

CELEBRATING BIRD:

100 Years
of
Charlie
Parker

"The President's Own"

MARINE BIG BAND

Sunday, March 1 2 p.m.

Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert
Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus



PROGRAM

Ray Noble (1903–78)

“Cherokee”

Cole Porter (1891–1964)

arranged by Joe Lipman

edited by Jeffrey Sultanof

“Night and Day”

MSgt Otis Goodlett, alto saxophone soloist

Vernon Duke (1903–69)

arranged by Joe Lipman

edited by Rob DuBoff and Jeffrey Sultanof

“I Can’t Get Started”

GySgt Jacob Chmara, alto saxophone soloist

Cole Porter (1891–1964)

arranged by Joe Lipman

“What is this Thing Called Love?”

MSgt Gregory Ridlington, alto saxophone soloist

Chico O’Farrill (1921–2001)

Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite

Gilberto Valdez (1905–72) and Marion Sunshine (1894–1963)

arranged by Rene Hernandez

transcribed by Michael Philip Mossman and Omar Castaños

“Mango Mangüé”

MSgt Gregory Ridlington, alto saxophone soloist

INTERMISSION

John Klenner (1899–1955)

arranged by Jimmy Carroll

edited by Jeffrey Sultanof

“Just Friends”

MSgt Gregory Ridlington, alto saxophone soloist

George Gershwin (1898–1937), Ira Gershwin (1896–1983),

DuBose Heyward (1885–1940), Dorothy Heyward (1890–1961)

arranged by Jimmy Carroll

edited by Jeffrey Sultanof

“Summertime”

GySgt Jacob Chmara, alto saxophone soloist

Matthew Dennis (1914–2002) and Thomas Adair (1913–88)

arranged by Jimmy Carroll

edited by Rob DuBoff and Jeffrey Sultanof

“Everything Happens to Me”

MSgt Otis Goodlett, alto saxophone soloist

Gerry Mulligan (1927–96)

arranged by Gerry Mulligan

edited by Jeffrey Sultanof

“Rocker”

MSgt Gregory Ridlington, alto saxophone soloist

Charlie Parker (1920–55)

arranged by Med Flory

edited by Jeffrey Sultanof

“Now’s the Time”

Charlie Parker (1920–55) and Benny Harris (1919–75)

arranged Greg Yasinitzky

“Ornithology”

Charlie Parker (1920–55)

arranged by Rob McConnell

“Indiana/Donna Lee”

Happy 100th Birthday Charlie Parker

“You can tell the history of jazz in four words: Louis Armstrong. Charlie Parker.” – Miles Davis

Born in 1920 in Kansas City, saxophonist and jazz composer Charlie Parker’s brief life changed the course of music in the twentieth century, but his rise came with many trials. Kansas City in the 1930s offered a vibrant music scene rooted in the blues. The famous bands of Bennie Moten, Count Basie, and Jay McShann all called the city home as they honed their respective styles. All night jam sessions—or “cutting sessions” as they were called, due to their fiercely competitive edge—allowed local and visiting musicians to test themselves and learn from one another. The young Parker often snuck out of his house to witness these sessions even before he played music himself. He later joined his high school band, where he played many different instruments before settling on the saxophone at age fifteen. After learning one scale and one-and-a-half tunes, he built up his courage and attempted to sit in on a jam session with seasoned professionals. It did not go well; during his solo, he got ahead of the band and was given a subtle cue from drummer Jo Jones to stop playing. Parker missed this cue and continued playing, and Jones gave him a less subtle cue, removing a cymbal and throwing it across the stage next to Parker. This gesture brought tears of laughter to the audience and tears of humiliation to Parker, but it also



contributed to his resolve. He quit playing in Kansas City and relocated to the Ozarks in 1936, where he gained experience and made time to practice intensively—eleven to fifteen hours a day, as Parker once recounted in an interview. During this time Parker and two members of his band were involved in an automobile accident that left one dead and Parker with several broken ribs. This may have been when he first began using heroin, an addiction that would plague him throughout his life. Shortly thereafter, in 1937, Parker returned to Kansas City, where he amazed all who heard him. It was around this time that he gained the nicknames “Yardbird” and “Bird.” (One tale about the origins of this nickname involves his making the band’s car pull over after hitting a chicken in someone’s yard so that he could eat it.) The following year, he joined the Jay McShann Band and then moved to New York City in 1939. Big band concerts of this era usually pitted two bands against each other, “battle of the bands” style. In New York City, the Jay McShann Band was initially regarded as a bunch of “hicks from the sticks,” but with their Kansas City swing, dazzling soloists, and balanced arrangements, they triumphed over all other bands and became the house band at the famed Savoy Ballroom.



Due to the competitive nature of music of the era, musicians were often lured from one band to another, not unlike professional sports today. In 1942 pianist and bandleader Earl Hines hired Bird and jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie to star in his new band, through which he intended to showcase the virtuosity of the “modernists” over the more tightly structured format of traditional bands. There are, unfortunately, no recordings from his period, due to a nationwide recording ban that resulted from a dispute between the musicians’ union and record companies from 1942 and 1944. Once recording resumed, however, a whole new style of music emerged, which became known as “bebop” (so called because of how it sounded when Gillespie was teaching a tune to another musician by singing it to him). Bebop, which had been incubating under the public’s radar, suddenly took the nation by storm.

