz: David Baker, Ran Blake, Jamey Aebersold, Bob Dorough, Don Ellis, Margo Guryan, Don Heckman, Steve Kuhn, Arif Mardin, Larry Ridley, Tupper Saussy and Earl Zindars.

But the best known are probably Don Cherry and Ornette Coleman whose quartet (with Charlie Haden and Billy Higgins) completely turned the jazz world upside down. It was at Lenox, in 1959, that Ornette Coleman caught the public's attention.

John Lewis has decreed that students will be called "Mister" or "Miss", regardless of their age, and that classes will start at 9 a.m. sharp. There will be no alcohol in the rooms and there will be no smoking in the classrooms.

The teaching is intensive: classes are given in the morning and afternoon, lectures take place in the evening, plus individual work and informal discussions around meals that are served at the "Potting Shed", a former greenhouse converted into a 60-seat restaurant, plus a terrace that can also accommodate 60 people. At lunchtime: grilled chicken, beef stroganoff, turkey Divan, filet mignon, green salad and potatoes or a simple snack. There is Beaujolais and Bordeaux. In the evening, there are a variety of sandwiches. And we hear, until late at night, the echo of the exercises that the students practice in their rooms.

Specialized magazines have taken an interest in the Lenox phenomenon and have given it great publicity: Down Beat, Musical Courier, Musical Leader, High Fidelity and Jazz Today. In the magazine, which is very much classical music, The Saturday Review, Nat Hentoff declared: "This new adventure marks a turning point in the history of jazz".

The New York Times published several articles on the school; The Nation announced its creation and Harper's Magazine wrote an article about the seriousness of the enterprise and ended by pointing out that the Newport Jazz Festival had donated \$1,000 (= \$9,000 today) for the 1958 session. »

Born in London in 1948, Jeremy Yudkin is the youngest of three sons of the famous English physiologist and nutritionist John Yudkin and his wife Milly Himmelweit.

He studied in England and the United States. A graduate of the Universities of Cambridge and Stanford, he teaches at Palo Alto, San Francisco, Harvard and, as a visiting professor, at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris.

Since 1982, Jeremy Yudkin has been a professor of musicology at the Center for Beethoven Research and Oxford Universities.

He is also very active in the Tanglewood Festival where he has created the "Pre-Concert Tanglewood Talks" which he presents every year and whose commentaries allow listeners to discover, in a friendly way, the works that will appear on the program of the next concerts.

Particulièrement prolifique, Jeremy écrit dans le Journal of the American Musicological Society, le Journal of Musicology, le Musical Quarterly, Musica Disciplina, Speculum, Notes, Early Music, American Music, Music and Letters, The Salisbury Review, Berkshire Living, The Stanford Italian Review et The American Journal of Philology.

He is a contributor to the Harvard Dictionary of Music, an advisor to the Smithsonian Institution for the Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz, and a jazz consultant to the Oxford English Dictionary.

Numerous conferences took him to the United States, Europe and Russia; the list of its activities is endless!

His analyses (a dozen books, most of them extensive) focus on Beethoven, Bartok, medieval music (his definitive Music in Medieval Europe), the Beatles and jazz. In addition to his Lenox, he is the author of "Miles Smiles, Miles Davis and the Invention of Post Bop" (2009) which received an Award for Excellence in Historical Sound Research from the Association for Recorded Sound Collections.

His greatest success is entitled "Understanding Music" which corresponds to one of his great passions, namely to help any audience in a clear and lively approach to music.

Although the Lenox School of Jazz episode is relatively short, lasting only four summers, it is a particularly creative moment in the history of jazz in the 50s, and in his book, Jeremy Yudkin emphasizes its importance with clarity and relevance.

He is also an excellent clarinetist, photographer, gardener and football player. His wife, Kathryn, is a French teacher; they have two children, Daniel and Susanna, and live in Berkshire, Massachusetts.

Le site à visiter : <http://jeremy-yudkin.com/>



Bill Russo's Bach Choral Class 1959
(Photo : Clemens Kalischer/Music Inn)

At Lenox, we tackle Swing, Bop, Cool, Free and especially the Third Stream, dear to the duo John Lewis - Gunther Schuller.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to drown you (musically)!"

It was with these words that Bill Russo welcomed his candidates, in 1957, to the first class of jazz composition. He taught at Lenox until 1960.

Some students, a little intimidated, had never been in contact with real professional jazz musicians. Of all the formulas used, the Bill Russo method, "*instruction by immersion*," was the favorite of the students who readily cited it as the peak of their internship.

Indeed, the results were excellent.

At the end of the session, a large concert is organized which brings together, in various ensembles, students and teachers.

At the concert on August 29, 1957 at 8:40 p.m., the first small group was conducted by Oscar Peterson; the second by Dizzy Gillespie and then it was the turn of Ray Brown, followed by Jimmy Giuffre and Max Roach.

The evening ends with the School's large orchestra, conducted by Bill Russo, and in which we find, among others, Jimmy Giuffre, Dizzy Gillespie, Ray Brown and Herb Ellis. On the program: "Tickletoe" (by Lester Young), "Jig-Saw" (Mulvihill, Baker, Galino, Mathieu), "Manteca" (Dizzy Gillespie, arrangement by Bill Russo), "Pussy Willow" (Bill Russo and Petan), "Piccadilly Circus" (Sture Swenson).

In 1958, the ensembles were directed successively by Bob Brookmeyer, Lee Konitz, Max Roach and Jimmy Giuffre. Arif Mardin led a training of teachers: Kenny Dorham, Jimmy Giuffre, Bob Brookmeyer, Milt Jackson, Jim Hall, John Lewis, Percy Heath and Connie Kay while Bill Russo was again in charge of the big band.

The School also organizes a series of lectures which are given by Gunther Schuller, Bill Russo with Lennie Tristano, Nesuhi Ertegun from Atlantic Records, etc.

Concerts are also a major part of education at Lenox. Every Thursday and Saturday evening, you can hear the musicians of the School but, in addition, guests such as Wilbur DeParis, Mahalia Jackson, Chris Connor and the Boston Percussion Ensemble.

Oscar Peterson's Trio, with Ray Brown and Herb Ellis, joined by Dizzy Gillespie and Max Roach, is worth noting. Jay Jay Johnson plays in a quintet, including Freddie Hubbard, and, of course, the entire Modern Jazz Quartet.

All this was magnificent, but the School lacked financial means and the 1960 session could barely end thanks to some help and a last-minute donation made by Michael Bakin (\$5,000, or \$45,000 today), son of the founder of the Museum of Modern Art.

In 1958, the Barbers were forced to sell Music Inn except for their own residence in

which they tried to continue the jazz school, but the 1960 season would be the last.



The Modern Jazz Quartet 1957
(Photo : Warren Fowler/Music Inn)

This is how the great and beautiful adventure of the Lenox School of Jazz ends. All the details of its history and many photos can be consulted on the site:

<https://www.musicinnarchives.org/the-lenox-school-of-jazz.html>

Gunther Schuller :

" The Lenox School of Jazz was an incredible, unique and pioneering effort in jazz education. It was twenty years ahead of its time. »

Sonny Rollins :

" The importance of the Lenox School of Jazz lies in the fact that it gave jazz a status of respectability that did not exist at the time."

Atlantic has recorded a few of John Lewis' Third Current performances at Lenox: "John Lewis Presents Jazz Abstractions" (1365) as well as others, on behalf of the Modern Jazz Quartet, which are part of the Mosaic box set (MD7-249) "The Complete Atlantic Studio Recordings of The Modern Jazz Quartet 1956-64" with, occasionally, a guest: Jimmy Giuffre, Jim Hall, Ralph Peña or Sonny Rollins. These historical recordings are generally referred to as "at Music Inn".

In 1967, the new owner of Music Inn, local entrepreneur Don Soviero, who had increased the outdoor capacity to 6,000 seats, went bankrupt and the buyers marketed the place more and more through activities and concerts that were less and less related to jazz.

Finally, at the 1979 concert of the Allman Brothers, a southern rock band, the

audience went so wild that the police had to intervene very energetically. That was the end of Music Inn.

The Barbers separated in 1972 and their residence currently operates as a luxury hotel and restaurant.

And the Music Inn saga, which lasted thirty years, remains today only in the memory of the residents of Berkshire County.

From 1959 to 1961, Bill Russo also taught composition at the prestigious Manhattan School of Music (N.Y.), created in 1917.

In 1961, he published "Brookville", a work for wind instruments.

VIVA ITALIAN AMERICAN JAZZ!

That same year, Bill went to Rome to complete his first opera, "John Hooton," three acts for which he wrote the music and text.

According to Howard Reich of the Chicago Tribune,

"It is a kind of jazz version of Otello that can be classified as one of the major works of an artist who produced a number of important scores over a period of about half a century."

With this opera, Bill made his first contact with the Italian tradition that is part of his family and cultural heritage.

During his stay in Italy, Bill Russo participated, in 1962, in the San Remo Jazz Festival. He is heard with his quintet but also at the head of a big band, The Italian Orchestra, composed only of Italian musicians: Sergio Fanni and Nino Impallomeni, trumpets; Stanislao Massara, Athos and Raoul Ceroni, trombones; Edoardo (Eddy) Busnello, viola; the veteran Eraldo Volontè, tenor; the very popular (on the viola) Fausto Papetti, baritone; Bruno DeFilippi, guitar; Piero Lapolla, bass and Gil Cuppini, drums.

You can also enjoy, on YouTube, an excerpt of the performance; this is a very personal arrangement (as always) by Bill on George Gershwin's "Summertime" theme. Three soloists: Athos Ceroni, Eraldo Volontè and Nino Impallomeni. (See page 87 - Bill Russo orchestra – You Tube).

According to the testimonies:

"A splendid and well-deserved tribute to a great artist: Bill Russo. »



(Photo : YouTube)

It should be remembered, in fact, that at that time, Italy had an impressive number of highly talented jazz musicians, particularly gifted and inspired, both as soloists and as sidemen of visiting American stars.

During the glorious 50s and 60s, Italy played a bit of the role of the West Coast in the United States in Europe.

And the phenomenon continues today, in Europe as well as in the States, where there are countless jazz musicians of Italian origin.

It is also worth mentioning the very interesting and perfectly documented book on the subject, written by Bill Dal Cerro and David Anthony Witter: "Bebop, Swing, and Bella Musica - Jazz and the Italian American Experience", published (2015) by Bella Musica Publishing, Chicago, Illinois (383 pages).

On y trouve, bien sûr, des noms typiquement italiens, comme La Rocca, Prima, Butera, Venuti, Candoli, DeFranco, Sinatra, Pizzarelli, Tristano, Russo, Lovano, Di Meola, DeFrancesco, LaFaro, Rosolino, Rugolo, etc.

But also real surprises, for many, such as Eddie Lang (Salvatore Massaro), Flip Philips (Joseph Edward Filipelli), Louie Bellson (Luigi Paolino Francesco Balassoni), Tony Bennett (Anthony Dominick Benedetto), Ray Anthony (Raymond Antonini), Vinnie Burke (Vincenzo J. Bucci), Frankie Capp (Frank Cappuccio), Johnny Desmond (Giovanni Alfredo DiSimone), Joe Farrell (Joseph Carl Firrantello), Jimmy Giuffre (James Peter Giuffre), Jerry Gray (Generoso Graziano), Pete Jolly (Peter A. Ceragioli), Frankie Laine (Francesco LoVecchio), Marty, Phil et Teddy Napoleon (Matteo, Filippo et Salvatore Napoli), Tony Scott (Anthony Joseph Siacca), Nick Travis (Nicholas Anthony Travascio), Charlie Ventura (Charles Venturo), George Wallington (Giacinto Figlia), etc, etc, etc.

Well, no, Louis Armstrong is not Italian!



David Anthony Witter & Bill Dal Cerro
(Photo : IAP - Italian American Podcast)



(Photo : Robert Aulicino)

A very big congratulations to the two authors who have done a prodigious job for which they have received the praise of many jazz professionals. Grazie Italia!

Bill Russo will also be Director of Orchestral Studies at the Scuola Europea d'Orchestra Jazz in Palermo, Sicily.

It's a small world because it was in Sicily, in San Piero Patti, that Pete Rugolo was born, on December 25, 1915.

RETURN TO LONDON

In 1962, Bill returned to London, where he worked for the B.B.C., and in July formed the London Jazz Orchestra, 21 professional musicians, among the best in Britain, who agreed to participate in weekly rehearsals until late at night and almost voluntarily, which did not prevent Bill Russo from being very demanding, even severe with them. He directed this ensemble until 1965.

The orchestra gives concerts, plays on the radio and participates in recording sessions. It consists of four trumpets, Ron Simmonds, Leon Calvert, Gordon Rose, and Tony Mabbett; four trombones, Johnny Edwards, Keith Christie, Bobby Lamb and Don Lusher; two bass trombones, Jack Thirlwell and Ray Premru; five saxes, Johnny Scott and Al Newman, altos, Duncan Lamont and Art Ellefson, tenors and Ronnie Ross, baritone; an oboe, Richard Morgan; Ray Dempsey on guitar; Arthur Watts, double bass; Kenny Clare, drums and four cellos, Raymond Clark, Derek Simpson, Hilary Robinson and Jack Holmes.

On December 21 and 22, 1962, all these beautiful people were gathered in the Lansdowne Studios in London under the direction of Bill (William) Russo (assistant: his pupil and great friend Richard Dick Peaslee whom we have the pleasure of mentioning, under his name, elsewhere on the site) for the recording of two Suites taking up themes composed by Bill, about ten years earlier, for Stan Kenton's orchestra.

The "Suite No. 1" (Opus 5), consists of five parts and begins with "Portrait of a Count" (dedicated to Conte Candoli) performed by Leon Calvert. "Egdon Heath" (dedicated to Stan Kenton) allows you to hear Johnny Edwards and Johnny Scott. Third theme: "Frank Speaking" (to Frank Rosolino) with Keith Christie as soloist, followed by "Thisbe" (to Max Jones, English jazz critic) and "Sweets" (to the very eclectic producer Pete Kameron) with soloists Tony Mabbett, Duncan Lamot, Ronnie Ross and Arthur Watts.

The four-part "Suite No. 2" (Opus 8) is dedicated to Sally and John Thompson. The latter, a famous American pianist (1889-1963) well known for his many methods of learning the piano, particularly for children.

The Suite begins with a performance of "Bill's Blues" with soloists Duncan Lamont, Leon Calvert and Johnny Scott. "Boredom" is played by Johnny Edwards and "Dusk" by Richard Morgan. As for "23° North - 82° West", it features Keith Christie and Duncan Lamont.

In each Suite, the themes are linked together on the basis of their harmonic approximation and rhythmic diversity, which favours the follow-up of the hearing. The orchestrations have all been modified, rewritten, and some even very deeply; they are not at all carbon copies of the original scores. Here we have Bill Russo revised by Bill Russo.

Listening, however, one cannot forget the great Kentonian versions of all these themes, both for the perfection of the orchestra and for the value of the soloists who were the dedicatees to them. But, very objectively, it must be recognized that the London Jazz Orchestra perfectly masters Bill Russo's writing, whether in the complexity, the nuance, the subtlety, the power, the virtuosity or the homogeneity of the ensembles which are remarkable.

As for the various soloists, they are very much in the role they assume. Leon Calvert is brilliant in his homage to Conte, even if he brings a slightly more romantic phrasing to the introduction exposition. Keith Christie values his dedication to Frank very well, but perhaps Bill could have used Don Lusher in this case? To be highlighted, in "Sweets", the magnificent solo of Duncan Lamont, the ease of Ronnie

Rosso and the effectiveness of the rhythm. Johnny Scott's viola is particularly fluid and lyrical. Johnny Edwards is admirable in "Ennui" but it is in "23° N.- 82° W." that we find a great Duncan Lamont who clearly expresses here his attachment to Getzian sounds.



(Photos : Vocalion Ltd)

Even if they are based on recompositions of pieces from his repertoire, these two Suites allow us to fully appreciate Bill Russo's idea of music. Ideally, a unique, rich, vast, complex music, a very personal, serious style (just like Bill, the musician), an absolute mastery of all the sections of the orchestra, especially brass, beautiful melodies, moving atmospheres, crescendos and silences, rhythmic variations, swing and romanticism, compositions which, musically, always have different characters.

For those who love jazz and have an open mind (to classical, possibly), Bill Russo's music is a must, and each hearing brings its share of new discoveries.

We can, therefore, be somewhat surprised by the opinion given by the very distinguished English music critic, Steve Race (1921-2009), also pianist, composer and presenter on Radio 4 (BBC), remarks reported to us by Ron Simmonds, of Canadian origin (1928-2005), first trumpet of the orchestra and producer of the magnificent site "Jazz Professional" <http://www.jazzprofessional.com/Main/welcome.html>

It should be noted that, under the title "William Russo disappoints", Steve Race shows a kind of disappointment that shows how much more he expected from Bill Russo, which is a kind of spontaneous tribute to the composer:

" My first musical approach to Bill Russo was the release of the LP 'Stan Kenton Showcase' which contains the music of Bill Holman and Bill Russo. During his stay in London, Bill formed an orchestra with the best English musicians. We now have the result of this collaboration under the title "Russo in London" which consists, to my great surprise, of old compositions by Bill Russo that already exist on other recordings.



Steve Race
(Photo : Discogs)



Ron Simmonds
(Photo : Jazz Professional)

We all know that Louis Armstrong plays the same repertoire year after year, but I'm sure Bill Russo has been designing new scores since the Kenton years. So, why not register them? Bill Russo's records are not so frequent that he devotes an entire LP (originally) to the revision of old compositions.

The whole is rarely exciting and the rhythm section is sometimes a little soft. Moreover, how can we explain why an orchestra that contains Art Ellefson and Don Lusher only offers, as tenor and trombone soloists, Duncan Lamont and Keith Christie?

To put it bluntly, I find the record disappointing and a bit boring. »

Guided by a real disappointment about the content, the comment is harsh but let's add all the same, as Steve Race acknowledges, that the rarity of Bill Russo's records makes this production an important part of his catalog and allows, despite everything, to appreciate excellent English musicians placed in professional conditions that are not always ideal in the face of complex scores, as is often the case with Bill.

The recording of both sessions was, at the time, released on a Columbia LP. Today, it is covered on a Vocalion CD (CDSML 8490) "Russo in London" along with eight tracks recorded on February 23 and 24, 1959, by the excellent English trumpeter Kenny Baker and The Baker's Dozen under the title "Blowing Up a Storm."

Musically, Kenny Baker is more in the Woody Herman lineage than in that of Stan Kenton; Its title says it clearly. A formidable jazz, direct, clean, energetic, imaginative soloists to whom Kenny Baker generously lets the floor, in short, an effective big band that already includes some musicians that can be found in Bill Russo: Ron Simmonds, Ray Premru, Johnny Scott, Art Ellefson, Ronnie Ross, but also a magnificent Don Rendell and the fantastic drummer Jackie Dougan.

