

THE NEW ORLEANS BRASS QUINTET : "Making Its Mark" (Liner Notes)

Bob Amato founded The New Orleans Brass Quintet in 1985, fielding a group eager to play music in the energetic, no-holds-barred manner he had sought for many years. "We enjoy taking musical risks, both in our choice of repertoire and in the dynamic manner we perform it."

For their first album, ^{1984?} The NOBQ explores the music born in America, jazz: bebop, blues, dixieland, contemporary, and standard tunes set in unique, original arrangements by writers who share the group's enthusiasm for the project: "I commissioned a dozen charts from five arrangers, told them about the five players I have, and issued only one guideline: 'write from your own instinct and leave your mark on the work.' What I got in return was a freshness and a variety that blends as an excellent collection; the writers really set the tone of the album."

That freshness and variety is evident right at the start with the opening cut, Sweet Georgia Brown. Talarico's writing easily flows from chorale to medium swing and up to a brisk stream of cascading and ascending lines, the chart providing an opportunity for each player to introduce himself briefly to us before it drives to the finish. The seamless effect of Davis' Blue Rondo a la Turk arrangement poses a challenge well met by the NOBQ; the sassy trumpet solo is that of "Sweet Willie" Singleton. Willie offers his own composition, Boubis, a lovely ballad captured in an attractive setting by Davis that serves as a solo vehicle for Singleton both in lush, gentle moods and breathtaking, double-time "breaks." Straight, No Chaser gets turned up, down and around by Garcia's pen as the Quintet enters the realms of bebop and funk with the soli teamwork of Genevay and Tidwell, solos by Singleton and Gardner, and a powerful ensemble push led by Amato, spurred on by an exchange of "fours" and a final, five-octave "bang"! Genevay's plunger-muted trombone takes center stage in St. James Infirmary, a Garcia arrangement that calls for the growling trumpet of Singleton and the piccolo trumpet of Amato as Bach meets the minor blues in the streets and alleys of old New Orleans. And the honky-tonk and stride traditions are saluted in toe-tapping

tribute by arranger Beaney when Singleton's plunger and Amato's harmon lay into this tongue-in-cheek version of the dixieland favorite, Royal Garden Blues. Amato gets the first solo break, followed by a side-stepping dance from Genevay and Tidwell; then Singleton tears into the uptempo solo spot -- the grooves feel so good, even the arrangement doesn't want to stop!

The flip side commences with Beaney's contemporary treatment of On Green Dolphin Street, initially spotlighting Tidwell's tuba amid rhythmic and harmonic surprises; Amato and Gardner navigate a sea of winding, interwoven lines that are so unique to this arrangement. Talarico charts course for an exotic journey within A Night in Tunisia, summoning Amato for the opening cadenza, ensuing solo, and a spate of screaming trumpet work that continues right up to the piece's sensational conclusion. (Listen for Tidwell's powerful tuba on the bridge following Bob's solo!) Gardner's introductory horn line provides the thematic palette for all the colors that follow in Garcia's ethereal arrangement of the work made so famous by Nat Cole, Nature Boy. Canonic exchanges, dramatic pauses, and converging, muted lines add to the somewhat disturbing mood of the piece, a mood sustained by the NOBQ's unified approach to pacing the performance. One of bebop's most demanding "heads," Donna Lee, gets a thorough inspection as arranger Ferguson toys with each phrase in turn before proceeding to the next. Individual players contribute essential lines to the contrapuntal plot, ringing down the curtain with a blistering finale! The jazz waltz Up Jumped Spring is charted uniquely in dual-flugelhorn fashion by Davis (with Singleton leading, often shadowed by Amato). The unmistakably-delightful swing feel detours enjoyably into royal concert hall-style flourishes before returning to the gentle waltz and an ending that arrives only at the performers' whim. The album closes with a contrasting Davis version of Daahoud featuring Tidwell beneath a fabric of muted, estrimato patterns. Singleton solos on the way through a powerful performance that creates tension and excitement, releasing only with the explosive, biting clash in the final moments.

The unique relationship that stems from the successful pairings of ensemble and arranger is aptly demonstrated in the hearing of this NOBQ debut. (Digital technology captures the

Quintet with a representation so accurate that even the gentle flow of air in historic
Langue Voe Gardens Playhouse cannot escape detection in the more quiet passages!)
Writers' inspiration and performers' enthusiasm are intensely focused toward the
common goal of expression, benefitting the listener and creator alike. Future
projects are in planning; look for The New Orleans Brass Quintet as it begins
to make its mark on the musical horizons ahead!

THE LOCATION

Once the private home of the Stern family, Longue Vue Gardens offers five magnificent gardens on an eight acre estate now designated as a local landmark. The Greek Revival style mansion includes a hardwood, high-ceiling Playhouse, the site chosen for this on-location recording. Our thanks to Longue Vue Director Flo Treadway, Assistant Scott Ratterree, and all the staff for their gracious and helpful assistance during the project.

(production notes)

New Orleans, LA

Recorded April 25, May 15, and June 4, 1986 at Longue Vue Gardens Playhouse, using microphones, Sony PCM-F1 Digital Audio

Processor, RTW PCM Analog and Digital Interface and Sony SLO-383 Recorder.

Recorded by Studio Solo (Slidell, LA): David Farrell, Chris Schneider, and Bobby Sellers, ~~David Farrell (Apr/May) and Chris Schneider (June)~~,

Engineers

; Antonio García, Producer; Bob Amato,

Executive Producer. Edited November 11-13, 1986 at Digital by Dickinson,

Bloomfield, NJ, using Sony SL-2000 Recorder, JVC DS-FC901 Digital

Interface, JVC CR-8500 Editing Recorder, and JVC CR-8200U Recorders,

Antonio García, Editor; Frank Dickinson, Jr., Engineer.