



## Sign Here!

Whenever I return from one of the family visits over in Canada I do so with any number of new entries in the 'story idea' file for 'A Story A Week'. Being away from my normal routines always creates new opportunities for things to happen, some of them predictable, some less so. Let me tell you today about an episode that totally surprised me in its unexpectedness - while I was in Vancouver this time, somebody over there asked me for my autograph!

The story actually begins about 35 years ago, in the days when I was a young 'would-be' musician. After it had become pretty clear that I wouldn't be simply waltzing into a flute chair in the local symphony orchestra, I started to search out experiences in a wider range of musical activities. In a sort of half-hearted way, I began to follow in my father's footsteps: picking up the baritone sax, I played for a time in a 'rehearsal band', and this led to a real job playing tenor sax in a hotel orchestra for around half a year or so. As it would turn out, my personality really wasn't much suited to the jazz world, as I was (and still am) a kind of 'square' guy who feels much more at home in an environment where things are well-planned and organized, rather than being free and 'ad-lib'.

But I hadn't learned that yet, so plowed ahead with my jazz 'studies'. One of the things I did that I thought would help me play better was to transcribe a number of jazz solos off recordings - writing down all the notes that had been improvised, and analyzing the structure of the solos. I did this with some famous recordings, and I then had the idea of transcribing some solos recorded by a very fine local tenor sax player, Fraser McPherson. He was a hugely respected player, very much in the Zoot Sims style; if he had been based in LA or New York instead of Vancouver, he would almost certainly have become quite famous.

I began to transcribe his solos on an album of jazz standards recorded at a live concert that he had given with his jazz trio. I found the work pleasurable and interesting, and ended up transcribing every note he had played on the entire album. After it was done, some friends asked me for copies, and - having received Fraser's OK to do so - I copied the whole thing out neatly, added chord notations (these were supplied to me by the guitarist in Fraser's trio - Oliver Gannon), and then had a number of copies run off at a local printing shop.

That was of course technically illegal, as the original songs on which the performance was based were of course copyrighted, but the production of what are known as 'fake books' is a long-established practice in the jazz scene, so I had no hesitation about doing this. Because of this 'grey zone' though, I didn't put my name on the booklets I was selling; the project was 'anonymous'.

Time went by; I moved away from Vancouver; this episode faded into the past.

What brought it all back was a phone call that came in one morning during this recent trip while my brother and I were sitting together in my parents' living room. It was from a friend of my fathers who had heard that I was in town. The story he told was far too long to recount here, but the salient points were this: *he* was the man who had been the promoter of the original concert that had been recorded to make that album. He had many years ago obtained a copy of the transcription of the solos and had never known who made it, but

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completely coincidentally he had just a few days ago been in casual conversation with somebody who had known me back in those days, and the unknown links in the chain had suddenly become filled in.

His copy of the album transcription was one of the few souvenirs he had of his concert promoting days, and was a treasure for him. His request on the phone? If he drove over and brought the booklet, would I autograph it for him? I of course acquiesced instantly, and shortly after, there I was signing the booklet with a flourish, to the gentleman's great pleasure.

After he had left, my brother tossed out a rather incredible thought: wouldn't it be funny - after all the things I have done in the printmaking world over so many years - to be remembered in the end mostly for something I had done so casually so many years ago!

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