It was high time that these excellent tracks appeared on CD.

In absolute terms, we must recognize the musical and multiple interest of this

Vocalion CD which offers two very different visions of Jazz, one being intellectually oriented with sometimes classical accents, the other focusing mainly on spontaneity.

And this is Jazz, a universal and living art, open to all variants of the creative imagination.

AN OPERA : « THE ISLAND »

In 1962/63, Bill Russo composed his second opera for the B.B.C.: "The Island" (Opus 42); the lyrics are by Adrian Michell.



(Map: Google/Le Monde diplomatique)

The action takes place on the island of Diego Garcia, the main island of the atoll of the same name, in the Chagos archipelago, a British territory in the Indian Ocean, and recounts the problems caused by the announcement of the forced and definitive evacuation, between 1968 and 1973, of all the inhabitants of the island when it was leased, in 1966 and for fifty years, to the American army, which makes it an important strategic base whose geographical location can allow actions towards Asia and the Middle East.

The agreement has been extended for twenty years, until 30 December 2036.

But, in its declaration of February 25, 2019, the International Court of Justice ruled that London and Washington are illegally occupying the island, whose territory is to return to Mauritius, which claims sovereignty over the archipelago. In 2024, Great Britain returns the Chagos Islands (50 islands) to the Mauritians except for the American military base. So much for history!

The opera is produced by Douglas Cleverdon; the B.B.C. broadcast it on Network Three on July 13, 1963, at the time of the expulsion of the islanders, and underlined the contrast between the superficial side of American popular culture and the

simplicity and naturalness of the islanders. It consists of only one act (45 minutes) but is divided into three rather short scenes:

1. Message from the Mainland, 2. Mainland Bounty, 3. Escape.

Bill Russo, with the help of Richard Peaslee, conducts a chamber orchestra and a big band, leader Leon Calvert, as well as a group of singers, including the famous Cleo Laine (Mrs. Johnny Dankworth) and Denis Quilley, English baritone (1927-2003), to restore, musically, all the force of this tragedy.



Richard Peaslee
(Photo : New Music USA)

To my knowledge, there are no commercially available recordings of opera; However, the following link allows access to the site, which offers, under good conditions, a very convincing execution.

<http://sgs.lpi.org.uk/seagreensingers/theisland/The%20Island%20-%20Cleo%20LaineRARversionPt3.mp3>

BILL THE LONDONER

Let's go back to Bill Russo with some confidences collected from Caroline Gowers (see William Patrick Gowers, on this site) and which situate a little the atmosphere created by Bill during his various visits to London:

"When Bill arrived in London, Patrick contacted him to ask if he could get some composition lessons because he greatly admired the work that Bill had done at Stan Kenton's. But, after a lesson, I think, Bill said that he had as much to learn from Patrick as Patrick had to learn from him. There was, therefore, a great deal of mutual admiration. Bill was very envious of Patrick's academic training and said that all

jazz musicians should learn the great rules of harmony and counterpoint.

When we lived in Paris, for Patrick's PhD on Eric Satie, we gave up our London apartment to Bill who used it as a studio.

When we returned, we experienced the sessions that Bill organized there, on Saturday afternoons, with the musicians of his London orchestra. He made them sing Bach chorales. Bill was in charge; Patrick and I participated. Personally, I produced the 'Tea and Cake'!

All of these musicians used to meet once a week in the middle of the night in Lansdowne Studios when they were not busy for recordings. And that's how we met Richard Peaslee, Patrick and Dick being Bill's assistants.



Caroline and Patrick Gowers
(Photo : Caroline Gowers)

Bill had a lot of charisma; the musicians loved him and would have done anything for him. He was a great friend. After returning to the United States, he returned periodically to London. He would come to see us and often ask me to organize a dinner party and invite people he knew. Bill would arrive in a cab, laden with groceries, and the party could begin. We had wonderful times, conversations went in all directions and Bill maintained a happy atmosphere.

Back in Chicago, Bill invited our daughter Katharine, an excellent violinist from the Menuhin School (see Patrick Gowers in the Menu), to play the English Concerto and she flew to Chicago.

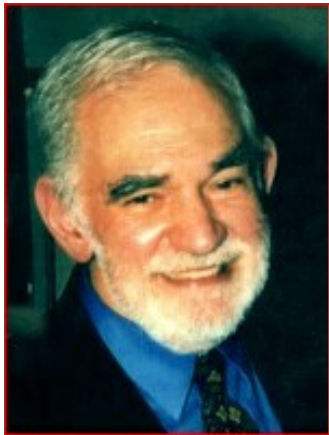
Later, Kathy played the concerto at a concert in London. Bill was conducting but he was very ill and it was not a very happy experience.

In 2001, when Patrick had his stroke, Bill, who was already suffering from cancer, arrived from Chicago and visited him in the hospital. At that time, Bill was kind of going back to the religious and was becoming quite deaf. I remember a strange scene where Bill and Patrick, each with a Bible in their hands, were discussing miraculous healings: Patrick had almost no voice and Bill heard almost nothing he said.

Bill led a very varied, very lively private life, he was a man who was not easy to live with but a warm being and a generous spirit. Patrick and Dick, two calm and

reserved temperaments, loved him very much although they were quite different from him. But I think I can say that Bill's communicative charisma freed them a little from their reserve. »

WILLIAM RUSSO : « IN MY OPINION »



Bill Russo
(Photo : Dennis Matthews)



Les Tomkins
(Photo : Jazz Professional)

In 1962 and 1964, Bill confided in the great English specialist in jazz interviews, Les Tomkins (1930 - 2020), whose complete and impressive list of artists he interviewed can be consulted on the "Jazz Professional" website:

<http://www.jazzprofessional.com/Main/Les%20Tomkins.htm>

Here's a look at the two interviews plus Bill's opinion on Duke Ellington:

—
— **1962** —

" About my compositions, I'm rarely satisfied, but that's normal. It would be more fun to write music if I was satisfied more often. I sometimes hear some music and I know that its authors are happy, but it's not a good sign. I think the more satisfied you are, the more problems you have unless you have the same genius as Mozart's...

Among my contemporaries, I place Duke Ellington first, then Gil Evans and several of the people of the Third Stream, especially John Lewis and Jimmy Giuffre. I really liked what Giuffre wrote five years ago but I don't know what he does today. John Lewis' music is also very beautiful and some of George Russell's pieces impressed me a lot...

My favorite soloists are Bill Evans, Lennie Tristano, Lee Konitz, Miles Davis, Harold Baker (Duke), Bob Brookmeyer, Gerry Mulligan, Ray Brown and Charlie Mingus, Jimmy Raney and especially Jim Hall; I still love Jack Teagarden...

I'm not interested in atonality, or in free, nor, for that matter, in the avant-garde in any art. I feel that the subject, the content, the idea are too narrow and that the scope of this art is limited; it is not directed towards great objectives. Music must have beauty, openness and address the world...

I don't think that jazz, itself, needs to be changed. The Count Basie idiom, for example, can be endlessly expanded rather than reproduced...

Personally, I don't see how big bands could come out of their decline: where they could go and who would be interested. The large jazz orchestra is in the position of the symphony orchestra; in a way, it must be maintained by the State. It can no longer even work for dance because popular music has been too mistreated, too corrupted. Registering is not enough and Clubs are not managed properly. And then, the jazz audience is not large enough to cover the necessary expenses. What the jazz orchestra really needs is a place to work and develop ideas, not just to play...

Musicians and composers absolutely need some (financial) security...

During the war (1940-45), it was the time of the great jazz orchestras. Jazz was the popular music of the country and there was a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm in society that fostered it. It was an exciting time...

Today, music has only a superficial attraction; the effect it produces on a teenager is not comparable to that of a big band of 15 or 20 musicians...

I think that all composers must practice an instrument and that all instrumentalists must have notions of composition. It is much easier to play when you know how and why a score is put together in this way...

In my opinion, it is not necessary to be a good musician of the section to be a good soloist. I know some instrumentalists who would never know how to play in a section but who are magnificent soloists. But there is also a great satisfaction in playing in the section and that can even exceed the pleasure of producing a great improvised solo. Few people know this. It's a wonderful feeling to be in a large orchestra and to be part of a band that plays well together, with precision, music loaded with meaning. At present, the individualist fever runs through all the executions; each sees himself as a soloist and this tendency frequently marks the work in the section...

One of my goals is to prevent the extinction of the great orchestra; if we are not careful, it could disappear, just like the dinosaurs. The entire tradition of jazz and its evolution has contributed to the advent of excellent session musicians, which has allowed the promoters of commercial music to use the advantages of this education and culture to their advantage without investing in their renewal. As a result, there may be no musicians left in fifteen years' time; You can't make cream without milk! »

- 1964 -

" You ask me to compare English and American musicians; I will answer you in all honesty...

The sound of the English musicians is very rich but is not balanced in the sections of the orchestra...

Speaking of sight reading, American musicians are much faster, especially outside of 4/4 and they memorize everything while reading. The most important difference is that the American musician works more. The English musician takes his time, calmly; he believes that things will work out on their own, which is not the case; He thinks that jazz is a romantic art, that the essential part of jazz is the soul and this is true but it is also the case in all the arts. It's true that music is 'feeling' but this idea doesn't go far enough. Music is also skill, technique, discipline, control, study and a lot of work...

With the English musicians, we had a lot of success but, unfortunately, we were the exception. I tried to replace old habits with new ones. The musicians worked with me, participating in the weekly rehearsals, without being paid. I think they did it thinking that it could help them musically and, also, because they felt like a kind of responsibility towards music that led them to fight against the anti-cultural forces that oppressed them. And, to be fair, I think it must also be said that everyone in the orchestra was touched by the goddess of music and aimed at an ideal...

I didn't write all the music for the orchestra. During the last two years, most of the scores are due to Dick Peaslee, Tony Russell, Ken Wheeler, Richard Rodney Bennett, Bill Geldard and Tony Kinsey...

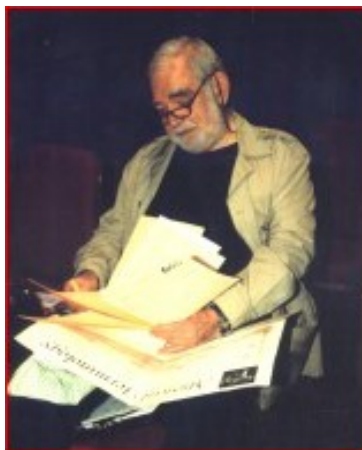
Since I have been in England, I have had a great deal of work; I have had musicians capable of playing my music with a high degree of sympathy and great technical competence; I love London and I believe I can help the English music world...

Financially, I was rich and I was poor. As a musician, I depend on my job to make ends meet. I have always taken risks; I refused to be dragged into commercial music. A lot of the money I earn goes to the orchestra, The London Jazz Orchestra...

Over the last two years, I think we have had about a hundred different musicians; if I count the substitutes, the number is close to two hundred...

Yes, the orchestra swings; Not always, of course. Some people think that we want to turn jazz into classical music. Nothing could be further from the truth. We play pieces of music that are longer, more elaborate than the jazz pieces of twenty years ago. Swing is created by discipline; Agitation is not swing. We forget that Count Basie, in the 1930s, owned one of the most controlled ensembles in the history of music. Ironically, that's what I tried to do but, perhaps, I wasn't always clear enough...

We try to avoid naïve tracks like 'Jumping At Joes' because they let the listener assume that what they are going to hear is not very important. If jazz has a real value, why diminish it by using teenagers' songs? So, for example, as far as I'm concerned, I think it's very condescending to jazz to use, in this case, my diminutive Bill and to talk about William Russo for classical. I don't appreciate the practice of such differences because many jazzmen have made substantial contributions to the art of music...



(Photo : Dennis Matthews)

The London Jazz Orchestra is not in the Stan Kenton line, but I take this opportunity to say that Stan Kenton's mistakes were much better than the successes of many others...

– **The Influence of Duke Ellington** -

–

" The unquestionable greatness of Duke Ellington's orchestra is often attributed to its longevity, which forced the Duke to have recourse, over a very long period, to many talented musicians in whom, it is said, he would have found his inspiration. To me, this reasoning is only partly true.

Several of these musicians were wonderfully expressive and imaginative; Some were even formidable soloists from a jazz point of view alone but also in the Ellingtonian aesthetic. I believe, however, that of all the soloists at the Duke, only Jimmy Blanton (bassist) was an improviser of a class comparable to that of Lester Young and Dizzy Gillespie; He had the gift of building a complete and structured solo.

Moreover, although the Duke was certainly inspired by his men, we must in truth add that he himself inspired them much more, using the best of their abilities by providing them with a magnificent musical context.

In general, the improviser plays along a continuous line that often limits the orchestra to an accompanist role. Ellington has managed to get the soloists to express themselves within his music: they stop when the orchestra intervenes, they play shorter solos, with fewer notes, use sordines, in short, they are subordinate to the orchestra and participate in the enhancement of the ensemble. Even the drummer works in the spirit of the band, using a wide variety of sounds and maintaining the rhythm in an unusual way.

The fact that the Duke kept several of his talented musicians for a very long time undoubtedly allowed him to realize and complete some of his projects. However, it was his vision and extraordinary gifts that brought all these resources to such a magnificent level of achievement. It's not about what you do, it's about how you do it!

The orchestra needs beautiful scores but also Ellington's hand. The realization of his music by the orchestra allows us to understand what his thought was. Without the orchestra, he would never have been able to prove his talent, but the reality is that it's Duke Ellington's music (and Billy Strayhorn's, of course) that determines the orchestra, not the other way around. »

« THE ENGLISH CONCERTO »

In 1963, Bill composed "Five Pieces for Jazz Orchestra" and his superb "English Concerto, Opus 43", for violin and jazz orchestra, commissioned by Lord Astor of Haver (from Kent, England) and the legendary violinist Yehudi Menuhin, who premiered it on 11 June of the same year at the prestigious Bath Festival (south-west England) with Bill Russo's London Jazz Orchestra.



Jehu Kills Steven Staryk
(Photo : Warner Classics)



(Photo : Instant Encore)



The Bath International Music Festival, depuis 1948
(Photo : Bath Festival)

"The English Concerto" has three movements:

1. The Thames (The Thames) - 7'02; 2. Salisbury Plain (South East of England) - 4'51 and 3. Leicester Square (London, pedestrian) - 3'55.

Despite its rather short duration, less than 16 minutes, the Concerto is a complete, coherent and diversified musical work, the result of the talent and creativity of its author.

The entrance is solemn and introduces the soloist in a happy contrast. Then comes a magnificent passage, slightly rhythmic, a little danceable, with the overall sounds of Bill Russo; They are powerful, surprising, but not aggressive. The violin continues in a sequence that is both virtuoso and melodic with a reprise of the beautiful theme. The movement ends with a strong intervention by the orchestra.

The second part is made of softness, discretion, both on the part of the orchestra and on the part of the soloist, the two harmonizing to perfection to highlight all the musicality of the beautiful melody imagined by Bill Russo.

The third movement clearly affirms the influence of jazz through the rhythmic element, especially the double bass, and the dialogue between the violin and the orchestra whose riffs are somewhat reminiscent of those that Bill knew from Stan Kenton.

Example 20. The English Concerto
Solo

Example 35. The English Concerto
Eye in return
Solo

As he does in his jazz compositions, Bill Russo applies all his art of melody for the soloist and orchestration for the ensembles to the Concerto, thus realizing his dream of writing a score on the model of Brahms' Violin Concerto; An admirably successful bet: to be listened to and listened to again, for pleasure!

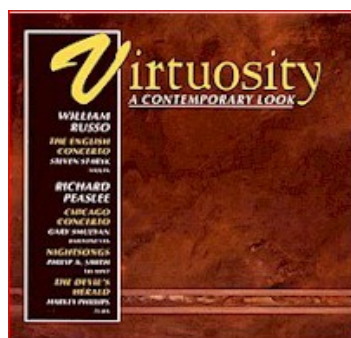
On August 16, 1964, Bill conducted, in London's Lansdowne Studios, the recording of his Concerto with, again, The London Jazz Orchestra, impressive, plus four cellos.

As soloist, the brilliant Canadian violinist of Ukrainian descent, Steven Staryk (1932), concert master, from 1963 to 1967, in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra of the great Fritz Reiner era, but who seems to adapt perfectly to a musical language to which he is probably not accustomed.

He also reveals an astonishing musical versatility through the great diversity of repertoires that he tackles outside of his performances in several major symphony orchestras. As a soloist, his impressive discography covers up to four centuries of the history of the violin, and it is thus that he has no hesitation in calling him " *A Musician's Musician* ". Accessible site: <http://starykanthology.ca/>

The session is produced by Bill Russo and Patrick Gowers (see under the Site Menu). The London Jazz Orchestra includes: Al Newman, Roy Wilcox, Eddie Mordeu, Vic Ash and Alex Leslie on saxes; Leon Calvert (leader), Ray Simmonds, Don Blakeson and Kenny Wheeler, trumpets; Maurice Pratt, Ric Kennedy, Tony Russell, Chris Smith and Jack Thirlwall, trombones; Arthur Watts, double bass; Ray Dempsey, guitar; Tony Kinsey, percussion; John Shineborne, Vivian Joseph, Paul Marinari and Lionel Ross, cellos.

The American premiere of the "English Concerto" took place on December 12, 1965 in Chicago. The soloist is the same Steven Staryk; Bill Russo conducts, this time, his very young Chicago Jazz Ensemble, which is playing its first concert.



(Photo : GM Recordings)

In 1991, GM Recordings released a CD (GM3017CD), which has become rare, under the title "Virtuosity: A Contemporary Look" which allows us to appreciate Bill Russo's Concerto as it was recorded on August 16, 1964, but also grants us the privilege of discovering three pieces, including the masterful "Chicago Concerto", by his student, collaborator and long-time friend, Richard Peaslee, an American musician who greatly deserves to hold our attention and who is mentioned elsewhere (see under the Menu of the Site).

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

From the beginning of the 60s and despite his many activities as a composer, teacher, lecturer and conductor, William Russo set out to describe, in detail, the methods he conceived and used in his compositions, especially in jazz. Three volumes are published by The University of Chicago Press.

The first, " *Composing for The Jazz Orchestra* " (90 p.), was published in 1961 (revised in 1973). It was accompanied, in 1978 by the same publisher, by a " *Workbook* " (119 p. of exercises) that William signed with Reid Hyams (1952), then a young graduate of Columbia College, pianist, composer and educator who is now very active in the world of music in Chicago.



