

Thursday, January 15, 2009, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Blue Note 7



Jimmy Katz

(l-r) Ravi Coltrane, Lewis Nash, Bill Charlap, Peter Bernstein, Nicholas Payton, Peter Washington, Steve Wilson

Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of Blue Note Records

Bill Charlap	<i>piano</i>
Nicholas Payton	<i>trumpet</i>
Ravi Coltrane	<i>tenor saxophone</i>
Steve Wilson	<i>alto saxophone & flute</i>
Peter Bernstein	<i>guitar</i>
Peter Washington	<i>bass</i>
Lewis Nash	<i>drums</i>

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Blue Note Records History

In 1925, 16-year old Alfred Lion noticed a concert poster for Sam Wooding's orchestra near his favorite ice-skating arena in his native Berlin, Germany. He had heard many of his mother's jazz records and began to take an interest in the music, but that concert night his life was changed. The impact of what he heard live touched a deep passion within him. His thirst for the music temporarily brought him to New York in 1928, where he worked on the docks and slept in Central Park to get closer to the music.

On December 23, 1938, Lion attended the celebrated *Spirituals to Swing* concert at Carnegie Hall. The power, soul and beauty with which boogie-woogie piano masters Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis rocked the stage gripped him. Exactly two weeks later, on January 6 at two in the afternoon, he brought them into a New York studio to make some recordings. They took turns at the one piano, recording four solos each before relinquishing the bench to the other man. The long session ended with two stunning duets. Blue Note Records was finally a reality.

The label's first brochure in May 1939 carried a statement of purpose that Lion rarely strayed from throughout the many styles and years during which he built one of the greatest jazz record companies in the world. It read: "Blue Note Records are designed simply to serve the uncompromising expressions of hot jazz or swing, in general. Any particular style of playing which represents an authentic way of musical feeling is genuine expression. By virtue of its significance in place, time and circumstance, it possesses its own tradition, artistic standards and audience that keep it alive. Hot jazz, therefore, is expression and communication, a musical and social manifestation, and Blue Note records are concerned with identifying its impulse, not its sensational and commercial adornments."

At the end of 1939, Lion's childhood friend Francis Wolff caught the last boat out of Nazi-controlled Germany bound for America. He found employment at a photographic studio and joined forces with Lion at night to continue Blue Note. In the late 1940s, jazz had changed again, and Lion and Wolff could no longer resist the be-bop movement. Saxophonist Ike Quebec had become a close friend and advisor to both of them. Just as

he had ushered in their swingtet phase, he would also bring them into modern jazz, introducing them to many of the new music's innovators and encouraging them to document it. Soon they were recording Fats Navarro and Bud Powell and giving Tadd Dameron, Thelonious Monk and Art Blakey, among others, their first dates as leaders. Lion and Wolff became especially fascinated with Monk and helped his career in every conceivable way. Despite critical resistance and poor sales, they recorded him frequently until 1952.

Monk's case was the first major example of what Horace Silver described in a 1980 interview, "Alfred Lion and Frank Wolff were men of integrity and real jazz fans. Blue Note was a great label to record for. They gave a first break to a lot of great artists who are still out there doing it today. They gave me my first break. They gave a lot of musicians a chance to record when all the other companies weren't interested. And they would stick with an artist, even if he weren't selling. You don't find that anymore."

Album covers started to become a distinctive component in the Blue Note mix. Frank Wolff's extraordinarily sensitive and atmospheric photos and the advanced designs of Paul Bacon, Gil Melle and John Hermansader gave Blue Note a look that was both distinctive and beautiful.

Meanwhile, Lion was making debut albums by the likes of Horace Silver, Lou Donaldson, Clifford Brown, Wynton Kelly, Elmo Hope, Kenny Drew, Tal Farlow and Kenny Burrell. He was also recording significant sessions with established modern talents such as Kenny Dorham, George Wallington, Milt Jackson, Miles Davis, Thad Jones, Sonny Rollins and Herbie Nichols.