Parker’s addiction issues made him at times unreliable. He frequently pawned his instruments and showed up to gigs without a horn, when he showed up at all. As a result, many musicians, including Gillespie, quit working with him over the years. Even Birdland, the jazz club in New York named after Parker, banned him from playing after one too many no-shows. Despite his personal issues, when Bird was “on,” no one could compare, and he left the world many recordings of unprecedented brilliance in terms of their technical virtuosity, rhythmic ingenuity, advanced harmonic vocabulary, and inventive melody, while never abandoning the Kansas City blues roots from which he came.

While Parker’s rise to stardom came largely from his work with small groups (particularly his quintets

featuring him with Gillespie or Miles Davis on trumpet) today’s concert focuses on his work with larger groups and is separated into four parts.

PART 1: BIRD AND BIG BANDS

We begin with a jazz standard, “Cherokee,” originally composed by English bandleader and composer Ray Noble as the first movement of a five-part suite. The tune was recorded by the Charlie Barnett Orchestra in 1939 and subsequently became something of an anthem for Parker, who often played it at blistering speeds and found the challenging harmonic structure of the bridge fertile ground for melodic invention.

The next three pieces—“Night and Day,” “I Can’t Get Started,” and “What Is This Thing Called Love?”—harken back to the jazz tradition made prominent by Louis Armstrong of using popular songs as vehicles for improvisation. Bird regarded Joe Lipman’s arrangements as “the greatest,” and he requested Lipman be hired to write charts for a 1952 recording for the Verve record label. One striking aspect of recordings from this era is the relatively short durations of the songs. Due to the two- to five-minute limitations of records produced at that time, all solos had to be short, and songs usually ended abruptly. Undoubtedly live performances would have had a very different feel.

PART 2: CHARLIE PARKER AND THE AFRO-CUBAN STYLE

A mark of a true artist is having a consistently unique voice, no matter the context. Bird’s recordings with Latin jazz musician Machito and his Afro-Cuban orchestra are a fine example of this. While bebop was in its heyday, exciting music rooted in Cuba was also becoming popular. Parker may not have been as integral to the development of Latin jazz as Gillespie, but he did make some notable recordings with Machito. Chico O’Farrill’s *Afro Cuban Jazz Suite* was composed at the request of Norman Granz of Verve Records for a 1950 recording session of Machito’s orchestra. At the time, O’Farrill was studying musical form with a teacher from the Juilliard School in New York, but he did not intend for the suite to be classical in any particular way. The original soloists were to be Harry “Sweets” Edison on trumpet, Flip Phillips on tenor saxophone, and Buddy Rich on drums. Dur-

ing the session, however, Edison was not comfortable soloing, so Parker was called in. Bird listened to the music a few times and then played solos when he was pointed at by the conductor, without ever being given his own sheet music. The piece is through-composed but contains eight distinct sections. The second section, “Mambo,” contains Parker’s first solo. In the next section, “Transition,” there is a solo cadenza, which was performed by Phillips. In the sixth section, “Transition and Jazz,” Parker and Phillips “trade fours,” or alternate brief four-bar solos, and the section concludes with a drum solo.

To conclude the first half of today’s program, we present another piece from Machito’s Orchestra with Parker, “Mango Mangüé.” Unlike with O’Farrill’s suite, Parker was very well acquainted with the music, and his brilliant solos demonstrate this familiarity. In this solo Parker’s roots in Kansas City blues shine through the Latin rhythms of the piece.

PART 3: CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS

We open the second half with selections from the 1950 album *Charlie Parker with Strings*. Bird was a great fan of classical music, particularly Igor Stravinsky’s compositions, and he always wanted to record and tour with strings. He saw this as a way of elevating the stature of jazz to that of serious art and not merely dance music. Since Parker’s mid-century recordings with strings, countless jazz and pop artists have also collaborated with strings. While he probably envisioned more of a fusion of jazz and classical music—along the lines of the Third Stream movement of the 1960s, which synthesized jazz and classical music into a new subgenre—what Parker actually accomplished was more akin to performing popular songs and a few jazz originals arranged for the string group. The first piece, “Just Friends,” contains a magnificent solo by Bird, and the recording was one of his very favorite. On the tunes “Summertime” and “Everything Happens to Me,” Parker stayed much closer to the melody, but the nuance with which he played them and the arrangements themselves are wonderful. Gerry Mulligan’s “Rocker” is a great example of the way Bird inspired future generations of musicians. Although most beboppers wrote melodies that fit the changes of a borrowed tune, Mulligan wrote an

original melody and chord changes, only shifting to “rhythm changes” for the solo section.

PART 4: BIRD LIVES!