Composing for The Jazz Orchestra



Workbook

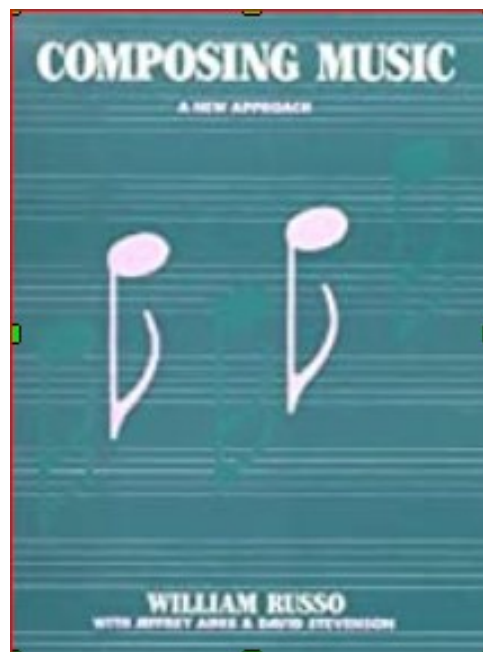
(Photos : The University of Chicago Press)

In 1968, he wrote the imposing treatise " *JAZZ Composition & Orchestration* " (825 pages), a technical compendium that contains numerous exercises and a multitude of excerpts from the Master's scores.

Finally, it was in 1980 (1983, 88) that William Russo published " *Composing Music; A New Approach* " (230 p.), a book that unites, from the first chapter, theory and practice, knowledge and experience. He received the collaboration of Jeffrey Ainis, designer, writer, publisher in fields such as spirituality and world music, of which he practiced kirtan, a devotional song in India. David Stevenson, designer and creator of electronic and acoustic instruments, also participates.

In the Preface (1961) to its very first volume, William Russo explains himself in these terms:

"The jazz orchestra is immensely important, if only as a permanent repository of jazz. Not only does it contain and codify what the improviser has done, but it has also created a new way of combining instruments, especially brass and saxophones. He uses a fresh and lively melodic and harmonic language. It requires a commitment and spontaneity from the performers that is less and less found in music."



JAZZ Composition & Orchestration

Composing Music : A New Approach

(Photos : The University of Chicago Press)

Some say that jazz cannot be written; that there is a contradiction between the terms "jazz" and "writing". In this sense, no music can be written; Musical notation has

always been woefully inadequate. However, the music played by Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Woody Herman, and Stan Kenton cannot be ignored; No one can claim, without diverting the historical reality of jazz, that, in the case of the orchestras mentioned, they only serve as a support for virtuoso soloists.

This book is not theoretical; it is not made to observe, classify and define.

Overall, the text comes from my own techniques as I first conceived them. I can even say that they have come out of the ground, inch by inch. I also offer other jazz composition techniques that I think have value.

Despite all the current interest in jazz, there are very few opportunities for the student to obtain information related to its techniques. I wrote this book with the hope that it would answer some of the questions that many people have asked me.

The potential of the jazz orchestra is very great! »

The first sentence of "JAZZ Composition & Orchestration" is as follows (p. 2):

" The four main elements of music are melody, harmony, rhythm and orchestration. The melody is unquestionably the most important element; it constitutes the essence, the soul of music. »

As for his latest book: "Composing Music - A New Approach", William Russo offers it to us as follows:

" This book intends to teach you how to compose music. If you already compose, it will make it easier and help you develop the ideas and skills you already have. It's not a book about music. This is not a book about composition. It is a book that presupposes your participation; In reality, you'll start composing from the first chapter. In other words, knowledge and experience are offered to you in a single operation. »

That is clear and clear! And William continues:

"Teaching is mainly articulated in the form of exercises; In fact, reading this book is working on the exercises. Each exercise introduces you, in most cases, to a particular procedure that you immediately use to compose a small piece. I find this way of teaching to be highly effective. The instant app brings you the instant experience. Plus, there's absolutely no better way to learn something than to try it yourself. »

On the user side, the reviews are generally very positive, such as Malcolm Bessom (The Music Magazine), about the first volume:

"While of primary interest to those engaged in composition, this book is also recommended for music lovers who wish to delve deeper into what makes jazz writing so different from the traditional approach."

Doug McMullen (The Whole Note/Canada) *ibid.* :

"Composing? Study this book and you will find it simple. This is not a theory book but a way to learn, on your own, the basics of composition while giving the utmost importance to musical expression. You are not going to become a Beethoven but you will have learned tons about music because the method is extremely creative. A great book for self-taught people, improvisers and composers. I can't recommend it enough. »

Jon Newsom (Notes) gives a very positive assessment of "JAZZ Composition & Orchestration":

" William Russo has undertaken a very ambitious project of presenting, together, the constituent elements of music that are usually offered in separate volumes on harmony, counterpoint and orchestration. As such, his book contains enough musical instructions to interest all students, even those who are not sensitive to jazz or William Russo's own musical idiom. But the student who wants to write for a large jazz orchestra will find, in this generous book, a multitude of very useful advice. »

Let's listen to Jeff Sultanof, on the same subject, "JAZZ Composition ... » :

" Bill wanted to make his ideas about composition and arrangement known in a more in-depth form than he had done before. At the time of writing this book, in the year 1968, big band scores were rarely printed and available, which was the case with the music of Duke Ellington and others that Bill would have liked to use to illustrate his point. The only possibility left was, therefore, to choose sequences from one's own repertoire.

The book is a treasure trove of wonderful ideas that are completely new. It should not be skimmed quickly; It's a book that you have to read and reread, over and over again, talk about it and absorb it slowly. Bill was a very profound thinker who believed that the jazz composer was not always respected as he deserved and the purpose of this volume was also to help rectify this fact.

Although he had no regrets about the book, Bill would have liked to write a new one much later, featuring excerpts from the Duke Ellington repertoire, which he had conducted so often with his Chicago Jazz Ensemble and which, being entrusted to the Smithsonian Institution, was becoming available.

If you have a serious approach to jazz music and orchestra, you have to read this book and listen to the music of Bill Russo, who was a major American composer; it's as if he hasn't left us. »

Here is the summary of the four volumes:

CONTENUS :Composing for The Jazz Orchestra

Aphabetical chord symbols – The six types of chords – Elaboration of the six types of chords – Basic harmonic considerations – The ranges of the instruments – Voicing – Close position voicing (I-II-III) – Open position voicing (I-II-III) – Non-chordal tones – Harmonization of non-chordal tones (I-II) – The thickened line – The widened line – Percussion – The double bass – The guitar – The piano – A preliminary view of the ensemble – The basic ensemble method – The four-tone ensemble method – The percussive ensemble method – Brass mutes – The background – The planning of orchestration – Combinations of instruments – Identities – Chords derived from scales – The progression of chords derived from scales – Mixed voicing – Mixed ensembles.

Workbook for Composing for The Jazz Orchestra

Les exercices portent pratiquement sur les thèmes repris dans les chapitres du livre de base ci-dessus.

JAZZ Composition & Orchestration

The nature of music – Harmony – Rhythm – Melody – Counterpoint – Harmonic use of the modes – Chord progression – Open position voicing – Close position voicing – Modification of the thickened line – Voice crossing – Supernumeraries to the Jazz Orchestra – The cello – Pairs of wind instruments in unison or octaves – Mixed orchestration – The division of the orchestra into five real parts – Transformation – The principal jazz form – Appendixes – Index.

Composing Music : A New Approach

Preface – General rules for the exercises – The cell, the row, and some scales – Harmony – Transformation – The small theme and the large theme – More scales and the 12-tone row – Isomelody and isorhythm, combined – Ostinato – Accompaniment procedures – Harmony – Counterpoint – Organum – Imitation : a useful game – Words and music – Picture music – Popular music as a source – Minimalism – Appendix A : Instrument ranges – Appendix B : Musical symbols – Appendix C : Bibliography – Index.

His excellent knowledge of our composer and his work thus allows Jeff Sultanof to enlighten those who were kindly surprised to find, in this large volume, 'only' excerpts from scores by William Bill Russo.

It should also be noted that most of the copies still available, often second-hand, unfortunately no longer contain, except at exorbitant prices, the CD that originally accompanied the book.

As for "Composing Music", we note the opinion of Jim Stockford (Co-Evolution Quarterly):

"Intended for those who have some knowledge of music but not necessarily of composition, this concise introduction begins immediately with a brief exercise in this discipline and then proceeds, step by step, to a series of increasingly complex problems, real challenges, which will gradually develop the student's musical grammar."

For his part, Leon Harrell, well known for his method of quickly learning to read a score: <https://oneminutemusiclesson.com/>, he declared:

"This book is one of the first I recommend to all my composition students. It uses a very interesting methodological approach and is perfectly designed for both the real

beginner and the veteran.

Although he is not totally rigorous on the topics he covers, William Russo does a wonderful job of explaining each technique and offering many exercises that will make your creativity flourish. »

It is not possible to reproduce here all the appreciations, all the praises, which relate to the writings of William Russo, as these opinions are so numerous, whether in the specialized press, on the Internet or among users, even today.

Like his arrangements and compositions, Bill Russo's lyrics on music are highly noteworthy, even interesting, astonished and admired alike, by professionals and music lovers alike. His great concern is, moreover, not only to participate in the development of a major art but also to make it known to as many people as possible; a true "Crusader" of music.

A DAY IN NEOPHONY

In the late 1960s, Bill Russo divided his time between Chicago, Baltimore, New York and Los Angeles. It was also the moment when Stan Kenton was finally able to offer the public the first concert of the Los Angeles Neophonic Orchestra at the Music Center Pavilion of the brand new Center for the Performing Arts in Los Angeles, which was inaugurated for a whole week, from December 6 to 12, 1964, various classical or jazz concerts were on the program, The first of eleven concerts of the L.A.N.O. took place on Monday, January 4, 1965 under the direction of Stan Kenton; the last one was given on April 15, 1968.

For the evening (8:30 p.m.) of Monday, March 7, 1966, seventh concert (3rd of Season 2), Stan gave way to Bill Russo as guest conductor.

Five line-ups have been announced:

"The New World" by Franklyn Marks, "Contemplations" by Viennese Paul Ruhlan and "Tangents" by Dick Grove with, as soloists, the members of Cal Tjader's Quintet. After the Intermission, it's the turn of "Stonehenge" by Richard Peaslee (see his name on this site) and, finally, Bill Russo's "Requiem".

As you can see on the program page below, taken from the "Kenton Kronicles" by Steven D. Harris, a great Stan Kenton specialist, the Los Angeles Neophonic Orchestra is a super big band of 26 professional instrumentalists and includes several big names of Californian jazz of the 60s.



Stan Kenton et The Los Angeles Neophonic Orchestra
(Photo : All Things Kenton / Terry Vosbein)

On all the concerts and depending on the pieces to be performed and which are generally dedicated to them, some prestigious soloists are invited to dialogue with the orchestra: here, Cal Tjader, but also Friedrich Gulda, Dizzy Gillespie, Jimmy Smith, Buddy De Franco, Gerry Mulligan, Shelly Manne, Don Ellis, Michel Legrand, Louie Bellson, etc.

Season 2, Concert 3
7 March 1966
Bill Russo, guest conductor
Cal Tjader Quintet, guest artists

THE LOS ANGELES NEOPHONIC ORCHESTRA

Stan Kenton, Musical Director
THE ONLY ORCHESTRA OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD
A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

3rd Concert March 7, Tomorrow, 8:30 P.M.
Guest Conductor: **WILLIAM RUSSO**

Soloists: **The CAL TJADER Quintet**
(Mr. Russo will also be presented as a composer
in a premiere work for the orchestra,
augmented by 4 cellos and 8 voices.)

Other Premiere Works By:
**DICK GROVE, FRANKLYN MARKS,
RICHARD PEASLEE, PAUL RUHLAN**

Tickets at Wallichs Music City Stores, Mutual Agencies,
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THE PAVILION OF THE MUSIC CENTER

In his "Kenton Kronicles", Steven reports the explanations given by Stan Kenton, to journalist Ralph Schoenstein, about the term "Neophonic":

" With the Neophonic Orchestra, we had some great moments but it was a terrible task. It was created mainly for the purpose of making the music of jazz composers heard. Our feeling was that the orchestra had to have a name of its own because the company was far too big to simply attribute it to Stan Kenton and his orchestra. So

we invented the word "Neophonic" which means "new sound". The scores had never been performed, the repertoire only offered original compositions and, each month, we only had two days to make all the adjustments and, sometimes, when we went on stage, we were not sure what was going to happen. »

Neophonic Program #7

Monday, March 7, 1966 at 8:30 PM

TITLE:

The New World
Contemplations
Tangents – Soloists: Cal Tjader Quintet
 Part 1: *Movin' Out* Part 3: *Time Table*
 Part 2: *Canto* Part 4: *Montuno*

COMPOSER:

Franklyn Marks
 Paul Ruhlman
 Dick Grove

INTERMISSION

Stonehenge
Requiem

Richard Peaslee
 Bill Russo

Guest conductor: Bill Russo

Reeds: Bud Shank, Bob Cooper, Bill Perkins, Don Lodice, John Lowe.

Trombones: Bob Fitzpatrick, Vern Friley, Lou Blackburn, Jim Amlotte (bt), John Bambridge (tuba).

Trumpets: Ray Triscari, Conte Candoli, Ronnie Ossa, Dalton Smith, Gary Barone.

French horns: Vince De Rosa, Arthur Maebe, Henry Sigismonti, Richard Perissi, George Price.

Piano: Ray Sherman. Bass: Bob West. Guitar: Ron Anthony.

Drums: Larry Bunker. Percussion: Emil Richards, Frank Carlson.

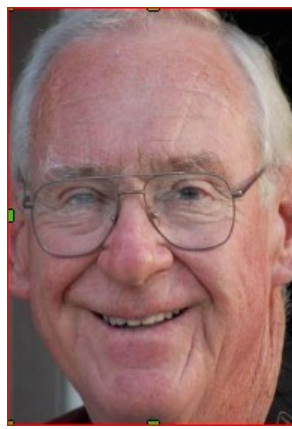
The Jimmy Joyce Voices: Jean Sewell, Ray Johnson.

Cellos (2nd set only): Fred Sekora, Jessie Ehrlich, Victor Sazer, Ray Kelley.

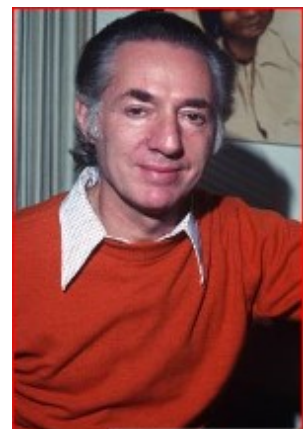
Cal Tjader Quintet: Tjader – vibes, Armando Peraza – Latin percussion,
 Al Zulaica – piano, Monk Montgomery – bass, John Rae – drums.



Steven D. Harris



John A. Tynan



Leonard G. Feather

(Photos : Steven Harris / The Desert Sun / Getty Images)

For his part, John Tynan explains, in *Down Beat* of January 14, 1965:

"The News arrived at the end of November 1964, a little prematurely but still mysterious as usual with Stan Kenton. A press conference was held at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles to announce the organization of the "World's First Permanent and Stable Orchestra Dedicated to Contemporary Music" and the creation of the International Academy of Contemporary Music.

The new orchestra was not to appear in public until 4 January 1965; The staff is not yet complete and the rehearsal program has yet to be established.

The name of the orchestra is a bit magical: The Los Angeles Neophonic Orchestra.

The music he will perform will be "neophonic". Initially, four concerts were announced; they will be directed by Stan Kenton and will take place at the prestigious Music Center for the Performing Arts located in the heart of Los Angeles.

Kenton fervently wants the true nature of the orchestra and its function to be clear:

"The composers who contribute to it or are called upon must be oriented in the same direction as us, musically speaking, but that does not mean that there cannot be different opinions, so, for example, a connection between the Neophonic and the music of Gunther Schuller and John Lewis would not be impossible. However, I believe that our music is not Third Stream because it has nothing to do with classical music; It is entirely based on the jazz tradition. In my opinion, the two schools should remain separate and composers have to choose one or the other. (Maybe Stan forgets City of Glass a little?).

In reality, it is very difficult to offer something new in music and I think that New York composers should be complimented for their effort to bring a completely new music, but I think that they remain too linked to European classical music; I would like them to be more in line with the tradition of American music."

A little over 20 years ago, it was Eager Beaver, Artistry in Rhythm and a whole new approach to swing music; 15 years ago, it was the Innovations and a radically different form of concert jazz; today (1965) it's Neophonic, and the emphasis is still on novelty and experimental. How does Kenton fit in in serious American music now? Does he think he is still in a position to communicate directly with the mass market? He answers firmly in the negative and, it seems, with great regret."

As for Leonard Feather, he recounted, in the *Los Angeles Times* of March 9, 1966, his impressions of the March 7 concert:

"Stan Kenton is not on stage on Monday night when the Los Angeles Neophonic Orchestra performs the third concert of the second of its three seasons (1965 to 1968). This is the first time Kenton has given way to a guest conductor. But his spirit is nevertheless very present because the guest is one of his most distinguished alumni of the 50s, Bill Russo.

The first piece of the concert, "The New World" is by Franklin Marks, also a former Kenyan. It begins with a wide largo that allows the horn section to produce

admirable effects in various atmospheres including a fast waltz, a slow passage in 4/4 with Conte Candoli and a moderato swing animated by several soloists. Despite the relative brevity of this composition, each small movement has its own meaning.

The concert continues with "Contemplations", a composition by Viennese Paul Ruhlan. The prolixity of the writing offers a sharp contrast through the use of a wide variety of rhythms, the introduction of striking sonorities by the saxophone section and, apparently, the attempt to produce a huge canvas but with too little paint. Nevertheless, the piece offers several moments worthy of interest, such as the passage in which Bud Shank, on alto sax, plays brilliantly against the trombones and the tuba. The first part of the concert ends with "Tangents", a four-movement composition by Dick Grove for which Cal Tjader's Quintet is added to the orchestra. One of the most protean authors on the Hollywood scene (1966), Dick Grove always seems to be aware of the vital role that improvisation must play in any successful marriage between symphonic and jazz. Its first movement is of exemplary quality and reminiscent of Gerald Wilson's orchestra. Worth mentioning is the moment when a trio of drummers – Larry Bunker, Armando Peraza and Johnny Rae – creates an exciting polyrhythmic atmosphere, with Cal Tjader's vibraphone being the very dynamic central piece.

For the second part of the evening, four cellos make their entrance and the horn section disappears.

Richard Peaslee's composition, "Stonehenge," emphasizes creating a mood rich in texture. In direct opposition to Ruhlan's work, "Stonehenge" seems to be a very dense painting in a somewhat narrow canvas.