In 1952, Alfred became intrigued by the sound of a Triumph recording that saxophonist-composer Gil Melle had done at engineer Rudy Van Gelder's parents' home in Hackensack, New Jersey, where Van Gelder had a recording setup in the living room. Blue Note had always been known for its superior sound and balance, but in Van Gelder Alfred found an intelligent, kindred soul from whom he could extract an ideal sound. Van Gelder engineered most of the major jazz recordings of the 1950s and 1960s for many labels and stated, "Alfred knew exactly what he wanted to hear. He communicated it to me and I got it for him technically. He was amazing in what he heard and how

he would patiently draw it out of me. He gave me confidence and support in any situation."

By 1954, Blue Note naturally gravitated toward a system that was much akin to a repertory theatre company: using a revolving cast of sidemen and leaders who would assure them the creativity, compatibility and dependability that Blue Note sought. Leaders would appear on each other's projects: recurring sidemen would be groomed to grow into leaders. Sometimes such instances could be purely serendipitous. Horace Silver's first session was to have been a Lou Donaldson quartet date that Lou had to cancel at the last minute to go out of town. Alfred thought it was time for Horace to make his debut anyway and offered him the same date as his own trio session.

On the subject of Horace Silver, Lion felt in late 1954 that Horace should do a record with horns. He and the pianist arrived at the ideal personnel: Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley, Doug Watkins and Art Blakey. The date went so well that these five men decided on a common purpose and formed a cooperative band called the Jazz Messengers. The group's idea was to present soulful modern jazz that incorporated the language of bebop (without the virtuosic clichés of its second-generation followers) and the soulful, warm roots of blues and gospel music. It worked, and it became, with Van Gelder's engineering, the Blue Note sound.

Soon after, Blue Note would set in motion another trend in jazz. On the advice of Babs Gonzales and other musicians, Lion and Wolff ventured out to hear a Philadelphia pianist who had abandoned his original instrument and woodshedded intently for more than a year on a rented Hammond organ in the corner of a warehouse. As Frank Wolff told it in 1969, "I first heard Jimmy Smith at Small's Paradise in January 1956. It was his first gig in New York. He was a stunning sight. A man in convulsions, face contorted, crouched over in apparent agony, his fingers flying, his feet dancing over the pedals. The air was filled with waves of sound I had never heard before. The noise was shattering. A few people sat around, puzzled but impressed. He came off the stand, smiling, the sweat dripping all over him. 'So what do you think?' 'Yeah,' I said. That's all I could say. Alfred had already made up his mind."

Around the same time, Wolff met Reid Miles, a commercial artist who was a devout classical music

fan. They struck up a rapport and Miles became the designer for the label for the next 11 years. He relied on Alfred to describe the mood and intent of each album and then created wonderful graphic covers that were different from each other, but still maintained an identifiable Blue Note look.

It was 1956, and the cast that gave the label its sound and identity—Lion, Wolff, Van Gelder, Miles, Blakey, Silver and Smith—was complete. For the next decade or so, Blue Note dominated the artistic and commercial courses of the music. As Wolff once said, "We established a style, including recording, pressing and covers. The details made the difference."

In addition to continuing its hard-bop tradition with Morgan, Mobley, Silver, Blakey and younger men like Hancock, Green, Wayne Shorter, Bobby Hutcherson, Freddie Hubbard and Joe Henderson, the label also moved cautiously into the avant-garde. Their first project was Jackie McLean's 1963 group with Grachan Moncur, Bobby Hutcherson and Tony Williams, all of who would soon be recording their own albums as well. Tony's albums led to an association with Sam Rivers. There were also impressive works by Larry Young and Andrew Hill as well as the grand masters of the avant-garde: Cecil Taylor, Eric Dolphy and Ornette Coleman.

When Liberty Records made them an offer to sell out of Blue Note in 1965, they took it. Lion stayed on until mid-1967, when health problems forced him to retire. Wolff and Duke Pearson divided the producing chores, and the roster still maintained many fine straight-ahead artists, but jazz was moving into another cycle of hard times, economically and artistically. There were few working groups and few decent, good-paying clubs. The scene did not provide an environment in which it could nurture young talent and perpetuate itself.

