

Black Ink

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Black Student Movement Official Newspaper
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



Volume XIX, Number 4

February 9, 1989

Jazz Conservatory Opens in Durham

By Gerda Gallop
News Editor

By 1991, all eyes in the jazz community will be focused on Durham when it becomes home to the Thelonius Monk Institute of Jazz Studies, the first conservatory in the world dedicated exclusively to the instruction of jazz performance.

The \$12 million complex will be located in downtown Durham and will include an academic building, student dormitories and a residence hall for professors and visiting artists-in-residence by completion in 1991, said Tom Carter, executive director of the Thelonius Monk Institute in Washington, D.C.

"We are filled with excitement and anticipation about working with the local community to get them more involved with jazz," Carter said.

One hundred fifty of the top performing artists in the world will be chosen to study at the Institute on an audition basis for the 4-year program with 35 students per class, Carter said.

Jazz masters such as Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, Herbie Hancock, Wynton Marsalis and others will lend their expertise as instructors, Carter added.

A \$50 million endowment from corporate and private donors and some government funding will allow students to attend the Institute tuition-free, Carter said.

The Institute will also sponsor a summer study abroad program, seminars, workshops, performance competitions and other programs locally and nationally, Carter said.

Durham was chosen for the location of the jazz conservatory over such cities as New York, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Philadelphia and Los

Angeles for several reasons including: Thelonius Monk, for whom the Institute is named, was born in Rocky Mount and because of the continuing development of the arts in Durham. But most importantly the institute was brought here because of the efforts of Paul Jeffrey, director of jazz studies at Duke University.

Jeffrey was a friend of Monk's and played saxophone in his band during the 1970s.

"The idea for the Institute started with a chance remark at Monk's funeral when someone compared his talents to those of Beethoven," Jeffrey said. "They were both geniuses and innovators in stylistic art form."

Jeffrey and members of the Beethoven Society of America talked with Monk's family about creating a special project to commemorate the contributions of this legendary jazz performer and as a tribute to jazz itself, Carter said.

Plans for the Institute began immediately following Monk's death in 1982.

The facility is administered by the Thelonius Monk Institute, the Beethoven Society of America and the Thelonius Monk Foundation.

The Institute is also affiliated with Duke and North Carolina Central universities which were chosen to become involved in the academic planning of the Institute's programs, said Dr. Charles H. Gilchrist, chairman of NCCU's department of music and director of choral activities.

NCCU has had a state approved jazz program since 1974, added Gilchrist,

who serves on the academic board of the Institute.

According to Gilchrist, the Institute will focus on jazz performance with national and international artists as instructors, which makes the program unique.

"Most of the jazz greats learned their jazz skills by hearing or playing in what you might call 'on-the-job training', rather than in an academic setting," he said. "At the Institute, we will have artists come in and work with the students who will benefit academically from them."

Maria Fisher, president of the Beethoven Society of America, said she became involved in establishing the Institute because of her desire to preserve jazz as the unique music of America.

"Thelonius Monk was a classical jazz artist," Fisher said. "He was to jazz what Beethoven was to classical music. They both changed the genre of their music."

The Beethoven Society of America, based in Washington, D.C., is a social and cultural organization which honors classical styles of music by sponsoring concerts, performance competitions and social fundraisers, Fisher said.

"Jazz is usually judged by European classical standards," Jeffrey said. "Music should be judged and taught on its own merits, and when we start to have places like the Institute, the United States will give jazz the proper respect it never had."

Jeffrey feels that students of music do not have enough exposure to live performance and to innovators in the music world, which he says the Institute

will provide.

"The Institute will train the best musicians in jazz to raise the level of jazz awareness and performance," Jeffrey said.

Thelonius Monk was a black pianist-composer who was recognized as a jazz innovator. He was associated with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker who were all instrumental in the development of "bebop" during the 1950s.

Monk and others made significant changes in the melodic and harmonic structures of jazz and further developed jazz into a more sophisticated type of music.

Among Monk's works are: *Round About Midnight*, *Fifty-second Street Theme*, *Ruby* and *In Walked Bud*.



"For Colored Girls" Review
See Page 5

2

BCC Calendar

4

The Collegiate Athlete

6

Black-Owned Businesses

3

BSM Meeting

5

"For Colored Girls"

7

Controlled Ramblings