The last piece of the program is by Bill Russo. It is a Requiem, "In Memoriam", which calls on a choir of nine voices, The Jimmy Jones Voices, plus two soloists: contralto Jean Sewell and baritone Ray Johnson.

Writing a great score inspired by the theme of death has always been a rather critical challenge, but Bill Russo manages to put enough vocal and instrumental variety into his Requiem to sustain its interest from beginning to end. He is a brilliant composer-arranger who focuses his attention as much on the melodic aspect as on the rhythmic impulse and the overall form. "In Memoriam" possesses clarity, continuity and cohesion.

One may be surprised, in the first movement, to hear a text by Langston Hughes sung almost in opera mode, but the beauty of Miss Sewell's sound quickly rejects any objection.

As for Ray Johnson, his voice has a quality related to the blues. Between his solo, Bob Fitzpatrick's trombone and the swing atmosphere produced by the orchestra, the jazz summit of the evening is reached. In short, this concert is one of the most stimulating of the Neophonic. »

Regarding Bill Russo, the conductor, everyone agrees that he conducts carefully, precisely, even meticulously; in short, very professional. We must therefore recall here his participation, in 1986, in the particularly vast and brilliant tribute paid to

Stan Kenton by the fantastic and versatile trumpeter Paul Cacia, a pupil of Pete Rugolo and a great admirer of Stan The Man.

Five conductors share the direction of the orchestra: Paul Cacia, Bill Russo, Shorty Rogers, Pete Rugolo and Dick Shearer.

Bill conducted two of his own compositions: the spectacular "23° North & 82° West" (soloists: Carl Fontana, Jack Sheldon, and Lee Konitz), and the romantic "Solitaire" (soloist: Roy Wiegand).



Paul Cacia
(Photo : SecondHandSongs)

This wonderful initiative by Paul Cacia is featured on the CD "Paul Cacia Presents The Alumni Tribute To Stan Kenton" (Empressario 5400) available via the <https://www.paulcacia.com/nav1.htm> website.

Further details about this exceptional event are available on this website, via the home page, in the work dedicated to

Pete Rugolo, chapter "Recognitions" page 51.

Let us return to the neophonic idea; it was born about sixty years ago in the mind of Stan Kenton who continued his constant search to discover a new aspect of American music.

There are many continuators who maintain the movement in the same philosophy, sometimes with slight personal nuances, which is very logical.

Let us mention a few:

The University of North Texas Neophonic Orchestra, The Collegiate Neophonic Orchestra, The Trinity Big Band de Bobby Lamb (Londres), The Kim Richmond

Concert Jazz Orchestra, The Jack Elliott's American Jazz Philharmonic Orchestra, Orbert Davis et The Chicago Jazz Philharmonic (Orbert Davis faisait aussi partie du Chicago Jazz Ensemble de Bill Russo).



Orbert Davis and the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic.
(Photo : Darron Jones)



Joel Kaye and The Neophonic Jazz Orchestra, June 14, 2020, at the Oconomowoc Arts Center.
(Photo : The OAC - Wisconsin)

In 1972, Joel Kaye (1940-2022), former saxophonist (in 1961-63) with Stan Kenton, formed The New York Neophonic Orchestra and, in 1994, he created The Neophonic Jazz Orchestra in Denver (Colorado).

Some recordings of these various ensembles are available from Capitol (for the

LANO), Mama Records, Tantara Productions, 3Sixteen Records-CD Baby, Universal Victor, Vartan Jazz, eBay.

In classical music, the twentieth century is certainly the century of interpretation, an art brought to a level of perfection that has probably never been reached before. This obviously does not exclude the possibility that the twentieth century also saw great composers and important musical pages.

The incredible diversity and extraordinary quality of both the great orchestras and the chamber music ensembles have made it possible for a multitude of conductors, each as brilliant as the next, to express themselves, but whose very marked personalities produce, of the same work, interpretations that are sometimes very different and incomparable.

And we find the same abundance of talent in both instrumentalists and singers, each artist developing, through his own technical or vocal means, a very personal thought, an expression, a sensitivity.

Even today, and more and more, we discover young performers, sometimes even revelations, who come, to the delight of music lovers, from certain regions of the world whose classical cultural richness is hardly suspected. In short, the next generation is assured!

Let us not forget, in this regard, that, unlike other forms of art such as painting or literature, for example, music needs the performer who occupies an indispensable and essential place between the composer and the listener.

This is how jazz, born at the dawn of the twentieth century, responded perfectly to the philosophy of this great movement focused on the development and personalization of the interpretation of music, because if there is an art that brings the value and importance of the performer to the highest level, it is jazz!

Jazz is everywhere: it is international and multiracial, created by genius soloists and wonderful composers and orchestrators who make it an art of great diversity but also increasingly sophisticated.

Jazz has its history, its eras, its schools, its styles; He is American, African, European, Asian, Slavic... but it's still Jazz! Great jazz musicians are French, Belgian, Dutch, German, English, Swedish, Italian, Japanese, ... and also, of course, black or white Americans. Jazz is universal.

With the Neophonic, in California, Stan Kenton once again pioneered a remarkable broadening of jazz thought by welcoming a multitude of talented composers, some of whom were very young and many of whom were languishing in the corridors of film,

television and recording studios, but who were to make the conception of the (very) great jazz orchestra flourish even more.

Some names : Hugo Montenegro, John Williams, Jim Knight, Lalo Schifrin, Allyn Ferguson, Gerald Wilson, Dee Barton, Clare Fischer, Bob Florence, Oliver Nelson, Duane Tatro, Don Ellis, Michel Legrand, Tommy Vig et Friedrich Gulda, éblouissant dans sa « Music for Piano and Band n°2 ».

There are also several "former" Stan collaborators who are only too happy to take this chance to reach the limits of their creativity: Johnny Richards, Pete Rugolo, Marty Paich, Russ Garcia, Shorty Rogers, Ken Hanna, Bill Holman, Franklin Marks and Bill Russo.

In New York, as Stan pointed out above, a movement called Third Stream Music is part of a similar approach; it is conducted by John Lewis (of the M.J.Q.) and Gunther Schuller, an American musician: horn player, composer, conductor, teacher and musicologist.



John Lewis



Gunther Schuller

(Photos : NPR / MacDowell-Andrew Hurlbut)

Other New York musicians who occasionally participated in this new direction of East Coast jazz include: Laurindo Almeida, Jimmy Giuffre (east and west), Jay Jay Johnson, George Russell, Charlie Mingus, Milton Babbitt, Teo Macero, Bob Prince, John La Porta, and Harold Shapero.

In France, André Hodeir also believes that the future of jazz lies with the composer. Objectively, we can consider that he fits perfectly, along with Michel Portal, Michel Legrand, Claude Bolling, Martial Solal and others, in the great lineage of the "Crusaders" of music.

Some music lovers may feel that, sometimes, it is no longer really jazz, but the aim of

the movement, in the East as in the West, is neither to reproduce the music of the schools that preceded it, nor to deny its importance. The ideal pursued by Stan Kenton and John Lewis is to take the evolution of jazz further through the use of more sophisticated architectures that are just as lively and spontaneous.

We have seen how much Bill Russo admires Duke Ellington and know the brilliant tribute that Shorty Rogers paid to Count Basie. As for Bill Holman, he rarely deviates from the path traced by the Count and does not hide his great sympathy for the music of Thelonious Monk, of whom he has written magnificent arrangements, including an admirable "Round Midnight" that he performs at the 2019 LAJI concert (below).

And Shelly Manne sums up the situation well when he declares that he is passionate about this kind of music, more intellectual, more structured, more complex, but also acknowledges that he gladly returns, for pleasure, to a straighter, more directly swing jazz; "*A necessity*," he says.

A magnificent recording from 1956 shows how admirable the understanding is between the musicians of the two Côtes when it comes to interpreting a slightly more traditional repertoire. We speak of "Grand Encounter - 2° East - 3° West" with John Lewis and Percy Heath for the East and Chico Hamilton, Bill Perkins and Jim Hall for the West (Pacific Jazz 1217); to be listened to very carefully.

We remember, of course, the previous attempts, generally isolated, by a few classical composers, some of which have become very popular; These include George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" (1924), Dmitri Shostakovich's two "Suites for Jazz Orchestra" (1934/38), Igor Stravinsky's "Ebony Concerto" (1945), Switzerland's Rolf Liebermann's "Concerto for Jazz Band and Symphony Orchestra" (1954) and other scores by Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Morton Gould, etc.

As usual, Stan Kenton doesn't do things by halves; He sets himself a goal and rushes straight ahead, despite the obstacles that may arise. He wants to give this new musical world a vast and courageous dimension, of which the Los Angeles Neophonic Orchestra is the perfect amplifying instrument.

As mentioned above, other similar sets will be inspired by it despite the significant financial burdens that are inevitably linked to this type of initiative. During the four years of the Neophonic, Stan tried to amortize the costs by performing, in the summer, with his usual orchestra, in tours, theaters and clubs including Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse and Shelly Manne's Manne Hole.

According to Carol Easton, Stan told the L.A. Times in 1966:

" Music brings to human beings what they cannot obtain from any other source except in religious faith."

Terry Vosbein points out that:

" In 2005, at the initiative of the Los Angeles Jazz Institute and to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the first Neophonic concert, musicians and fans gathered in Los Angeles to pay tribute to this vision of Stan Kenton. More than a dozen concerts are presented, covering some of the original pieces but also looking to the future with new compositions in the Neophonic spirit. »



Stan Kenton, perpetual innovator of Jazz
(Photo : Capitol Records)

Rahne Pistor details the festival's program in The Argonaut (Marina Del Rey, California):

" The Neophonic Impressions Festival takes place from Thursday, May 26 to Sunday, May 29, 2005 at the Four Points Sheraton-LAX in Westchester (Los Angeles).

The new Los Angeles Neophonic Orchestra, assembled to commemorate this 40th anniversary, will be conducted by Clare Fischer, Russ Garcia, Bob Florence, Joel Kaye, Gerald Wilson, Tommy Vig and Lennie Niehaus in neophonic pieces by Clare Fischer, Shorty Rogers, Russ Garcia, Johnny Richards and Bob Florence.

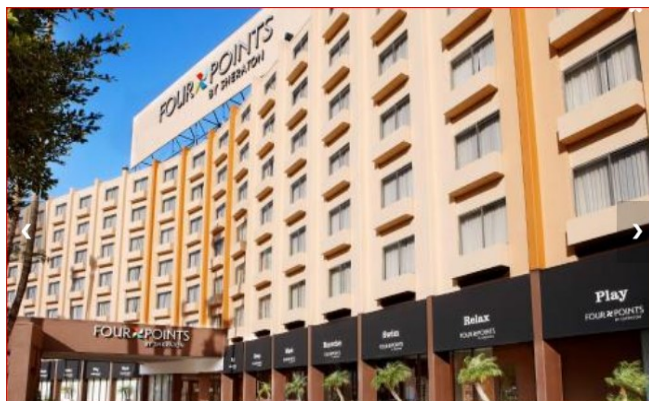
The festival will culminate on Sunday evening with the performance of the Bill Holman Big Band joined by Bud Shank, as soloist.

Bud Shank will give a concert, with his own Big Band, on Saturday at 5 p.m.

Other "Neophonic" orchestras are also on the program: Joel Kaye's The New York Neophonic, The Collegiate Junior Neophonic Orchestra of Southern California, the Kim Richmond Concert Jazz Orchestra, Bob Florence Limited Edition, the Clare Fischer's Jazz Corps, the Buddy Collette Big Band, the Gerald Wilson Orchestra and

Richard Simon's The Jazz America Big Band.

On Friday evening, a special dinner is organized in honor of the composer Russ Garcia (1916-2011) for his 89th birthday.



(Photo : Four Points Sheraton-LAX)



(Photo : Ken Poston)

The Los Angeles Jazz Institute is an organization that preserves archives of both contemporary jazz and the great periods of 20th Century jazz, with a special focus on Southern California jazz. He holds the personal collections of Howard Rumsey, Bud Shank, Gerry Mulligan, Shorty Rogers, Art Pepper, Bob Cooper, June Christy, Pete Rugolo, Johnny Richards, Ken Hanna, Dr. Wesley La Violette, Jimmie Baker, Sleepy Stein, Ray Avery, Warne Marsh, Woody Herman and Phil Moore. »

The Institute (non-profit) is housed at California State University Long Beach. Her website [allows http://lajazzinstitute.org/](http://lajazzinstitute.org/) to discover a multitude of activities and archives which, as Rahne Pistor mentions, concern jazz and its history in all its diversity with, of course, a marked emphasis on Californian jazz but not only.

Ken Poston, Director of the Los Angeles Jazz Institute, said:

" This event was the only one of great size. Others, more modest, took place in 1991 "Back to Balboa" and in 1997 "The Kenton Era" with, however, the performance of some neophonic pieces by Bob Cooper: "Solo for Orchestra", Bill Holman (for Gerry Mulligan), Lennie Niehaus: "Atonal Adventure" and Shorty Rogers: "Invisible Orchard". »

Apart from his passion for the neophonic movement, Ken Poston regularly offers concerts devoted to the music of Big Bands of more classical design.

Thus, from October 5 to 8, 2000 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Redondo Beach, the "Way Out West" festival will see the following: Maynard Ferguson's Big Bop Nouveau, The Gerald Wilson Orchestra, The Bill Holman Orchestra, The Terry Gibbs' Dream Band, The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, The Bob Florence

Limited Edition, The Phil Norman Tentet, The Tom Talbert Orchestra, The Pete Rugolo Orchestra with The Four Freshmen, the music of Johnny Richards conducted by Joel Kaye, The Toshiko Akiyoshi-Lew Tabackin West Coast Reunion Band, The Louie Bellson Orchestra and The Frank Capp Juggernaut, the latter two, gathered on stage, engage in a kind of Battle of the bands.

Certainly, four exciting days!

In 2019, Ken Poston and LAJI are hosting a three-day masterful event called "Best From the West - Ultimate Big Band Experience" which features a series of 19 concerts, plus films and debates, as part of the Westin Los Angeles Airport Hotel.

Y participant, les big bands de Bernie Dresel, Gordon Goodwin, Mike Barone, Steve Huffsteter, Kim Richmond, Roger Neumann, Scott Whitfield, Johnny Mandel (93 ans), Tom Kubis, Phil Norman, Chris Walden, Rob McConnell (Dir. Charlie Ferguson), Bob Florence (Dir. Kim Richmond) et la star du festival : Bill Holman (91 ans).

Let's also mention the combos of Rickey Woodard, Lanny Morgan, Doug Webb and the always amazing trumpeter Carl Saunders.



Bill Holman and his Big Band in concert, May 25, 2019,
at the Westin L.A.: "Best From The West" by LAJI
(Photos : You Tube / Kathryn King Media)

*Bill Holman died
on May 6, 2024,
of natural causes,
at the age of nearly 97.*



It is easy to see that all these current ensembles deserve, directly or indirectly, by the intelligence of the writing of the orchestrations, to join the ranks of the "Crusaders" of music whose family is constantly growing and enhanced.

Mike Kaiser is gradually bringing several of these magnificent concerts to YouTube; they are presented, with humor, under a huge portrait of Shorty Rogers (ditto of the cover of the record "The Swinging Mr. Rogers"), by the very nice and perfect connoisseur Ken Poston himself.

A simple click+Ctrl such as, for example, [Bill Holman Band-YouTube](#) (above) gives access to the concert of the orchestra chosen from the names mentioned above. Thereupon... Happy listening and Happy California Jazz!

WHEN CLASSICAL MEETS BLUES

We know how much William Bill Russo's musical thought is multiple and innovative, willingly combining, for example, elements of jazz or other elements with a page of classical form. As for his interest in the blues, he has already shown it, on several occasions, in his compositions and arrangements.

And it was in 1966 that the young 31-year-old Japanese conductor, Seiji Ozawa, director of the Chicago Orchestra at the Ravinia Summer Festival, after hearing the famous blues ensemble Corky Siegel & Jim Schwall at the legendary Big John's, a bar in Chicago, wished them to participate in one of his symphony concerts.

The following year, still in Ravinia, Seiji Ozawa conducted Bill Russo's "Second Symphony" and shared with him his idea of an association between classical and

blues.

It was the Ravinia Festival that commissioned Bill to write a work for symphony orchestra and blues band; the "Three Pieces for Blues Band and Symphony Orchestra, op. 50" were completed at the beginning of 1968.

Seiji Ozawa recorded them in 1972 at the head of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. The San Francisco Ballet will use the music for its ballet "Mother Blues".

And Bill Russo continues his momentum in the union of Blues and Classical with his "Street Music, op. 65", composed in 1976 and engraved, the same year, by Seiji Ozawa and the San Francisco.



William Russo conversing with Corky Siegel (left) and Seiji Ozawa at Ravinia Park in 1968 before the premiere of the "Three Pieces".

(Photo : Facebook)



(Photo : DGG)



Jim Schwall et Corky Siegel 1966
(Photo : Rick Sullo)

These two recordings (originally LP) are collected on a Deutsche Gramophone 463 665-2 GOR CD along with George Gershwin's "An American in Paris".

However, it is surprising that Bill Russo's two pieces are not offered in the chronological order of their composition; In order to rectify this situation, the hearing should therefore begin at slot 5.

The CD begins with "Street Music" (A Blues Concerto) in four movements with, as soloist, Corky Siegel (1943) on harmonica and piano.

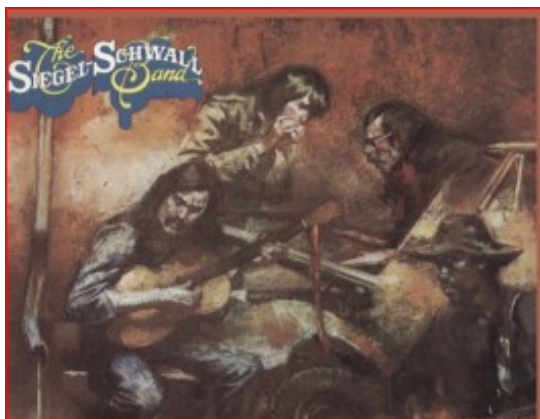
From the very first notes, we are dazzled by the particularly dynamic side of the recording technique.

The atmosphere is serious, it's serious. The orchestration is ample, diversified, à la Bill Russo, and Seiji Ozawa brings it power and relief. For his part, Corky Siegel, who has a great freedom of action, integrates perfectly into the score by drawing very impressive sound effects from his harmonica: glissandos, vibratos and even Wawa. His style is quite different from that of Toots Thielemans, for example.

For the second movement, it is the piano that sets the tempo, a kind of well-marked Rhythm and blues; discreet intervention of the brass, then return of the piano in dialogue with the strings to finish nicely in the orchestra.

In the third part, Corky Siegel is again at the piano and begins a very slow blues in which he leads the strings of the San Francisco. After a sort of cadenza, he resumes his harmonica, discreetly supported by the ensemble, then returns to the piano to close.