Wolff remained at Blue Note until his death in 1971. With Wolff's death and the lessening involvement of Pearson, the label's emphasis shifted more toward fusion. Donald Byrd discovered Larry Mizell and asked him to produce *Black Byrd*, a huge hit. Mizell later produced Bobbi Humphrey, who was brought to the label by Lee Morgan.

The old Blue Note managed to survive through a program of reissues and previously unreleased material that Blue Note executive Charlie Lourie and Michael Cuscuna started in 1975. That program survived sporadically until 1981: The last

active Blue Note artist was Horace Silver, who recorded for the label from 1952 until 1980.

In 1982, Lourie and Cuscuna started Mosaic Records as a by-product of trying to convince current owner Capitol Records to restart Blue Note. The first releases were complete Blue Note collections by Thelonious Monk and Albert Ammons-Meade Lux Lewis. In mid-1984, EMI hired Bruce Lundvall to resurrect the label in earnest in the United States. The label was re-launched the following February with the *One Night with Blue Note* concert of all-star bands composed of new and old Blue Note artists at New York's Town Hall. Blue Note was reborn.

While Lundvall did bring many of the label's early stars back home to Blue Note, including Stanley Turrentine, McCoy Tyner, Jackie McLean, Jimmy Smith, Kenny Burrell, Tony Williams, Freddie Hubbard and Andrew Hill, he also began signing new talent including pianists Michel Petrucciani, Don Pullen and Eliane Elias, and the unique young guitarist Stanley Jordan, whose 1984 debut album *The Magic Touch* went on to become a gold record.

One very important way in which Lundvall distinguished himself from Lion was in his signing of vocalists. A 1962 recording of singer Dodo Greene remains the lone vocal record from the Lion years, but Lundvall had an ear for singers, and immediately signed two artists that would go on to establish themselves among the most distinctive of their generation: Dianne Reeves and Bobby McFerrin. In the early 1990s, he added two more signature stylists to the Blue Note roster, Kurt Elling and Cassandra Wilson, the latter whose first two albums, *Blue Light 'Til Dawn* and *New Moon Daughter*, were groundbreaking in their blending of jazz with blues and folk music.

Lundvall also became enamored of Cuban jazz during several trips to Cuba, and went on to bring two brilliant pianists, Chucho Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba, into the Blue Note family. Blue Note continued to build a powerful roster of mainstream jazz talent, including pianists Benny Green, Jacky Terrasson and Bill Charlap, guitarist Pat Martino and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis.

The label also maintained its longstanding tradition of promoting sidemen to become leaders. The guitarist John Scofield led an acclaimed quartet that featured the saxophonist Joe Lovano, who

has since gone on to record nearly 20 recordings of his own as a leader. Alto saxophonist Greg Osby introduced Blue Note to pianist Jason Moran and vibraphonist Stefon Harris. Trumpeter Terence Blanchard, himself a graduate of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, has become a great mentor of young talent, with pianist Robert Glasper, guitarist Lionel Loueke and pianist Aaron Parks coming through Blanchard's band and then going on to make their own debuts with the label.

In 1992, Blue Note scored one of the biggest hits in its history when the label granted permission for a group of British hip-hoppers called Us3 to access their vaults for a remix project called *Hand on the Torch*. The album contained a hit single in "Cataloop (Flip Fantasia)," an irrepressible dance tune built off of the Herbie Hancock classic, "Cataloupe Island." The currents of jazz and hip-hop had without a doubt begun to cross. Major artists from the hip-hop world, including A Tribe Called Quest and the Beastie Boys, had already begun looking to Blue Note's late-1960s/early-1970s catalog of funky jazz—from Grant Green to Lonnie Smith to Ronnie Foster—for samples to use as the basis for their tracks. Sometimes the adulation was more overt, as with *Shades of Blue*, an acclaimed Blue Note remix project by the underground hip-hop producer Madlib.

In 2001, Lundvall signed a young singer who was to become not only the bestselling artist in Blue Note history, but also one of the bestselling artists of all time. Norah Jones had studied jazz piano before moving to New York and falling in with a circle of singer-songwriters. Her 2002 debut album, *Come Away with Me*, an unassuming album of soft spoken original and choice covers of country, R&B and jazz songs, became a runaway success, sweeping the 2003 Grammy Awards with eight wins and going on to sell over 20 million copies worldwide.