In the final section of today’s concert, we explore Parker’s lasting influence on the generations following him. The songs “Now’s the Time,” a twelve-bar blues composition; “Ornithology,” based on the song “How High the Moon”; and “Donna Lee,” built on the jazz standard “(Back Home Again in) Indiana,” are original Bird tunes that borrow chord progressions from well-known tunes. Recycling chord changes of existing tunes was common practice and allowed improvisers familiar terrain to play over (and also avoided having to pay royalties). This version of “Now’s the Time” comes from the library of jazz musician Med Flory and his band Supersax. The concept of this music is simple: take an existing Parker solo, harmonize it for five saxophonists, and add a rhythm section—voilà!

Composer and saxophonist Greg Yasinitsky’s arrangement of “Ornithology” provides young musicians opportunities to solo that are far less formidable than Parker found as a youth on the streets of Kansas City. For the final selection, Canadian bandleader and valve trombonist Rob McConnell’s arrangement “Indiana/Donna Lee” shows the relationship between the two tunes by including both melodies, first “Indiana” in a traditional Dixieland style, then changing gears into the unmistakably bebop tune “Donna Lee.” First recorded in 1947 by Parker and Davis, it lays an intricate melodic line over the chord changes of “Indiana” and is often played at breakneck speeds.





Master Sergeant Alan Prather, moderator

Guitarist Master Sergeant Alan Prather joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in July 1999. Master Sgt. Prather began his musical training on the guitar at age eight. After graduating in 1986 from Cuyahoga Falls High School, he attended the University of Akron in Ohio, where he earned a bachelor's degree in music education in 1991. In 2012, he earned his master's degree in music education from Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Master Sgt. Prather taught instrumental music in Nordonia Hills City School District in Ohio and freelanced with various ensembles. He is a frequent soloist who leads, performs, and sings with a variety of Marine ensembles, including Free Country, the Marine Jazz Orchestra, and the Marine Jazz Combo.



Master Sergeant Gregory Ridlington, saxophone

Saxophonist Master Sergeant Gregory Ridlington joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in April 1999. Master Sgt. Ridlington began his musical instruction at age ten. After graduating in 1991 from Mead High School in Spokane, he attended the University of North Texas, in Denton, where he received a bachelor's degree in music in 1995. In 1999, he earned a master's degree in music from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where he studied with Kenneth Radnofsky and George Garzone. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Master Sgt. Ridlington toured with the Glenn Miller Orchestra.



Master Sergeant Otis Goodlett IV, saxophone

Saxophonist Master Sergeant Otis Goodlett IV, joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in June 2000. Master Sgt. Goodlett began his musical career at age eight. After graduating from Lexington High School in 1994, he attended Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, where he earned a bachelor's degree in music education in 1998. In 1999, he received a master's degree in saxophone performance from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Master Sgt. Goodlett taught music at the American Renaissance Charter and Middle Schools in Statesville, North Carolina, and taught private music lessons.



Gunnery Sergeant Jacob Chmara, saxophone

Saxophonist Gunnery Sergeant Jacob Chmara joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in November 2007. Gunnery Sgt. Chmara began his musical training on saxophone at age ten and bass guitar at age twelve. After graduating from Keswick Christian School in St. Petersburg in 1999, he attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he earned a bachelor's degree in saxophone performance in 2003. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Gunnery Sgt. Chmara won the North American Saxophone Alliance competition in 2000, and the University of Michigan Concerto Competition in 2002.



Influencers on Charlie Parker

Art Tatum
Chu Berry
Bennie Moten
Count Basie
Roy Eldridge
Benny Carter
Johnny Hodges
Coleman Hawkins
Louis Armstrong
Lester Young
Jay McShann
Buster Smith
Biddy Fleet

Notable contemporaries of Charlie Parker

Dizzy Gillespie
Miles Davis
Kenny Clarke
Max Roach
Art Blakey
Thelonious Monk

Bud Powell
Charles Mingus
Charlie Christian

Artists influenced by Charlie Parker

Paul Desmond
Clifford Brown
Lee Morgan
Phil Woods
Dexter Gordon
Lee Konitz
Grant Green
Jackie Mclean
Sonny Stitt
Lennie Tristano
John Coltrane
Art Pepper
Sonny Rollins
Gerry Mulligan
Chris Potter
David Sanchez
Branford Marsalis
Antonio Hart
Vincent Herring
Joshua Redman
Kenny Garrett

Select Discography

Charlie Parker's recording career spanned from 1944 to 1953 and can be divided into three parts:

SAVOY 1944-48

DIAL 1946-47

VERVE 1948-53

Bird At St. Nick's. Original Jazz Classics, OJC-041, 1983, vinyl, reissue.

Bird On 52nd Street. Original Jazz Classics, OJC-114, 1984, vinyl, reissue.

Charlie Parker on Dial: Volumes 1-6. Spotlite, 1993, CD, reissue.

Charlie Parker Story, The. Savoy, SV-0105, 1991, CD, reissue.

Charlie Parker with Strings. Verve, MGC-675, 2013, CD, reissue.

Greatest Jazz Session Ever, The. Savoy, SV.

Quintet, The. Jazz at Massey Hall. Original Jazz Classics, OJC-044, 1953, vinyl, reissue.

Swedish Schnapps. Verve/Polygram, 849 393-2, 1991, CD, reissue.

South of the Border. Mercury/Blue Star, MGC-513, 1953, vinyl.





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