It is Corky who begins, on the harmonica, the last movement with a rapid solo followed by several powerful punctuations from the orchestra which continues, in harmonious consultation with the soloist, to end the movement with a grand finale to the glory of the Blues.



(Artwork : Harvey Dinnerstein / Photo : Colin Johnson)

Let's now move on to opus 50, "Three Pieces", for which Bill fully fulfills Seiji

Ozawa's wish by using the entire Siegel-Schwall Band, namely:

Corky Siegel, harmonica and electric piano; Jim Schwall, guitar; Al Radford, bass and Shelly Plotkin, drums.

The first piece begins with a solemn entrance of the orchestra which envelops the discreet arrival of the harmonica. Symphonic and blues band then launch into a kind of shuffle with a jerky rhythm supporting a great guitar solo in several parts and it is the orchestra that finishes strongly.

In the second piece, Bill first offers a very beautiful passage of the strings in pizzicato; The brass instruments that follow are grandiose. Guitar solo, powerful string momentum and brief harmonica intervention. Back to the pizzicato that ends the piece in discretion.

The last page of this trilogy engages in a series of riffs punctuated by attacks from the percussions of the orchestra. Then, it's a plaintive solo on the harmonica with brass interventions. Majestic finish of the whole set.

In his note, David Noble explains:

"The finale, built on a traditional bass line, establishes a sharp contrast between the band's playing and that of the orchestra. Perhaps this is what Bill Russo had in mind when he said that the work was orchestrated with deliberate boldness, because it had to "ring" in the open-air pavilion of Ravinia, and on the day of its premiere, Sunday, July 7, 1968, it "sounded" very well, in Ravinia.

According to Bill, "It's just eighty-nine blues choruses and it's the hardest thing I've ever done."

A year later, when the New York Philharmonic performed the work, the first rehearsal was interrupted, after each movement, by the applause of the orchestra's musicians, many of whom also worked, in the studio, as jazz musicians. The audience reacts in the same way on the day of the concert. »

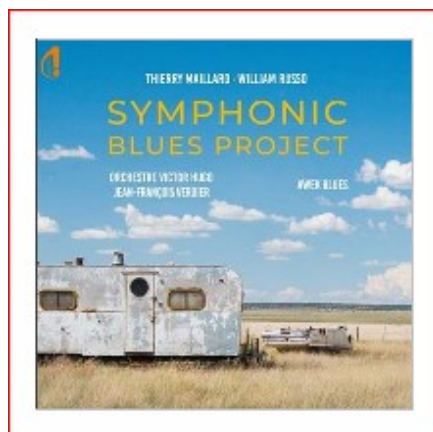
The CD ends with a very beautiful, colorful version of "An American in Paris", George Gershwin's famous score.

Moreover, the chance of record productions sometimes does things well! Thus, in 2023, the French label Indesenscalliope released a CD (IC005), "Symphonic Blues Project" which contains, among others, Bill Russo's "Three Pieces for Blues Band and Symphony Orchestra, op.50".

This magnificent surprise is due to Jean-François Verdier, artistic director of the Victor Hugo Orchestra of the Bourgogne Franche-Comté region in Besançon

(birthplace of the great writer).

Very nice site of the orchestra: <https://www.orchestrevictorhugo.fr/>



(Photo : Indesenscalliope)

Jean-François Verdier is considered one of the most interesting personalities on the current music scene. Conductor, soloist, composer and teacher, he is one of the best European clarinetists. A laureate of international competitions in several disciplines, he received the Bruno Walter Prize at the Lugano International Conducting Competition in 2001. He has played under the direction of the greatest conductors and collaborates with many world-renowned artists, opera singers and instrumentalists.

He explains his motivations as follows:

"To rediscover the adventurous music of William Russo, it has, for me, a double meaning: it's a tribute to Seiji Ozawa and his open-mindedness when he commissioned the "Pieces" from Bill; It is also to progress in a movement of cross-fertilization and recognition of music among themselves, a movement that is promising for the future. We had to continue on the road...

I asked Thierry Maillard, jazzman, connoisseur of Zappa, Bartok and classical orchestras, to compose in the same spirit, sharing the adventure with AWEK, a group steeped in the famous Chicago blues and whose records have always pleased me very much. On the road again! »

After the music of Bill Russo, we can therefore appreciate, on this CD, first the piece "Orchestra" (2021) followed by "Symphonia Blues for blues band and orchestra" (2021) in four parts, two scores by Thierry Maillard.

Thierry Maillard (1966) is presented as a pianist, composer and arranger without limits or borders, who is not afraid of radical changes of musical direction and thus

navigates between Big Band, symphony orchestra, classical ensemble, trio, quartet or solo piano. Each year, his agenda is practically full and is divided between concerts, tours, festivals and recordings; To date, he already has, as a leader, about twenty very diverse albums.

On its magnificent website: <https://www.thierrymaillard.com/> , he can be heard and seen (videos) in different ensembles and discover his "First Concerto for Cello and Symphony Orchestra".

L'Orchestre Victor Hugo



Thierry Maillard

Jean-François Verdier

(Photos : Orchestre Victor Hugo)

In his commentary in the CD booklet, Thierry Maillard tells us:

"The composition of the first piece "Orchestra", whose nomenclature is quite singular since it does not include woodwinds, was, for me, a great pleasure! The inspiration was there, this piece is a tribute to the nature that surrounds us.

"Symphonia Blues" is a suite of four pieces, again for orchestra (also without woodwinds) and blues band. These pieces are an echo of William Russo's mythical but little-known work "Three Pieces for Blues Band and Symphony Orchestra", probably the first attempt to make blues and classical coexist. »

The Toulouse ensemble AWEK, from the Occitan "A Huec" (at full speed), is composed here of Bernard Sellam, vocals and guitar; Joël Ferron, bass; Olivier Trebel, drums and Stéphane Bertolino, harmonica (Award for best blues harmonica player in 2011).

Bernard Sellam makes a secret:

"The day before our first concert with the Victor Hugo Orchestra, we received a message from Corkie Siegel giving us some essential recommendations, including one that Jean-François Verdier had given us several times, namely not to play too loudly."

At the end of 2022, Fabrice Jousot succeeded Bernard Sellam.

AWEK



B.Sellam/J.Ferron/O.Trebel/S.Bertolino 2015
(Photo: DR)



F. Jousot 2023
(Photo: La Dépêche)

Created in 1995, Awek was voted best French blues band in 2004/2005 and established itself as one of the first European bands. He participates in most of the major blues festivals in France, Belgium, Europe, Morocco, India, Canada, the USA, most often, as the opening act for legendary artists in the blues world but also as a headliner.

Currently, Awek has no less than a dozen albums to his credit. All the details are published, with a lot of humor,

On the website (discography): <https://www.awekblues.com/index.php/fr/>

From the beginning of the hearing of the "Three Pieces", we can see, with pleasure, that it is indeed a real tribute to William Bill Russo paid by passionate and particularly competent musicians who perfectly assume this mix of musical genres: the ensembles are magnificent, the forte are powerful, the rhythmic is well present, the soloists are inspired and in excellent harmony with the orchestra.

Of particular note is the beautiful pizzicato of the second movement and the solemn atmosphere produced by the brass.

In short, and as Bill has always claimed the importance of it, the orchestration is very assertive and the finale effectively balances between the orchestra and the harmonica. The Blues is here!

As its name suggests, "Orchestra" is a kind of concerto for large-scale orchestra that makes abundant use of the various sections, including brass, strings and percussion, in the form of dialogues. There is power and discretion, contrasts and rhythm (not jazz). The final Crescendo is grandiose, no doubt in the image of the Nature that inspired Thierry Maillard.

As for "Symphonia Blues", we find a little, from the beginning, the Swing era with the predominance of brass instruments which sometimes even intervene as soloists (trumpet) with lyrical accents. From the second movement, it is the guitar that is part of a more modern blues, joined by the harmonica in the third part on a change of tempo. The two soloists meet again in the finale for a faster blues.

Thierry Maillard concludes by saying, with great satisfaction:

"This rare and unusual initiative to present a program at the crossroads between symphonic music and blues is a wonderful idea to offer music as it is rarely heard, with virtuosity and openmindedness."

Thank you and congratulations to Jean-François Verdier for the tribute to William Russo, but also for having decided to address Thierry Maillard in order to " *Continue the road* "!

MUSIC FOR A SHRINK

The eminent German-American psychoanalyst Erik Homburger Erikson (Frankfurt, Germany 15 June 1902 - Harwich, Massachusetts/USA 12 May 1994) is also a psychologist of Human Development and a particularly prolific author. Inspired by his writings, the Erikson Institute was established in Chicago in 1966 and was dedicated to the training of early childhood teachers.



Erik Homburger Erikson
(Photo : Jon Erikson Science Source)

ERIKSON INSTITUTE (Chicago)
 Construire un avenir meilleur pour tous les enfants.
 Notre mission est d'éduquer, d'inspirer et de promouvoir
 un leadership qui aide les enfants et leurs familles
 à atteindre leur plein potentiel.
<https://www.erikson.edu/about/history/erik-erikson/>

Influenced, among others, by Sigmund and Anna Freud, he proposed, in 1963, a very personal theory of psychosocial development based on eight stages.

Let's briefly follow the analysis that Paulina Herrera wrote in March 2024 for NURAU, a Canadian management consulting firm:

"According to the German-American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, personality develops over a lifetime through eight stages. At each period of life, the person goes through an issue or a crisis that he or she must resolve in order to allow the evolution and change of his or her personality. Once the crisis has been successfully resolved, a healthy personality has acquired the basic skills.

The stages of personality development, according to Erikson, are:

1. Trust vs. distrust - 0 to 18 months.

This stage is characterized by the child's total dependence, mainly on the mother.

2. Autonomy vs shame and doubt - from 18 months to 3 years.

At this stage, the child develops his motor skills and a certain autonomy.

3. Initiative vs. guilt - from 3 to 6 years.

Now, the child is motivated to develop his own projects, his own games and invites others to participate, a kind of leadership.

4. Work vs. Inferiority - 6 to 12 years old.

This age group is characterized by the acquisition of knowledge and skills (for example, logical reasoning) that will be required in adulthood. The child becomes very competitive and learns to have confidence in himself and his abilities.

5. Identity vs. Role Confusion - 12 to 20 years old.

A period characterized by a questioning of adolescents' skills, beliefs and values in order to forge their own identity.

6. Privacy vs. Insulation - 20 to 45 years.

At this stage, it is essential to be able to compromise on a personal, romantic and professional level and in one's relationships with others.

7. Generativity vs. stagnation - from 45 to 65 years old.

Here, the adult feels the need to bequeath something valuable to his family and to society: to work more, to volunteer...

8. Integrity vs. despair – from age 65 to the end of life.

During this stage, the adult takes stock of his or her life. If he comes to the conclusion that he has lived fully and done useful work, he will see himself as an accomplished and upright being towards himself."

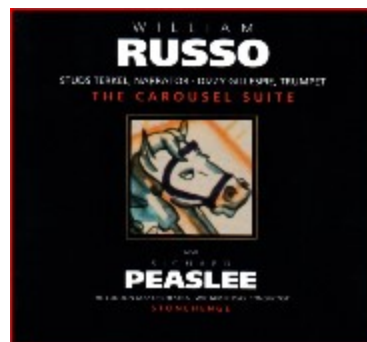
In 1975, the famous American director John Hubley (1914-1977) and his wife (the second) Faith Hubley (1920-2001) formed the project to produce an animated film, his specialty, based on the theory of Erik Erikson.

And this was the birth, in 1976, of "Everybody Rides the Carousel (of life)", in a prologue and eight parts, with a total duration of 72 minutes.

The performers (spoken voices) are about thirty in number, including Meryl Streep and Dee Dee Bridgewater. The music was written and conducted by William Russo with the participation of Larry Adler (harmonica), Benny Carter (alto sax) and Dizzy Gillespie (trumpet).

Some excerpts from the film are offered by "The Meryl Streep Forum" - YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5bXws0hAu4>.

Seven years after the film's release, Bill reworked his score and made "The Carousel Suite, Op. 63" (about 32 minutes) for a small ensemble of musicians, mostly "classical," but which, as Bill puts it, "*sounds less like a chamber orchestra than like a small theater orchestra with jazz accents*," a musical genre he liked to play at the time.



(Photo : GM Recordings)

On July 1, 1983, GM Recordings recorded the "Suite" at Olympic Sound Studios in London; the production was signed William Russo and Carol Loverde, his wife (at the time). A CD was released (GM 3014 CD) but it is rare today.

It also contains Richard Peaslee's magnificent Suite "Stonehenge" recorded in 1964 by Bill Russo at the head of the London Jazz Orchestra and which we talk about on page 26 of the dossier devoted to this composer, a student of Bill Russo.



John et Faith Hubley



Dizzy Gillespie



Studs Terkel

(Photos : IMDbPro / James Kriegsmann / Raeburn Flerlage)

For his "Carousel Suite", Bill brings together an ensemble of fourteen musicians, a narrator: Studs Terkel and a soloist: Dizzy Gillespie.

The orchestra includes: David Theodore (oboe and English horn), Anton Weinberg (clarinet), John Harle (soprano and baritone saxophones), Jeffrey Bryant (horn), Ray Simmons (trumpet), John Iveson (trombone), Stephen Saunders (bass trombone), Harold Fisher and Douglas Perry (percussion), Paul Hart (piano and clavinet), Galina Solodchin (violin), John Underwood (viola), Stephen Orton (cello) and Chris Laurence (double bass).

The recording is broken down into a "Prologue", followed by the eight "Stages of Development" according to Erik Erikson and then an "Epilogue".

The music is generally very fine, discreet and varied; at times it suggests a somewhat medieval atmosphere, at others echoes of Viennese music, which is very much in line with Alain Tercinet's statement about Bill's *"encyclopaedic knowledge of music"*.

This with, as always with Bill Russo, this preoccupation with creating original and unexpected sounds of his own, which made Lennie Niehaus (interviewed by Gordon Jack) say:

"At Stan Kenton, Bill Russo experimented with the different sounds that can be obtained from a jazz band, using various combinations of instruments. For example, he would achieve what he called the "Gazelle" sound by pairing the conducting alto sax with a trombone and two tenor saxes, creating a very graceful sound, just like a gazelle. I have always liked his arrangement of "Fascinating Rhythm" as well as the more serious scores he wrote for Stan. »

In Step 6 (track 11) "Intimacy vs Isolation" Bill brings in his friend Dizzy surrounded by a light but real jazz context that Dizzy garnishes with magnificent improvisations,

very subtle, of which he has the genius.

As for the truculent Louis "Studs" Terkel (1912-2008), he expounds, with strong conviction, bonhomie and in a very personal vocal articulation, Erikson's eight principles.

A law graduate from the University of Chicago but preferring journalism, often anti-establishment, Studs became very popular in the United States with his radio show "The Studs Terkel Program" broadcast from 1952 to 1997 by WFMT Chicago. From the many radio interviews, he published a number of collections, both written and oral, which are like a kind of history of the United States in the twentieth century. He has received several awards for his activities and publications, including "The National Humanities Medal" and "The National Medal of Arts" which were awarded to him in 1997 at the White House.

Studs applies his art of radio communication in his very original way of participating in the recording of the "Carousel Suite" thus, he begins his presentation with a very sympathetic, even friendly, start-up:

« Now let's see. Is everyone here ? Is everybody ready ? How do you do, friends ? And here we have " The Carousel of Life ". Eight rides for eight ages. Everyone is invited. An age for every rider on our cycle of life... » et le ton est donné !
(Thanks to Olivia for the transcription).

As for the musical atmosphere, if it really invites reflection, in accordance with the text inspired by Erikson, it is however neither sad nor morose, on the contrary, we find serenity and even surges of happiness which allows us to suppose that, for Bill Russo, everything ends well!

BIRTH AND END OF THE CHICAGO JAZZ ENSEMBLE

It was in 1965 that Bill returned to Chicago, a kind of homecoming. He was called by Mirron "Mike" Alexandroff, president of Columbia College, who offered him the position of the first full-time member of the college's faculty for ten years.

As soon as he arrived at Columbia College in Chicago, William Russo founded Columbia's Music Department, became director of the Center for New Music and decided, as usual where he was passing through, and for the third time in his career, to create a new jazz orchestra as he conceived it, the Chicago Jazz Ensemble.

He devoted himself body and soul to it, creating a repertoire of new compositions but

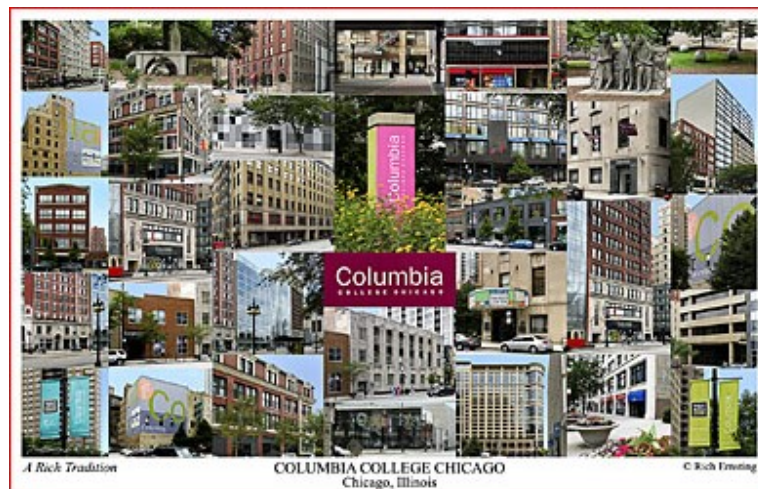
which also included previously unpublished arrangements, either of many traditional pieces, notably by Duke Ellington, or scores that Bill had written for Stan Kenton's orchestra.

The college is well-known for being a progressive educational institution, which is a perfect fit for Bill Russo's ideas about music and teaching.

Under his leadership, the Music Department program was one of the first at the college level to combine courses in classical music, jazz and rock, but also studies literature, visual arts, dance, theatre (including musical) and cinema.

In his own words:

"The Music Department at Columbia College aims to bridge the gap between classical and popular music by selecting and developing the best in each genre: the seriousness and morality of classical music and the audience impact of popular music."



The many sites of Columbia College Chicago
(Photo : Rich Traditions)

In addition to his college activities, Bill is Director of Orchestral Studies at the Scuola Europea d'Orchestra Jazz in Palermo (Italy), Visiting Professor at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, and Composer-in-Residence for the City and County of San Francisco. Among his many students, several became famous and received awards: John Barry, Fred Karlin, Richard Peaslee, Mark Hollmann, etc.