Norah's success made it possible for Blue Note to expand its scope into many other areas of meaningful adult music, including singer-songwriters Amos Lee and R&B legends Al Green and Anita Baker. All the while, Blue Note has continued to strive to remain the home of The Finest In Jazz Since 1939, maintaining the best roster of current jazz talent of any jazz label in the world and continuing to celebrate its unrivaled history and catalog.

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One of the world's premiere jazz pianists, **Bill Charlap** has performed with many leading artists of our time, from Phil Woods and Tony Bennett to Gerry Mulligan and Wynton Marsalis. He is known for his interpretations of American popular song and has recorded albums featuring the music of Hoagy Carmichael, Leonard Bernstein and George Gershwin.

In 1997, Mr. Charlap formed the Bill Charlap Trio with bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington (not related). In 2000, he was signed to Blue Note Records and has since received two Grammy Award nominations: for *Somewhere: The Songs of Leonard Bernstein* and, most recently, *The Bill Charlap Trio: Live at the Village Vanguard*.

Born in New York City, Mr. Charlap began playing the piano at age three. His father was Broadway composer Moose Charlap, whose credits include *Peter Pan*, and his mother is singer Sandy Stewart, who appeared on the *Ed Sullivan* and *Perry Como* shows and earned a Grammy nomination for her recording of "My Coloring Book." In 2005, Mr. Charlap and Ms. Stewart released the acclaimed *Love Is Here to Stay* on Blue Note Records. Mr. Charlap is married to jazz pianist Renee Rosnes. The two artists often collaborate in a duo piano setting.

Mr. Charlap serves as the artistic director of the 92nd Street Y's *Jazz in July* festival in New York.

Nicholas Payton was born September 26, 1973, in New Orleans, Louisiana, into a musical family. Mr. Payton took up the trumpet at the age of four. Encouraged by his pianist/singer mother and his bass-playing father, he swiftly reached a level of proficiency that enabled him, at the age of nine, to play alongside his father in the Young Tuxedo Brass Band. At age 12, he was a member of the All-Star Jazz Band, playing with this group both locally and at European festivals.

Encouraged by Wynton Marsalis, he played semi-professionally throughout his school years, and then enrolled at the New Orleans Centre for Creative Arts, where he studied the trumpet and music theory and undertook classical training.

He next attended the University of New Orleans, where he studied with Ellis Marsalis.

During the early 1990s, Mr. Payton toured throughout the United States and Europe with many leading jazz musicians, including Clark Terry, Marcus Roberts, the Jazz Futures II project and Elvin Jones, and as a member of the Rising Star tour of Europe in 1996. He has recorded with Marcus Roberts, Elvin Jones, Jesse Davis, Teresa Brewer, Joe Henderson, Manhattan Projects, the New Orleans Collective, Courtney Pine, Joshua Redman, in a trio with Christian McBride and Mark Whitfield, and with fellow trumpeters Roy Hargrove and Marsalis. He appeared on the soundtrack album for the 1996 Robert Altman film, *Kansas City*. Memorably, he appeared at club engagements with veteran trumpeter Doc Cheatham, and recorded with him shortly before Cheatham's death in 1997. Mr. Payton has recorded numerous albums as a leader; his most recent, for Nonesuch Records, is entitled *Into the Blue*.

Born the second son of John and Alice Coltrane in 1965 in Long Island, New York, and raised in the Los Angeles area, **Ravi Coltrane** was named after Indian sitar legend Ravi Shankar. Starting in middle school, Mr. Coltrane began playing clarinet, though he grew up hearing a variety of music. In 1986, Mr. Coltrane entered the California Institute of the Arts to pursue musical studies, focusing on the saxophone.

In 1991, he connected with Elvin Jones, his father's renowned drummer from the 1960s, and received his first taste of the jazz life. Within a year, he relocated to New York City and began playing with a variety of players, including Jack DeJohnette, Wallace Roney, Geri Allen, Kenny Barron, Joe Lovano, Joanne Brackeen and Steve Coleman. Mr. Coltrane's relationship with Mr. Coleman throughout the 1990s was particularly influential on the budding saxophonist, and included tours and appearances on several Coleman albums.

