

Jazz Ensemble gets into the swings of things

BY VICTORIA ZGURA

Dr. John Gudmundson, Director of Jazz Studies, took the Brevard College Jazz Ensemble to Asheville to play in the UNCA Jazz Festival, held February 20 in Lipinsky Auditorium. Together with the Daniel High School Jazz Band, directed by Greg Day, and the USC Jazz Band, directed by Roger Pemberton who was joined by some older musician acquaintances, the Brevard Jazz Ensemble helped to provide an afternoon with an array of jazz music.

Brevard's eighteen member big band played a set entitled "Mostly Mingus," which featured tunes written by Charles Mingus, a famous jazz bassist of the avant garde style. The set included the songs "Nostalgia in Times Square," Duke Ellington's "Sound of Love" and "Moaning". Aside from Mingus tunes they also played "Now's The Time" by Charlie Parker and "You Go To My Head" by Gillespie and Coats. Of the whole set, "Moaning" got the best response from the audience and fellow musicians.

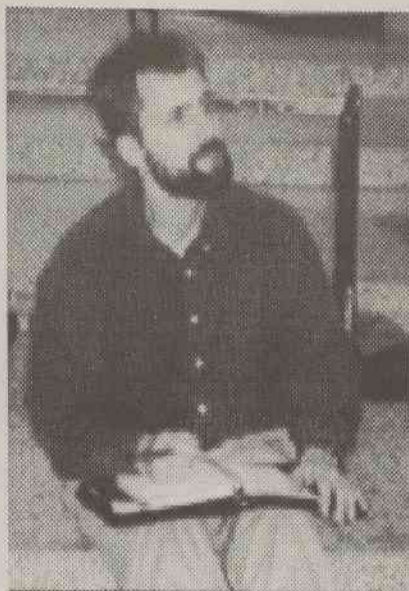
Danielle Walker, a senior saxophone player, was the featured soloist of the piece playing baritone sax, which is the instrument the piece was written for. Said Walker of her performance:

"I don't remember much of what I did, but based on the reactions of people I feel like I did a pretty good job. I don't want to brag, I just did what I needed to do."

Mingus wrote a lot of pieces for other instruments besides the bass that he played. The tune "Moaning" is currently featured in a movie entitled "The Whole Nine Yards", starring Bruce Willis, Matthew Perry and Patricia Arquette.

Tim Haden is an Artist in Resi-

dence and the Director of Jazz Studies at UNCA, as well as the director of the festival. He was offered the position of running the festival when he came to Asheville five years ago. The festival was started three years ago with many intentions: The UNCA music department felt there was a demand for live jazz, that the public had an interest in



Courtesy of Pertelote Files

Dr. John Gudmundson directs the BC Jazz Ensemble and helps bring music alive for his students and the public.

hearing good old music from the past, and it is also a way for UNCA to recruit. According to Haden, there is a big demand for brass players at UNCA, and this is one way to see who is out there.

Any band is welcome to play in the festival. Usually, Haden calls and invites bands to play. He lives in Greenville and associates with people at USC through graduate work, so most of the people he deals with are from South Carolina. This is why two of the three bands present this year were from South Carolina. Other

bands who have presented at the festival in the past include the University of Tennessee, Furman University and Mars Hill, as well as big name bands from the region. There is no audition, but if a band wants to solicit and they have a tight gig they are more than welcome to play (provided there is room).

Haden found many benefits in the concert.

"The students benefit from the exposure. They get to see what and who else is out there. Older people who listened to this stuff when they were young get a kick out of hearing it, it makes them feel good. And I feel like the city gets something out of it, more culture," said Haden.

"Compared to what's being played on Top 40 these days, which is all about A+B = C, how much can I get? I feel like jazz is pragmatic, democratic, individualistic. It's all American."

When asked about the rebirth of swing bands such as Cherrie Poppin' Daddies and the Brian Setzler Orchestra, Haden replied that he feels like it is good to reinterpret the past, but also good to move on. "College is the place to expand your imagination, to express yourself freely".

Because of a musical past together Tim Haden and John Gudmundson are long time friends who share a philosophy on music.

"His approach is the art of the big band, and that's why I like John Gudmundson. The stuff that he does is esoteric and demanding material. That challenges the students to be imaginative." Brevard has attended the festival every year since it started.

The festival is still growing. Haden is toying with the idea of having an all high school jazz festival, and an all college festival. He feels that to combine the two is positive in order

to show high schools what playing in a college band is like, and that musicians need to know who else is playing in their field at their level. They are also trying

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to figure out how long it should be. This year it was three bands in one day, but should it be four bands over four days? As the festival is only three years old they have plenty of time to play around and find the perfect setting.

Haden felt that this was "one of the best small ones (festivals) we've ever had"

He felt there was a good mixture with a high school band, a small college band, and a big college band.. Everybody involved from Brevard felt the day was fun and constructive.

Said Jose Acosta, soprano sax player among other instruments, "I had fun and it was a good time. The band played alright, this was our second or third year there. It was good to hear other groups too. The band from USC played some pretty neat stuff". It looks like Haden's purpose has been accomplished.

The jazz festival came ten days before the Brevard Jazz Concert on February 29, where the same tunes were played plus music from the jazz combo. Gudmundson said he felt that UNCA was a good warm up for the concert in the Porter Center, and his sentiments were shared by other members of the band.

"It's never perfect," he said, "but then why do we do live music? I'm always proud of them."

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