Under the direction of Bill Russo, the Chicago Jazz Ensemble earned an international reputation as a groundbreaking orchestra. Thus, for example, it is the first ensemble

to create a new score of Duke Ellington, an event that the latter always reserved for his own orchestra. And this is the case for the premiere, in collaboration with the Duke who conducts the performance, of his "First Concert of Sacred Music".

In June 1966, Bill Russo offered a musically diverse concert at the Playboy Theater in Chicago: "Sounds for a Swinging Sunday".

In addition to the Chicago Jazz Ensemble (23 musicians including 4 cellos) that Bill directs and which had participated, a few months earlier, in the American premiere of his "English Concerto" (with Steven Stryk), we can hear a rock band: The New Colony Six and the vocal sextet of trumpeter Warren Kime. Also participating is the McLaurin Dancers troupe.



William Russo
(Photo : Columbia College Chicago)

The program includes compositions by : Bill Russo « Sweets », « Club Gigi », « The Lion House », « Jazz in Motion » and « In Memoriam » ; Richard Peaslee « Black Pedro » ; Tony Russell « 22-50 Paris East » ; Jerry Mulvihill « Rags Old Iron » ; Edward Baker « Dr. Bop » ; J.S. Bach « Trio » ; Robert Ragland « Blues for My Father » ; Gerry Mulligan « Limelite » and Stan Kenton « Statues ».

In his commentary (Down Beat), Pete Welding especially highlights the very attentive direction of Bill Russo as well as the magnificent performance of the big band whose instrumentalists are among the best in Chicago, namely :

Art Lauer, Chuck Kainz, Sandy Mosse, Bob Ericson and Ron Kolber, saxes; Gary Slavo, Warren Kime, Oscar Brashear, Bobby Lewis, Marty Marshack and Lenny Morrison, trumpets/flugelhorns; Cy Touff, bass trumpet; John Avant, Harry Lepp, Bill Dinwiddie, paper clips; Fred Luscombe, bass trombone; Roberta Guastafeste,

Marilyn Becchetti, Roberta Jacobs and Bob Lah, cellos; Robert Roberts, guitar; Jim Schipper, bass and Bob Cousins, percussion.

Everyone knows that keeping a big band alive poses many problems, whether financial, human or organizational. But when, in addition, the repertoire is avant-garde, you have to face all kinds of criticism.

And this is the case for the Chicago Jazz Ensemble.

A great connoisseur of Bill Russo's artistic activities, musicologist Howard Reich explains, in the Chicago Tribune of September 1, 2002, what happened :



Howard Reich of Chicago
(Photo : Howard Reich)

"From the moment Bill Russo created the orchestra in 1965, he had to deal with criticism from those who claimed that it was not necessary to have a jazz ensemble that gave equal importance to the scores of the past and the present, to music that was more composed than improvised. The band members also disagreed on the nature and purpose of the Chicago Jazz Ensemble, while racial tensions among the staff (at the height of the American civil rights battles) did not make things any easier. Still, Russo and his friends persevered for three years, offering historic performances of landmark jazz works, including Duke Ellington's "Sacred Concert."

In 1968, however, Russo disbanded the ensemble and moved on to other projects, but never completely abandoned the idea.

Periodically, he conducted informal performances of the group before officially relaunching it in the early 1990s.

By this time, it is evident that American culture had finally caught up with Russo, the arrival of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in New York City and the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra in Washington, D.C., among others, suggests that

listeners are finally ready to embrace the concept of a large ensemble performing great American jazz scores in the same way that symphony orchestras approach European classical masterpieces.

Yet, despite the critical praise that the Russo-revived CJE received from Chicago to Manhattan and Montreal, the journey was arduous. Yes, the CJE now ranks second only to the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in the length of its season and the extent of its travels, but Russo's band still operates on few means (its annual budget is about six figures, compared to, say, Jazz at Lincoln Center, which runs into the millions).

Moreover, Russo knows that he will not lead the CJE forever and that if he wants to give a future to the whole, he must do it now.

"I think I have three, four years left to lead this group, maybe a little bit more," says Russo, who refused to leave the podium while undergoing chemotherapy treatment for cancer of one of the salivary glands. "So, in the meantime, we need to make the whole thing bigger and stronger. We have to make sure that it can fly on its own for a long time."

Still, one must marvel at how much Russo and his resurgent ensemble have already accomplished, while the composer still held a full-time position as chairman of the music department at Columbia College in Chicago (a position from which he recently retired). In the last few years alone, the CJE has given the world premiere of the reconstructed (because lost) score of "Sketches of Spain" by Miles Davis and Gil Evans (with jazz trumpeter Orbert Davis), performed a rare version of Duke Ellington's extensive suite "Black, Brown and Beige"; and released a definitive recording of Stan Kenton's music, aptly titled "Kenton à la Russo."

When Bill Russo fell ill, it was questioned whether the band had then reached the end of their glorious and tumultuous journey.

True to form, Russo has simply redoubled his energy, recently making plans for an ambitious next season, including the world premiere of a new work he's currently completing and a return to Gil Evans-Miles Davis' great "Sketches of Spain."

Nevertheless, the CJE is clearly at a turning point. More specifically, it must build an administrative and financial infrastructure that matches its excellent artistic product. And that means that if Chicago's foundations and philanthropists ever want to step forward to secure the future of the CJE, now is the time.

Setting priorities: "I'm optimistic," says Russo, who has never been anything else.

"We intend to commission works from composers like [Bob] Brookmeyer, [Henry]

Threadgill, Gunther [Schuller] and Wynton [Marsalis]. We want to ask a choreographer to create a piece that we will perform with dancers and we also want to get a salary for the band members.

And now that I don't have to run a music department, I can focus on everything that needs to be done."

Have mercy on anyone who tries to get in his way! »

(Recall that this article was written in 2002).

Three years after taking up his position at Columbia College, Bill dissolved the orchestra and created the Free Theater, an avant-garde company whose experimental concept would mark the entire Chicago theater scene (Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, etc.) and spark initiatives as far away as Baltimore and San Francisco.

The themes used are usually very political, very free and are aimed at civil rights, the war in Vietnam and other current topics, The shows are always free, which makes them accessible to everyone. A collection is carried out at the exit.

In the meantime, Bill continued to compose: "Suite for Violin and String Orchestra" (Op. 46), "America 1966" (Op. 48) for harmony, as well as two operas: "Land of Milk and Honey" and "Antigone".

In early 1968, he published a cantata, "The Civil War" (Op. 52), for which he used jazz, classical and rock elements, as well as two singers, a choir and numerous lighting effects. The argument is based on four poems by the American writer and historian, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, Paul Horgan (1903-1995).

The cantata was premiered, after a single rehearsal, on 7 April 68 in San Antonio, three days after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination on 4 April in Memphis; it is dedicated to his memory.

In June 1968, Bill was ready to leave for London but the Company was hired, at the Second City Theater in Chicago, founder Paul Sills, for two performances per night of "The Civil War". The troupe is paid for by a grant from the non-profit Music Industries Recording Trust Funds.

The contract was scheduled for two weeks, but Bill decided to extend it for another week, even though the grant had ended. The artists work for free and the show continues for 70 weeks at the rate of two shows per week.

Encouraged by the success of his cantata, Bill chose to stay in Chicago. He wrote the music for Paul Sills' new show, entitled "The Sex Life of the Gods" inspired by Ovid's "Metamorphoses".

Two more shows by Bill Russo: "Liberation" and "City in a Swamp", this time for Chicago's The Body Politic Theatre (now The Greenhouse Theater Center).

Kate Dumbleton, Executive Director of the Chicago Jazz Ensemble, published the rest of the orchestra's activities in the Chicago Community Trust's newsletter in 2007 :

" In 2002, the CJE and its guest, Buddy De Franco, re-enacted Benny Goodman's legendary 1938 concert at Carnegie Hall; the hall of the Teatro Manzoni in Milan was full.

In 1999, with the support of a grant from the McConnick Tribune Foundation, the CJE inaugurated its first subscription-based programming, the American Heritage Jazz Series, and established a schedule of regular annual performances, drawing its core repertoire from the rich and unique heritage of American jazz, including well-known and rarely performed works by masters such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Stan Kenton, Bix Beiderbecke, Jelly Roll Morton, Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Woody Herman, Miles Davis, Gil Evans, and William Russo.

The American Heritage Jazz Series featured a very rare performance of Duke Ellington's "Black, Brown and Beige" suite as well as collaborations with renowned artists such as Lennie Niehaus, Bill Dobbins, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Clark Terry, Joe Lovano, Johnny Frigo, Franz Jackson, Corky Siegel, and Orbert Davis. The CJE has also showcased works by living composers and in 2003/04 it was the world premiere of Slide Hampton's "Africa Suite".

After the death of William Russo in 2003, the CJE entered a new phase in its history and, in September 2004, appointed virtuoso trumpeter, composer and conductor Jon Faddis as its new artistic director until 2010. Under his leadership, the CJE has been committed to promoting new works and has commissioned and presented the world premieres of numerous compositions and new arrangements by various musicians including Slide Hampton, Bill Holman, Frank Foster, Michael Philip Mossman, Jim Gailloro, T.S. Galloway, Tom Garling, Bob Ojeda, Thomas Gunther and Edward Wilkerson.

The CJE has also performed by invitation at notable events such as the 2005 Chicago Jazz Festival, Made in Chicago: A Jazz Celebration at Millennium Park; in 2006: Jazz at Symphony Center Series and then the Ravinia Festival.

In 2007, the CJE presented its eighth American Heritage Jazz Series at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance. The season included, among other things, a special jazz ballet commission presented in collaboration with the Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, a performance with singer Dee Dee Bridgewater and another with trumpeter

Clark Terry. In addition to the Harris Theater series, the CJE hosted a series at the Black Orchid Supper Club with saxophonist Jimmy Heath, a Women in Jazz program, and an evening of Big Band Jazz.

The CJE's mission statement is to connect people around the world to the passion, creativity, joy and rhythms of Big Band Jazz through awareness, education and performance."
(This is 2007).

The Chicago Jazz Ensemble at the Harris Theatre in Chicago, March 5, 2010.



Dana Hall and Jon Faddis

Kate Dumbleton

(Photos : James Walker Jr/ SAIC)

Howard Reich returned, on May 9, 2012, again in the Chicago Tribune, with the following clarifications:

« Another sign of the impending demise of the Chicago Jazz Ensemble at Columbia College Chicago is that artistic director and drummer Dana Hall and executive

director Kate Dumbleton are resigning.

A "Blueprint: Prioritization" report produced by Columbia and released in March recommended the closure of the complex as the school grapples with declining enrollment and heavy budget pressures.

By June, a final decision on the fate of the CJE is expected from Columbia's board of trustees and the school's president, Warrick Carter, who announced yesterday that he will retire in August 2013.

"I think there's been some indecision about the future of the whole thing, and I think that indecision just creates an environment where it's hard to plan and develop and organize for the future," Dana Hall said in an interview Wednesday.

"Believe me, our staff and I have (programming) ideas for years. There is no way that the organization can plan sustainably, one year at a time, without knowing the fate of the whole," he added.

Hall had previously announced that he was leaving his current position at the University of Illinois School of Music at Urbana-Champaign for a position at DePaul University's School of Music in Chicago.

"I'm excited to move to Chicago and take on my role at DePaul," he said. "I believe there are many opportunities to continue to develop and expand the work I have done with the Chicago Jazz Ensemble, but to do so in a different form, and I hope those opportunities will come to fruition soon."

Dumbleton said resigning as executive director of the CJE "was a very, very difficult decision to make. But the circumstances are such that I am not really able to continue in this position. ... The CJE was proposed for elimination, and there is this continuing uncertainty about that. At some point, as a mid-career professional, you have to figure out where you're going to work and under what circumstances."

In July, Dumbleton will become director of the 2012 Hyde Park Jazz Festival on a six-month contract. "The festival has a lot of possibilities in the future. Not to expand, but to think about ways to reach new audiences," possibly by presenting concerts beyond the September event.

And in August, Dumbleton will join the School of the Art Institute of Chicago as a full-time visiting professor. She will "design and run an arts management studio for graduate students," she said.

Dumbleton, a widely admired arts professional, added that she is committed to culture in Chicago:

"I like the diversity of the music scene here. ... It's really rich and stimulating." »

And so ended a great adventure, the work of a Giant, a magnificent experience that profoundly marked the musical life of Chicago and participated in the continuous evolution of jazz.

Fortunately, we can still appreciate, thanks to two CDs, the music conceived and conducted by William Bill Russo at the head of the Chicago Jazz Ensemble.

The first, produced in 1997 by Chase Music Group (CMD 8052), is simply entitled "The Chicago Jazz Ensemble conducted by William Russo".

The orchestra was imposing and included: Paul Mertens, Tyrone Tatum, Pat Mallinger, Eddie Johnson and Billy Rogers on saxes; Orbert Davis (discussed below, in Neophony), Mark Olen, Scott Hall, Chuck Parrish and Terry Connell, trumpets; Audrey Morrison, Edwin Williams, Tracy Kirk, Loren Binford and Fritz Hocking, trombones; Brandon McCune, piano; James Cammack, double bass; Frank Donaldson and Dana Hall, drums; Charley Harrison, guitar; Bobby Everson, timpani; Carol Loverde (Bill's 3rd wife), Cynthia Felker and Bobbi Wilsyn on vocals and, as guests, clarinetist Larry Combs.

To stay in the family, let's note that the photos in the booklet are by Condée Nast Russo, Bill's daughter.

The liner notes for the libretto are due to the musicologist David William Noble (1940 - 2007), who was very well known in Chicago and who frequently collaborated with Bill Russo as part of the Chicago Jazz Ensemble.

As for the music, it largely reflects the sympathies that Bill feels towards his colleagues recognized as masters in the world of jazz.

Let's follow David Noble in his commentary:

"The CD begins with the "Chicago Suite No. 1" that William Russo composed in 1995.

It consists of five parts: " The Blue Note ", in memory of a famous Chicago club where Bill played while he was at Stan Kenton's house, and later with his own quintet; " Henri "Red" Allen, to honor, with a very beautiful theme, the famous trumpeter (1908 - 1967) whom Bill would listen to in 1946 at the Garrick Stage Bar, in the Loop, a historic district of Chicago; Chinatown " maintains Bill's nostalgia for this very lively place in his hometown; " "Studs" is a tribute to the great American radio and oral history journalist Louis " Studs " Terkel and, finally, " The Pershing ", a famous Chicago club where Bill could admire the orchestras of Lionel Hampton and Dizzy Gillespie. It was also there that Hamp and his musicians played several jazz scores written by Bill, a precocious teen-ager.

Then it's "The Horn Blower", again by William Russo, performed by Orbert Davis, the work's dedicatee. "Artistry in Percussion" is by Pete Rugolo who also arranged Joe Greene's "Soothe Me".

"Goin' to Chicago Blues" is attributed to Count Basie and Jimmy Rushing.

It was followed by five tracks by Duke Ellington (and Billy Strayhorn for three of them): "Second Line" (from the New Orleans Suite), "Mauve (The Blues)" (from Black, Brown & Beige), "It Don't Mean a Thing", "Transblucency" and "Ready Go" (from Toot Suite). »

The Chicago Jazz Ensemble demonstrates remarkable efficiency, precision and professionalism, not only in the execution of the scores written by Bill Russo, which are never simple, but also in the reproduction of the musical atmospheres of other authors, notably Duke Ellington.

Among the soloists, we cannot ignore the trumpeter Orbert Davis, whose imagination and intelligence inspire improvisations that are sometimes very generous, sometimes perfectly discreet. For the high register of the instrument, Bill uses Mark Olen and Chuck Parrish, much like he liked to do with Maynard Ferguson; in his "Symphony No. 2 - Titans", for example.

In the saxophone section, the two tenors Pat Mallinger and Eddie Johnson brilliantly remind us of the marathon solos of which Paul Gonsalves had the secret.

Larry Combs is brilliant, by technique and sonority, in "Second Line".

James Cammack's bass is very present; On the other hand, the percussions are a little timid.

In the trombone section, Audrey Morrison, well known for her practice of both classical and jazz music and for her teaching of both disciplines, should be noted.

As for the vocal trio, we can admire the beauty of Carol Loverde's soprano in "Transblucency" and the extraordinary deep voice of Cynthia Felker in "The Blues".

Singer Bobbi Wilsyn perfectly reproduces the blues side of "Soothe Me" supported by Paul Mertens on alto saxophone and an overheated band.



(Photos : Chase Music Group / Hallway Records)

Just like the first CD, the second is a tribute to a musician that Bill Russo has always admired, Stan Kenton.

Its title: "*Kenton à la Russo, live at the Jazz Showcase*" by the Chicago Jazz Ensemble conducted by William Russo and recorded by Hallway Records (Hallway 9710) on February 15 and 16, 2000.

The orchestra is just as solid as the one on the first CD; There are also some names of musicians:

saxophones: Pat Mallinger, Tyrone Tatum, Jim Gailloreto, Tim McNamara and Ted Hogarth; trumpets: Mark Olen, Orbert Davis, Scott Hall, Art Hoyle and Chuck Parrish; trombones: Audrey Morrison, Tom Garling, Steve Berry, Tracy Kirk and Fritz Hocking; for the rhythm section, we have: Thomas Gunther, piano, Frank Dawson, guitar, Dan Anderson, bass, Frank Parker, drums and Alejo Poveda, conga. The vocal part is provided by Bobbi Wilsyn and Vikki Stokes.

It is again David Noble who writes the notice:

"William Russo is almost like a kind of reincarnation of Stan Kenton in the sense that he is able to eliminate, from current instrumentalists, the musical tension and impact that characterized Kenton's orchestra during its greatest years.

The repertoire used in this album comes from two periods of Kentonian history, namely 1943-47 and 1952-54.

The first theme is a 1952 composition, "Frank Speaking" that Bill dedicated to the brilliant trombonist Frank Rosolino. Here, Tom Garling is in charge of the interpretation and realizes Bill's intentions very well, both for lyricism and virtuosity when the tempo accelerates.

Tom Garling opens the 1946 ballad by Gene Roland "Ain't No Misery in Me" and Pat Mallinger intervenes on alto sax.

Pat is also the soloist in the classic "Lover Man" arranged by Bill, in 1953, for Lee Konitz.

Trombone Tracy Kirk launched the charge of the "Peanut Vendor", the arrangement of which is generally attributed to Stan Kenton (1947), but Bill Russo thought he could detect the expert hand of Pete Rugolo. Frank Parker and Alejo Poveda make a real percussion assault.

In 1952, Bill composed "23° North 82° West" which became a real hit. The present version is particularly rhythmically clear. Tom Garling and Pat Mallinger took the solos originally intended for Frank Rosolino and Lee Konitz.

It was Gene Roland who orchestrated the song "Shoo Fly Pie" in 1945 and made it a hit. Bobbi Wilsyn brilliantly succeeds June Christy; the soloists are Orbert Davis and Jim Gailloreto.