In 1997, after performing on more than 30 recordings as a sideman, Mr. Coltrane recorded his first album as a leader, *Moving Pictures*, for RCA Victor Records. *From the Round Box*, Mr. Coltrane's second album, was released in 2000. In 2002, Mr. Coltrane launched his own

recording company, RKM Music, with albums by trumpeter Ralph Alessi and saxophonist Michael McGinnis. That same year, Coltrane produced *Legacy*, a four-disc thematic study of his father's career, for Verve, and co-produced and penned liner notes for the Deluxe Edition repackaging of *A Love Supreme*. Mr. Coltrane continues his role as family archivist.

The year 2003 brought the release of Mr. Coltrane's third album, *Mad 6*, on Columbia Records. Mr. Coltrane was the driving and guiding force behind his mother Alice Coltrane's return to recording after a 26-year hiatus. *Translinear Light*, featuring performances by Alice and Mr. Coltrane, along with Charlie Haden, Jack DeJohnette, James Genus, Jeff Watts, Oran Coltrane and others, was released in late September 2004 on Impulse! Records.

Mr. Coltrane's fourth album as a leader, *In Flux*, was released in 2005 on the Savoy Jazz label, and his new recording, *Blending Times*, will be released on Savoy Jazz this winter.

In addition to working and traveling with his own group, Mr. Coltrane has made guest performances with McCoy Tyner, Pharoah Sanders, Carlos Santana, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, John McLaughlin, Michael Brecker, George Duke, Stanley Clarke, Branford Marsalis, and as a member of the collaborative group, Saxophone Summit, alongside Dave Liebman and Joe Lovano.

A native of Hampton, Virginia, **Steve Wilson** began his formal training at age 12. Playing saxophone, oboe and drums in school bands, he also played in various R&B and funk bands throughout his teens, and went on to a yearlong stint with singer Stephanie Mills. He attended Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, where he studied and performed with Jimmy and Percy Heath, Jon Hendricks, Jaki Byard, John Hicks, Frank Foster and Ellis Marsalis.

Mr. Wilson has brought his distinctive sound to more than 100 recordings led by such celebrated and wide-ranging artists as Chick Corea, George Duke, Michael Brecker, Dave Holland, Dianne Reeves, Bill Bruford, Gerald Wilson, Maria Schneider, Joe Henderson, Charlie Byrd, Billy

Childs, Karrin Allyson, Don Byron, Bill Stewart, James Williams and Mulgrew Miller. Mr. Wilson has seven recordings under his own name, collaborating with such stellar musicians as Lewis Nash, Carl Allen, Steve Nelson, Cyrus Chestnut, Greg Hutchinson, Dennis Irwin, James Genus, Larry Grenadier, Ray Drummond, Ben Riley and Nicholas Payton.

In 1986, he became a member of O.T.B (Out of the Blue), a sextet of young players recording on Blue Note Records. In 1988, he toured the United States and Europe with Lionel Hampton. Wilson was the subject of a *New York Times* profile, "A Sideman's Life," highlighting his work with Ralph Peterson, Jr., Michele Rosewoman, Renee Rosnes, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Joanne Brackeen, the American Jazz Orchestra, the Mingus Big Band, the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, Leon Parker and Buster Williams. In 1996, he joined the acclaimed Dave Holland Quintet, and from 1998–2001 he was a member of Chick Corea's Grammy-winning sextet, Origin.

Mr. Wilson's latest two recordings are *Passages* on the Stretch Records label and *Soulful Songs* on the MaxJazz Records label.

Born September 3, 1967, in New York City, **Peter Bernstein** has been an active and important member of the vibrant New York jazz scene since 1989. He has participated in numerous recordings and performed at many festivals, concerts and clubs with musicians from all generations.

Mr. Bernstein is a member of the long-standing collaborative trio with Larry Goldings and Bill Stewart. They have performed all over the world, and maintain an annual weeklong engagement at the famed Village Vanguard in New York City.