"Resist" is an excerpt from "In Memoriam", a jazz Requiem composed by Bill in 1965

for choir and orchestra; he led it, on 7 March 1966, at the head of the L.A.N.O. (see page 34). It is a vehement protest against death. Tim Hogarth's baritone can be heard as well as Scott Hall and Dan Anderson.

"Collaboration" is led by the formidable Tom Garling, after the introduction of Thomas Gunther, to lead to an interpretation of a very vigorous romanticism.

"Blues Before and After", written by Bill in 1954, features a dazzling solo in bebop mode by Orbert Davis and a very lyrical intervention by Pat Mallinger.

Composed by Stan in 1943, "Eager Beaver" is one of the very popular classics in his repertoire. Thomas Gunther perfectly reproduces the piano solo at the beginning and Tim McNamara reveals a tenor full of beautiful energy.

"Portrait of a Count" is a play imagined by Bill, in 1952, for Conte Candoli at Stan Kenton's house. Scott Hall does a rather exceptional job of articulation and gives a very personal interpretation of the score.

The last selection of this concert, "Road Runner", dates from 1998 and illustrates the eclectic side of the music that Bill loved at that time. There is a reminder of the Duke of the 50s as well as the big bands and small ensembles of the time. »

Personally, around 1950, I was passionate about the big bands, jazz or jazzy, numerous and magnificent, born in the 40s: Charlie Barnet, Count Basie, Les Brown, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Jerry Gray, Lionel Hampton, Woody Herman, Harry James, Gene Krupa, Glenn Miller, Sy Oliver, etc.

Then, I discovered Stan Kenton in 1951 with the "Southern Scandal" of 1945 and it was a shock! It was still jazz, but different: rigour and flexibility in complexity.

And that's what I really appreciate here, with the Chicago Jazz Ensemble, and despite the fact that the performances take place in public, it's the high perfection of the sections, especially the brass, which has always been the essential characteristic of Stan's ensembles, even in the most difficult scores.

With Bill Russo, who is known for his extreme attention to detail in his way of conducting an orchestra as well as his constant search for new sounds, this aspect of the performance is really not a problem.

As for the soloists, it is not easy, in such well-known pages because they are over-recorded, to succeed Kentonian giants such as Milt Bernhart, Conte Candoli, June Christy, Bob Cooper, Lee Konitz, Vido Musso, Frank Rosolino, Kai Winding, etc. Also, the musicians of the Chicago Jazz Ensemble have not only had the good taste to be inscribed, even in this year 2000, in the original style of the compositions, but also the intelligence to show originality, even humor, in their improvisations, thus totally excluding any idea of imitating the popularized versions that every big band lover has in memory.

The two CDs we have just examined brilliantly testify to the conceptions that Bill Russo has always defended about the importance of orchestration in a musical piece.

They also allow us to appreciate the immense technical and expressive possibilities that the Chicago Jazz Ensemble possesses; they are truly two very important documents that perfectly illustrate a great period in the life of jazz in the "Windy City".

Despite the advanced state of his illness (cancer and pneumonia) and a necessary and permanent supply of oxygen, Bill was still conducting the orchestra, at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago, a week before he passed away on Saturday, January 11, 2003. A fine example of determination. What a will! What strength of character!

After the departure of Bill Russo and the critical period that followed, very detailed, above, by Howard Reich, it seems that musical activities are once again part of the news at Columbia College in Chicago.



Scott Hall
(Photo : Columbia College)

Indeed, the programs offered are very numerous and particularly varied: Fusion Ensemble, Gospel Choir, Groove Band, Hip-Hop Ensemble, Jazz Combos, Jazz/Pop Choir, New Music Ensemble, Pop Rock Showcase Ensemble, R&B Ensemble, Chicago Vox, Guitar Ensemble (Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced), Columbia Laptop Ensemble and a return to big band with Columbia College Jazz Ensemble led by Scott Hall, a classically trained trumpeter who was part of Bill Russo's Chicago Jazz Ensemble and is very active in the jazz world as a conductor, performer, arranger, producer and educator.

At Columbia College, he served as Professor of Instruction and Coordinator of Contemporary Musicianship and Jazz and Senior Lecturer and Director of Jazz StUdies. Outside, he participates in many musical activities.

Under Scott Hall's direction, four main levels of study are established: Styles and

Techniques (Introductory), Performance Survey (Intermediate), Performance Genre (Advanced) and Showcase Genre (Professional).

They can be found in several approaches: Recording and Performance Ensemble, Performance Survey Ensemble, Styles and Techniques Survey Ensemble and American Roots Ensemble (ARE).

Even if his name is not mentioned in the presentations and comments, it is easy to imagine that the shadow of Bill Russo hangs over this return of music to Columbia College in Chicago; he must be happy about it!



Remember the genius of William Russo !

(Photo : Chicago Tribune)

REQUIEM FOR A "SUPER-CRUSADER"

William Bill Russo passed away from pneumonia (in addition to cancer) on Saturday, January 11, 2003, at the age of 74, at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago.

A Memorial Service is being held on Friday, February 14, 2003, at St. John Cantius Church in Chicago: Musical Meditation at 2 p.m., Mass at 2:30 p.m.

According to Down Beat magazine on January 31, 2003, a concert in his memory will take place on February 3, 2003:

"William Russo's Chicago Jazz Ensemble and friends will pay tribute to their late founder/composer/conductor at a special concert at Chicago's Jazz Showcase on Monday, February 3. Russo died Jan. 11 in Chicago after a two-year battle with cancer. Alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, who featured in many of Russo's compositions during his tenure with the Stan Kenton Orchestra in the '50s, will join renowned Chicago jazz composer/pianist Eddie Baker and the Chicago Jazz Ensemble in a program paying tribute to Russo's life and work. The two artists remained friends with Russo for more than 50 years as a jazz composer and bandleader.

The evening's program will include works by Bix Beiderbecke; King Oliver; Jelly Roll Morton; Louis Armstrong and, of course, William Russo (indeed, Bill was very fond of traditional jazz).

The Chicago Jazz Ensemble will also pay tribute to Russo in its "The Birth of Jazz" program, which is the final stop on the "American Heritage Jazz Series," which will be presented Feb. 5-March 7 in seven Chicago-area cities. The CJE will revive several of his works, including Russo's 1959 arrangement of Bix Beiderbecke's "Davenport Blues". »

As for his private life, Bill has been married three times :
 he married the singer Shelby Davis on 13 March 1947 and divorced in 1953 (1 child, Camille Blinstrub),
 then it was Jeremy Warburg, music teacher, on February 6, 1960, divorced in 1973 (2 children, Condee Nast Russo and Alexander William Warburg Russo),
 finally, it was Carol Loverde, classical soprano, on August 23, 1982, divorced in 1992.

He also had a child out of wedlock: Whitney Schildgen who surprised him, around 2001, by coming to see the father she had never known when she was about twenty years old. It seems, however, that Bill was not aware of this birth.

And, if we are to believe Don Rose, of the Jazz Institute of Chicago (2003) :

« These are all young women who have not been able to live with him but who still seem to love him, which is quite rare. Bill Russo was a rare man! »

As for Howard Reich, the inexhaustible, he wrote on January 13, 2003, in the Chicago Tribune :

« For more than 50 years as a composer and conductor, Mr. Russo wrote landmark jazz scores and groundbreaking rock operas, wrote influential texts on the art of instrumental arrangement, and trained generations of musicians at Columbia

College in Chicago, where he founded the Department of Music." Bill Russo was one of a kind, an incredibly imaginative jazzman who contributed more to music in Chicago and around the world than many imagine ; just think of all the splendid pieces he composed and the great Chicago Jazz Ensemble he conducted. Look at all the kids he taught at Columbia College," said writer Studs Terkel, who knew Mr. Russo for more than half a century.

Mr. Russo was at a turning point in his life and career, as since retiring from Columbia last year, he has been able to devote his energy to his Chicago Jazz Ensemble and composition. In November, he unveiled his last and perhaps greatest jazz work, "Jubilatum," a typically idiosyncratic (very personal) composition based on Gregorian chant and written for big band, chamber string section, vocal sextet, classical soprano, and jazz trumpet soloist.

This work crowned one of the most prodigious and complex jazz careers of the second half of the twentieth century. »

Larry Combs, principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and jazz improviser who has often collaborated with Mr. Russo, added :

« He was one of my idols very early on. »

The testimonies of three musicians:

Orbert Davis (Chicago)

« Bill hired me to teach trumpet at Columbia College in 1984. I soon became an artist-in-residence until 1999. As a soloist and concert master of the Chicago Jazz Ensemble, I was fortunate to know Bill as a mentor and to have him as a friend. He sowed in me the seeds of professionalism and knowledge that I hope to pass on to other musicians. Now that I have my own classical and jazz orchestra (The Chicago Jazz Philharmonic), I wish I had more long conversations about music with Bill ! »

James D'Angelo (London)

« I was a private student of jazz composition with Bill Russo during his period in New York (1958-61) and his influence lives on because he held very high the ideal of what music could convey. He asked his students to read Plato and work on Hindemith's compositional exercises, which is not the usual way for jazz musicians. His marriage of jazz and classical was unique; This is evidenced by the addition of four cellos to the jazz orchestra. Overall, he continued the musical tradition of Duke Ellington. Perhaps his greatest event was Leonard Bernstein's performance of his "Titans Symphony" with the New York Philharmonic and Maynard Ferguson as soloist. Although his reputation comes from the jazz world, he was, currently, forging a whole new musical world with a freshness and joy worthy of the poet Walt Whitman. I hope

that his music will continue to be performed. »

Phill Aranda (San Jose/California)

« I was a student of Bill Russo in the late 1950s in Chicago. I have continued to compose and arrange and his influence is present in everything I write. I am continually grateful to have had the opportunity to study with him. It was a small class in his house ; Sture Swenson and Grant Wallin were my classmates. »

Some of the many awards received by William Bill Russo and mentioned in **Prabook** (World Biographical Encyclopedia – N.Y.) :

William Russo, American Composer, educator. Recipient 25th Anniversary award Roosevelt Alumni Association, 1970, GoldenEagle award, 1975-1976, Grand Prix du Disc award, 1978, Italia, British Broadcasting Corporation submission, 1963, American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers Special award, since 1961, NARAS Lifetime Achievement award, 1990, Collaborative Artists of the Year, 1991; inducted into 1stNavy Pier Hall of Fame, 1981.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Bill Russo's death, Columbia College in Chicago is organizing a great tribute on Friday, December 6 and Saturday, December 7, 2013:

« **Celebrating William Russo, Artist & Educator** »



(Photo : WGN Radio)

**A Benefit Concert in Honor of William Russo (1928-2003)
 Proceeds Benefit the William Russo Endowed Scholarship
 at Columbia College Chicago
 Admission : \$50 includes pre-concert reception
 Featuring the Columbia College Jazz Ensemble under Scott Hall
 Special guest artists : Lee Konitz, Corky Siegel and Orbert Davis**

The tribute first offers, on Friday at 6 p.m., the free screening, at Columbia College's Film Row Cinema, of the animated film "Everybody Rides the Carousel" for which Bill composed, arranged and directed the music.

On Saturday afternoon, from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Columbia College Music Department, the theatre critic Albert Williams will lead a debate, free admission, on the role played by Bill Russo in the world of theater in Chicago as well as his work in jazz.

The speakers are Corky Siegel, Lee Konitz (1927-2020), Orbert Davis, actress Kate Buddeke and writers Don Rose and Ron Dorfman.

Finally, a large concert takes place on Saturday evening at 8 p.m. at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago with the participation of the Columbia College Jazz Ensemble conducted by Scott Hall and soloists Lee Konitz, Corky Siegel and Orbert Davis.



The Columbia College Jazz Ensemble at the Chicago Jazz Showcase/Scott Hall
 (Photo : YouTube)

Let's follow Alain Drouot (Down Beat) in the comments he gives us the day after the concert :

« The presence of several former students in the audience shows how much Bill Russo was appreciated by the students of the college.

The concert begins with two of his compositions for Stan Kenton's orchestra and which became real pillars of his repertoire: "Peanut Vendor" and "Frank Speaking", the latter being dedicated to the virtuoso trombone Frank Rosolino and it is Xavier Galdon who takes on the perilous solo part. This piece shows how Bill Russo's music is very difficult to perform when it is so pleasant to listen to.

For the rest, the orchestra returns to Latin music with " 23° North 82° West " before moving on to Duke Ellington and his " Happy-Go-Lucky Local ".

Preferring the accompaniment of a small ensemble, Lee Konitz performed only one piece with the big band, namely the " Lover Man " arranged by Bill Russo. He then switched to the sextet with, among others, pianist Justin Bowse, alto saxophonist Alex Kerwin and trumpeter Parris Fleming for a Lennie Tristano theme " 317 East 32nd Street " and a composition by Lee himself " Subconscious-Lee ".

Then comes the performance of Orbert Davis who, with his incisive side, his humor and his powerful and clear sound, creates a beautiful contrast with Lee Konitz's passage. This is true in Bill Russo's "Blues Before And After" but the latter's arrangement on "Autumn In New York" allows us to discover a meditative and delicate Orbert Davis. He ends his performance with a piece that Bill has specially dedicated to him, "The Horn Blower", in which Orbert shows both candour and spontaneity as well as an admirable and dynamic use of very contrasting lines.

(The theme has already been recorded, in 1997, by the same soloist with the Chicago Jazz Ensemble conducted by Bill Russo on the CD presented above, on page 65).

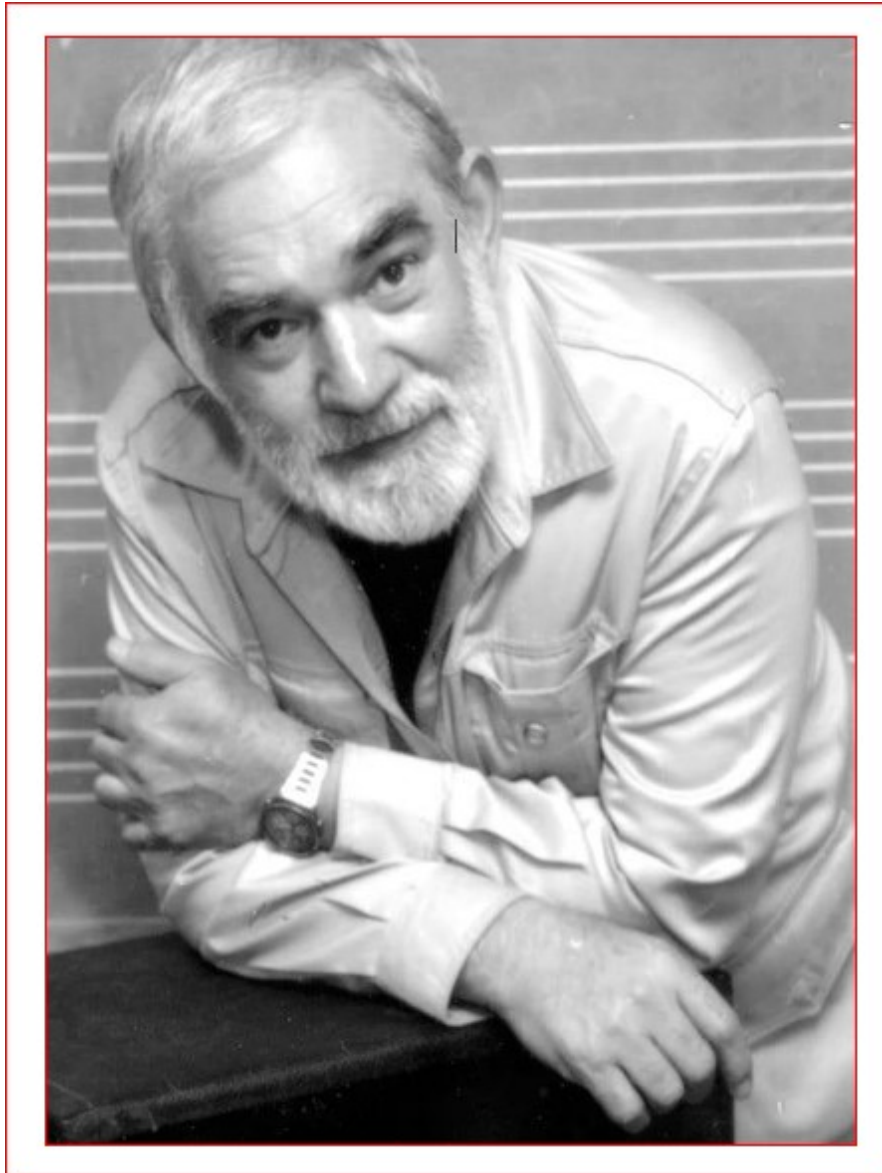
The concert continues with "Coky", the last part of the "Chicago Suite No. 2", a score written by Bill in 1996, recorded shortly before his death but not released. It is the dedicatee, Corky Siegel, who tackles it with joy and vigour on a dazzling boogie-woogie rhythm.

For the grand finale, Orbert Davis and Corky Siegel join in an improvised blues and enthusiastic chorus exchanges with Endre Rice, the orchestra's trumpeter.

And the audience leaves happy with this beautiful tribute dedicated to William Bill Russo. »

We keep alive the memory of this wonderful musician, among the most eclectic and influential, a true bridge builder, for whom Jazz, Classical and Blues are not natural enemies.

Thank you, Bill,
Musician of the Absolute !



(Photo : Columbia College Chicago, années 1990)

RECONNAISSANCE / GRATITUDE

Mes très sincères remerciements vont à tous ces musicologues et autres mélomanes :

My sincere thanks go to all these musicologists and other music lovers :

Phill Aranda, Malcolm Bessom, Neil Butterworth, Columbia College Chicago, Lary Combs, Joe Cunniff, James D' Angelo, Frank D'Rone, Bill Dal Cerro, Orbert Davis, Olivia Devegnée, James D.Dilts, Kenny Dorham, Down Beat, Alain Drouot, Kate Dumbleton, Carol Easton, Leonard Feather, Michael Fitzgerald, Caroline Gowers, Scott Hall, Leon Harrell, Steven D. Harris, Paulina Herrera, Jacques Hess, André Hodeir, Gordon Jack, Horst Lange, Cheryl Layin, Dr. William F. Lee, John Lewis, Thierry Maillard, Peter Margasak, Doug McMullen, Mark Myers, Mike Nevard, Jon Newsom, Lennie Niehaus, David Noble, Chris Pirie, Rahne Pistor, Dennis Polkow, Ken Poston, Steve Race, Ben Ratcliff, Howard Reich, Sonny Rollins, Don Rose, Jean-Louis Scali, Phil Schaap, Ralph Schoenstein, Gunther Schuller, Bernard Sellam, Ron Simmonds, Michael Sparke, Héléne Sportis, Wanda Stafford, Jim Stockford, Jeff Sultanof, Alain Tercinet, Louis « Studs » Terkel, Les Tomkins, John Tynan, Jean-François Verdier, Terry Vosbein, David Anthony Witter, Scott Yanow, Jeremy Yudkin. (M.C.)

and, in addition, some useful appendices...

A DOCUMENT

It is a letter written, between the staves of a blank score, and addressed by Bill, on January 22, 1996, to his friend Phil Schaap (Philippe van Noorden Schaap) offering him, as a priority and before marketing, the proof of a new CD, the one that will be published, in 1997, by Chase Music Group (CMD 8052) under the title "*The Chicago Jazz Ensemble conducted by William Russo*" (see page 64 above).

Phil Schaap (April 8, 1951 – September 7, 2021) is the renowned historian, archivist, record producer, educator and also, since 1970, Jazz columnist for Columbia University's Radio WKCR (Greater New York).

Phil said, on August 18, 2020:

« But yes, Bill sent me an advance on the CD that will be released later with the "Chicago Suite #1". Bill has been incredibly kind to me. At my request, he agreed to submit to an interview with one of my Princeton students whose name is Dan Siegfried. The interview was conducted on January 7, 2003. Bill died while my student was flying back to school on January 11, 2003. Unfortunately, I am seriously ill and suffering from a recurrence of cancer. »



(Photo : John Abbott)

Phil passed away on September 7, 2021 in Manhattan after a long-time battle with lymphoma. He was 70 years old. He leaves his partner Susan Shaffer. His knowledge of Jazz was legendary, both overall and in detail. Son site : <https://www.philschaapjazz.com/>

A very nice article, from September 7, 2021 by Hélène Sportis, on the website of the magazine "Jazz Hot" (France): <https://www.philschaap,1951-2021,jazzhot.net/>



Arrangements & compositions created for Kenton

* indicates original composition

by Bill RUSSO

23 Degrees North - 82 Degrees West * (aka *Cuban Night* and *A Modernist In Cuba*) (1952)

Adios (1952) Jerri Winters vocal

Adios (1953) (rescored sans vocal) featuring Sal Salvador

All About Ronnie (1953) Chris Connor vocal

Altonality * (1954) *Festival Tour* - featuring Lee Konitz, Charlie Mariano, Dave Schildkraut, & Charlie Parker

And the Bull Walked Around, Olay (1953) Chris Connor vocal

April In Paris (1953)

Autumn in New York (1952) featuring Buddy Childers

Autumn in New York (1953) featuring Buddy Childers

Bacante * (1953) *Festival Tour* - featuring Candido

Baia (1953) Chris Connor vocal

Bill's Blues * (1952)

Blues - Before & After * (1953)

Body and Soul (1952) featuring Frank Rosolino

CC * (195?) featuring Conte Candoli

Childers No. 1 * (1953) featuring Buddy Childers

Crazy Rhythm (1953)

The Creep (1953)

Darn That Dream (1952) Kay Brown vocal

Dusk * (1954)

East of the Sun (1952)

Easy to Love (1952)

Egdon Heath * (1954)

Ennui* (1951) *Innovations* - featuring Harry Betts

Ennui* (1952) *Dance band* - featuring Bill Russo

An Esthete on Clark Street * (1952)

Everything Happens to Me (1952) Helen Carr vocal

Fascinating Rhythm (1953)

Forbidden Games * (1953) *Festival Tour* - featuring Stan Getz

Frank Speaking * (aka *Happy Talk*) (1952) featuring Frank Rosolino

From This Moment On (1954) *Festival Tour* June Christy vocal

Gazelle * (1953)

Gloomy Sunday (1951) *Innovations* - June Christy vocal

Gone with the Wind (1953) featuring Sal Salvador

Gregory Bemko * (aka *Cello Piece*) (1951) *Innovations* - featuring Gregory Bemko

Halls of Brass * (1950) *Innovations*

Harlem Nocturne (1953)

How High the Moon (1953)

I Can't Get Started (1952) Kay Brown vocal

I Get a Kick Out of You (1952) Kay Brown vocal

I Get a Kick Out of You (1953) Chris Connor vocal

I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good (1952) featuring Frank Rosolino

I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues (Oct. 1952) Frank Rosolino vocal

I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues (Dec. 1952) Frank Rosolino vocal

I'll Remember April (1953) Chris Connor vocal

I've Got You Under My Skin (1953)

If I Should Lose You (1952) Kay Brown vocal

Improvisation * (1951) *Innovations*

Improvisation * (1952) *Dance band* - featuring Lee Konitz

In Memoriam * (Requiem) (1966) 9-piece chorus led by Jimmy Joyce vocal - *Neophonic*

It Don't Mean a Thing (1952) Frank Rosolino vocal

It's the Talk of the Town (1952) featuring Richie Kamuca, later Zoot Sims

Jeepers Creepers (1952) Kay Brown vocal

Just You, Just Me (1953)

Love Me or Leave Me (1952)

Love Me or Leave Me (1953) Chris Connor vocal

Lover (1951) *Innovations* June Christy vocal

Lover, Come Back to Me (1953) *Festival Tour* featuring Stan Getz

Lover Man (1952) featuring Lee Konitz

Lullaby of Birdland (1953)

Moonlight in Vermont (1952)

My Heart Stood Still (1953)

My Lady * (1952) featuring Lee Konitz

The Nearness of You (1952) featuring Buddy Childers

Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen (1953) Chris Connor vocal

No Moon at All (1953) *Festival Tour* - June Christy vocal

One for My Baby (1951) *Innovations* - June Christy vocal

Over the Rainbow (1952) featuring Bob Burgess

Pennies from Heaven (1953) Frank Rosolino vocal

Pink Evil * (1953) featuring Maynard Ferguson

Poached Eyes on Ghost * (1951) *Innovations*

Poem for Trumpet * (1953) featuring Conte Candoli

Portrait of A Count * (1952) featuring Conte Candoli

Purple Hyacinth * (1953) *Festival Tour*

Pyramus and Thisbe* (1950) *Innovations*

Reverie (1953)

Robbin's Nest (1952)

Rockin' Chair (1952)

Rockin' Chair (1952) Frank Rosolino vocal

Shadow Waltz (1953)

Sketch * (A Mood) (195?)

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes (1950)

Solitaire * (aka Falstaff) (1950) *Innovations* - featuring Milt Bernhart

Solitaire * (aka Falstaff) (1952) *Dance band* - featuring Bob Burgess

Solitude (195?)

Somebody Loves Me (1953)

Sophisticated Lady (1952)

Study for Bass * (1953) featuring Don Bagley

Sweets * (1952)

Sweets * (1953)

'S Wonderful (1953) featuring Ernie Royal, later Don Dennis

Tenderly (1952) Jerri Winters vocal

That Old Feeling (1952)

A Theme of Four Values * (1953)

There's a Small Hotel (1952)

There Will Never Be Another You (1952) Jerri Winters vocal

These Foolish Things (1952) featuring Bill Holman

Thisbe * (1954)

Untitled Original * (1950) *Innovations*

Untitled Original * (1952)

Untitled Original * (1952)

Untitled Original * (1953)

Untitled Original * (1953)

Vignette * (1953)

What's New (1953) Chris Connor vocal

Where or When (195?) featuring Lee Konitz & Buddy Childers

Without Wings * (1951) *Innovations* - featuring Bob Fitzpatrick

You and the Night and the Music (1953)

You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To (1953)

You Go to My Head (1953) featuring Lee Konitz

Young Sebastian * (1950) *Innovations*

Zoot Sims * (1953) featuring Zoot Sims

Thanks to Kenton scholar/author Michael Sparke for his meticulous assistance in making this list as accurate as possible.

Catalogue of William RUSSO's works proposed by the site: musiqueclassique.forum.fr/t7688-william-russo-2003

Works for orchestra

1955 Music for alto saxophone and strings, op. 9
 1957 Divertissement, for flute, clarinet, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, three violins and piano, op. 13
 1957 Symphony Nr. 1, for orchestra, op. 15
 1958 Symphony Nr. 2 in C "The Titans", op. 32
 1960 Variations on the American theme "When the Saints Go Marching In", for orchestra, op. 40
 1962 Concerto in C for Violoncello and Orchestra, Op.41
 1963 Five Pieces for Jazz Orchestra
 1963 The English concerto, for violin and jazz orchestra, Op. 43
 1965 Suite for violin, for violin and string orchestra, op. 46
 1968 Three pieces for blues band and Symphony orchestra, op. 50
 1975 Suite Carousel, for jazz orchestra, op. 63
 1977 Street Music - A Blues Concerto for jazz harmonica and orchestra, op. 65
 1983 Hello, for orchestra, op. 79
 Chicago Concerto for Baritone Saxophone and Jazz Orchestra
 Chicago Suite No. 1, for Jazz Orchestra
 Chicago Suite No. 2 for Jazz Orchestra, Op. 97 (1996)
 Frank Speaking, for jazz orchestra, op. 5
 In Memoriam, Herman Conaway, Op.95, 1994
 Jubilatum, for orchestra, op. 101 (1999)
 Portrait of a Count, for jazz orchestra
 The Red Hat

Works for winds

1952 Suite No. 1, for jazz orchestra; op. 5
 1952 Suite No. 2 for jazz orchestra, op. 8
 1955 The English Suite, for orchestra, op. 20
 1957 Allegro for concert band, op. 12
 1959 Fugue for Jazz Orchestra, op.18 n° 2
 1960 Concerto grosso for saxophone quartet and orchestra, op. 37
 1961 Brookville
 1966 America 1966, for harmony, op. 48
 1984 The new Age Suite for Jazz Band , op. 80
 Newport Suite, op. cit. 24

Cantatas, vocal works

1988 The Civil War, Rock- cantata in collaboration with Irma Routen - Text: Paul Horgan, op. 52
 1971 Songs of celebration, op. 58
 1989 The Touro Cantata, op. 85
 1987 An album of songs, op. 94
 1996 Mass, op. 99

1997 Missa, op. 100

Operas

1962 John Hooton, op. 36

1962/63 The Island, op. 42

1964 Land of Milk and Honey, Op. 45

1967 Antigone, op. cit. 49

1971 Aesop's Fables,

1971 The Shepherd's Christmas, op. cit. 71

1973 Pedrolino's Revenge, op. cit. 62

1974 Isabella's Fortune

1976 A General Opera, op. 66

1977 A Cabaret Opéra, op. 70

1979 Paris-Light

1983/84 The Pay-Off

1988 Dubrowsky, op. cit. 83

1989 Talking to the Sun, op. cit. 86

Ballets

1954 The World of Alcina

1984 The Golden Bird, Op. 77

1990 Listen Beneath

Chamber Music

Suite for violin, Op. 46

1989 Sonata for Violin and Piano

Piano

3 Cuban Pieces

4 Dance Movements

Chicago Sketches

March Suite

Made in America

Ogou Badagri

Prelude, Choral & Fugue

Film Music

1975 WOW Women of the World

1975 Everybody Rides the Carousel, op. 63

1977 Whither Weather, op. cit. 69

1984 Hello

1987 Time of the Angels, op. cit. 84

Columbia College Chicago Detailed Archives:

[william-bill-russo-collection.pdf](#)

... and to learn more, in Video, about our friend Bill :

HIS MUSIC

[Bill Russo Conducting Rehearsal - YouTube](#)

[Bill Russo orchestra - YouTube](#)

[Jazz Panorama Conducted by William Russo \(1/2\) - YouTube](#)

[Jazz Panorama \(Last Part of Concert\) - YouTube](#)

[Ennui - Bill Russo - YouTube](#)

[Bill Russo: The World of Alcina \(1954\) - YouTube](#)

[Bill Russo - Shorty Rogers - Shelley Manne - Jimmy Giuffre: Jazz Composers Work Shop \(1955\) - YouTube](#)

[Bill Russo Quintet - Cathy - YouTube](#)

[Bill Russo \[arr.\] - East Hampton Blues \(1959\) - YouTube](#)

[Maynard Ferguson - Bill Russo's Titans Symphony part 4 audio - YouTube](#)

[Stan Kenton - Bill's Blues - YouTube](#)

[William Russo - Three Pieces for Blues Band and Symph.Orch.Op. 50 \(1968\), Parts 1&3 - YouTube](#)

[William Russo. Street Music. 4th movement. SFSO. C.Siegel. S.Ozawa. - YouTube](#)

[An Image of Man - William Russo // Luke Carbon, alto saxophone - YouTube](#)

[23 Degrees North, 82 Degrees West - UCLA Jazz Orchestra - YouTube](#)

[Chicago Jazz Ensemble - "Tell Me It's The Truth" - June 12, 1994 - YouTube](#)

(orch./song/dance after Duke Ellington).

AS A GUEST

[Visit with an American Composer William Russo 1/4 - YouTube](#)

[Visit with an American Composer 2/4 - YouTube](#)

[Visit with an American Composer 3/4 - YouTube](#)

[A Visit with an American Composer 4/4 Conclusion - YouTube](#)

[Bill Russo discusses his commedia dell'arte production |The WFMT Studs Terkel Radio Archive |](#)

[A Living Celebration](#)

THE SPEAKER

[William Russo Paris in the 1920s \(1/4\) - YouTube](#)

[William Russo Paris in the 1920s \(2/4\) - YouTube](#)

[Bill Russo Paris in the 1920s \(3/4\) - YouTube](#)

[Russo Paris in the 1920s \(4/4\) - YouTube](#)

These titles are only a small selection of everything that appears on the Web that deals with the work and career of William Joseph "Bill" Russo from various points of view. Some of these sites, including those mentioned above, can however be taken down suddenly. Therefore, if you are interested, it is advisable not to wait too long to discover them. Enjoy your consultation and "*Long live Jazz!*". - M.C.

and, as a last note :

A BASIC BIOGRAPHY

« *Dictionary of American Classical Composers* » (Routledge Edition 2005)
by Neil Butterworth (1934 – 2020).

RUSSO, WILLIAM (JOSEPH)

b. Chicago, Illinois, 25 June 1928

d. Chicago, Illinois, 11 January 2003

Russo studied English at Roosevelt University, Chicago, graduating in 1955. He was a private composition pupil of John J. Becker (1953–55) and Karel Jirák (1955–57). He also studied with the jazz pianist Lenny Tristano. In Chicago in 1947 he founded a rehearsal orchestra, “An Experiment in Jazz.” As a trombonist and composer-arranger he worked for Stan Kenton (1950–54), with his own orchestra in New York (1959–61), and as director of the London Jazz Orchestra (1962–64). He taught at the Lenox School of Music, Massachusetts (1957–60) and the Manhattan School of Music (1959–61). From 1965 to 1975 he was director of the Center for New Music at Columbia College, Chicago and conductor of the Chicago Jazz Ensemble. He taught at the Peabody Conservatory, Baltimore (1969–71) and at Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio (1971–72) and was Composer-in-Residence to the City and County of San Francisco (1975–76). Until the early 1990s he was Composer-in-Residence at Columbia College.

In his compositions, Russo attempted to fuse jazz and blues with the symphonic orchestra. Among his large-scale symphonic jazz works are Symphony no. 1 (1957); Symphony no. 2 in C, *Titans* (1958), a Koussevitzky Foundation commission; Cello Concerto (1962); *English Concerto* for violin and jazz orchestra (1963), commissioned by Yehudi Menuhin; *Variations on an American Theme* (1964); *America 1966*, a concerto grosso for jazz orchestra (1966); *Three Pieces for Blues Band and Orchestra* (1968), danced as a ballet, *Mother Blues*, by the San Francisco Ballet in 1974; *Street Music: A Blues Concerto* for harmonica player, piano, and orchestra (1975); and *Carousel Suite* for narrator, chamber orchestra, and dancers (1975). For orchestra Russo wrote *Solitaire* for strings (1949), *Newport Suite* (1958; arr. for jazz orchestra, 1960), and *Urban Trilogy* (1981).

In addition to numerous arrangements, Russo composed much for jazz orchestra: two suites, no. 1 (1952, rev. 1962), and no. 2 (1951–54, rev. 1962); *Four Pieces* (1953–57); *Seven Deadly Sins* (1960); *The New Age Suite* (1984); *For My Friend* (1991); *The Horn Blower* (1991); and *The Garden of Virtue* (1993).

For the stage he wrote two ballets, *The World of Alcina* (1954, rev. 1962) and *Les Deux Errants*, commissioned by the London Festival Ballet in 1955. He

has also composed several operas: *John Hooton* (1961) in three acts to his own libretto, broadcast on B.B.C. London radio in 1983; *The Island* (1964) in one act to a text by Adrian Mitchell, commissioned by the B.B.C. as its entry for the Italia Prize; *Antigone* (1967), in one act; *Land of Milk and Honey* (1964); *The Alice B. Toklas Hashish Fudge Revue* (1970), which had a lengthy run in New York. (Retitled *Paris Lights: The All-Star Literary Genius Expatriate Revue*, it was revived at the American Place Theater in New York in 1980.) *Aesop's Fables*, a rock opera with a text by Jon Swan, received almost two hundred performances in New York, including an off-Broadway run in 1972.

Two one-act comic operas, *Isabella's Fortune* and *Pedrolina's Revenge*, were produced in New York in 1974. *A General Opera*, a chamber opera in one act with libretto by Arnold Weinstein (1976), was completed under a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. More recent operas include *The Shepherds' Christmas*, staged in Chicago in 1979; *The Pay Off*, a cabaret opera (1984); *Dubrovsky* (1988); and *The Sacrifice* (1990). In 1984 he composed a musical, *The Golden Bird* for narrator, singers dancers, and small orchestra, staged in Chicago.

Russo composed several rock cantatas for soloists, chorus, and band, including *The Civil War* (1968), *David* (1968), *Joan of Arc* (1970), *The Bacchae* (1972), and *Song of Songs* (1972). Other choral pieces include *In Memoriam* (1966), *Songs of Celebration* for solo voice, chorus, and orchestra (1972), and *Touro Cantata* (1988).

Among a handful of instrumental pieces are *21 Etudes* for brass instruments (1959), a Violin Sonata (1986), *Memphis* for alto saxophone and nine instruments (1988), and *Women* for harmonica, piano, and string quartet (1990). Vocal music includes a song cycle, *Talking to the Sun* (1989); *Listen Beneath* for soprano, jazz contralto, and orchestra (1992); and *In memoriam, Hermann Conaway* for mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, and 11 instruments (1994). Russo also composed a number of film scores, including *Everybody Rides the Carousel* (1976), *Women of the World*, and *The Second Chance*.

He was the author of three significant books: *Composing for Jazz Orchestra* (1961, rev. 1973); *Jazz: Composition and Orchestration* (1968, rev. 1974); and *Composing Music: A New Approach* (1983).