As a leader, Mr. Bernstein has made five recordings for the Criss Cross Jazz label and counts Brad Mehldau as a featured sideman on four releases, including his latest, *Stranger in Paradise*, on the Japanese imprint Venus Records.

While a student at The New School, Mr. Bernstein met the legendary guitarist Jim Hall, who proved instrumental in helping to nurture Mr. Bernstein's career. Mr. Bernstein performed as part of Lou Donaldson's group throughout the 1990s, was a member of Joshua Redman's band

About the Artists

from 1995 through 1997, and toured the world as part of Diana Krall's quartet from 1999 to 2001.

In addition to his recording and touring, Mr. Bernstein has taught at The Juilliard School, Berklee College of Music, North Texas State University, the New School Jazz Program and the Jazz Conservatory in Amsterdam.

Perhaps the most recorded bassist of his generation, **Peter Washington** has a discography of over 350 recordings that grows on a near-weekly basis.

Born in Los Angeles, he majored in English literature at UC Berkeley, and while in San Francisco was invited by Art Blakey to move to New York and join his Jazz Messengers. From there, Mr. Washington became part of two of jazz's most celebrated trios: the Tommy Flanagan Trio and, for the past ten years, the Bill Charlap Trio.

Mr. Washington's freelance work roster is a "Who's Who" of jazz. Among the instrumentalists he has worked with are Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry, David Sánchez, David Hazeltine, Regina Carter and the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, in addition to vocalists Chris Conner, Mark Murphy, Paula West and Ernestine Anderson.

Mr. Washington has recorded and/or performed with many of the legendary Blue Note Records recording artists, including Bobby Hutcherson, Johnny Griffin, Freddie Hubbard, Donald Byrd, Milt Jackson and Jackie McLean.

Lewis Nash is the drummer of choice for an incredible array of artists, from the masters of the music to the hottest young players of today, and is equally in demand as a clinician and educator.

Born in Phoenix, Arizona, Mr. Nash developed an early interest in music and began playing drums at age 10. He performed with local jazz groups by the time he was 18, and by 21 he had become the "first call" jazz drummer in Phoenix, working with Sonny Stitt, Art Pepper, Red Garland, Lee Konitz, Barney Kessell and Slide Hampton.

In 1981, Mr. Nash moved to New York City and joined the trio of the great jazz vocalist Betty Carter. For nearly four years, he toured internationally with Ms. Carter, and is featured on three of her recordings, including the Grammy-winning *Look What I Got*.

World-renowned bassist Ron Carter hired Mr. Nash in 1984. As a member Mr. Carter's nonet, quintet and quartet, Mr. Nash toured extensively and is featured on several of the bassist's recordings. Mr. Nash then joined Branford Marsalis's band, and their work is documented on Mr. Marsalis's Grammy-nominated recording, *Random Abstract*, as well as on two videos: *Royal Garden Blues* (directed by Spike Lee) and *Branford Marsalis: Steep*.

When trombone master J. J. Johnson returned to the scene in 1988, he chose Mr. Nash to provide rhythm duties for his band. That same year, Mr. Nash joined the Don Pullen-George Adams Quartet, succeeding the late Dannie Richmond. In 1989, Mr. Nash toured with legendary saxophonist Sonny Rollins. He has also performed with Stan Getz, Art Farmer, Clark Terry and Milt Jackson.

From 1990 to 2000, Mr. Nash was a member of the Tommy Flanagan Trio, and he is featured on seven CD recordings with the late piano master. During this period, Mr. Nash also toured and recorded with both the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. His impressive discography (over 300 recordings) includes projects with jazz legends Dizzy Gillespie, Oscar Peterson, Benny Carter, Hank Jones and John Lewis, as well as new jazz stars Diana Krall, Joe Lovano and Roy Hargrove. Demonstrating his stylistic diversity, Mr. Nash is also featured on recordings by Natalie Cole, Bette Midler, Nancy Wilson, Kenny Rankin, Melissa Manchester and George Michael.

These days, Mr. Nash regularly tours with Cedar Walton and also leads his own band. His latest recording as a leader is entitled *Stompin' at the Savoy* on the M&I Jazz Records label.