A Man Called Art

Pianist Fritz Pauer remembers flugelhorn virtuoso Art Farmer, who inspired the jazz world from his adopted home Vienna for the past four decades. As a member of Farmer's quartet and quintet formations, Pauer commends his colleague especially for the freedom he left his musicians to develop musically.

By Fritz Pauer and Wolfgang Weitlaner

The Austrian jazz world has lost one of its greatest virtuosos: 71-year-old Art Farmer, who lived in Vienna for the past three decades, succumbed to heart disease in a New York hospital on October 5, 1999. Arthur Stewart Farmer made a substantial contribution to the country's musical industry. He left the United States for Vienna, "when the bottom was falling out of jazz in New York." He married Mechthilde, an Austrian banker, and fathered a son, Georg, today also an accomplished musician, in 1972. In his authoritative *Jazz Book*, Joachim E. Berendt included the Iowa-born musician among the world's best flugelhorn players, as he combines "liquid mobility with soulful expressiveness and a strong jazz feeling."

Art Farmer emerged from the Lionel Hampton Band in 1952, performing with stars such as Coleman Hawkins, Thelonius Monk, Charles Mingus, and Art Blakey. At the time he rented his horn for ten dollars a night to a young, temporarily trumpetless musician by the name of Miles Davis, who would call him "a real nice dude, real quiet, but a hell of a trumpet player" in his 1989 autobiography.

In explaining his inspiration, Art Farmer once said, "What I try to do with a song is to get as much enjoyment out of playing as I can. The degree of enjoyment depends on just how natural it seems to me, and the natural feeling of playing this horn comes from really losing yourself in it, getting to the place where the song is second nature and you don't have to think about it."

Art Farmer's signature contribution to jazz is his mastery of the flumpet, a new instrument especially designed for him. It combines the scale of a Monette B-Flat trumpet with the warm timbre of something between a trumpet, a flugelhorn and a trombone. Although originally trained as a trumpeter, Mr. Farmer had not played it for many years because he did not care for any commercially available instruments and thus stayed with his flugelhorn. In the early 1990s, *New York Times* music critic Peter Watrous described Art Farmer as "making an audience concentrate to hear his story, each of his phrases hinting at a previous idea or adding shadows to the melody he was just about to play." Together with Gerry Mulligan, Art Farmer reached a place where jazz improvisation rarely finds itself: the realm of the dream.

Art Farmer collaborated with his quartet's and quintet's pianist Fritz Pauer for the past 30 years by popularizing the latter's compositions on his albums. Art Farmer once called his younger band member "together with Friedrich Gulda and Joe Zawinul one of 'the trio' of exceptional pianists and composers from Austria." This is how Fritz Pauer remembers his close friend and band leader:

"I first heard Art Farmer play live at the Old Eden Saloon in Berlin in 1965. At that time, the band did not use any amplifiers and just relied on acoustic sound. Art broke into amazing musical slurs on his flugelhorn. His extensive repertoire included the best standards from Irving Berlin to Burt Bacharach. Later I found out that Art first studied a standard's original melody and lyrics. He internalized both melody and lyrics to

such an extent that he could take the harmonic structure of a piece to a new musical realm, i.e. an intricate web of upbeats, ornaments, variations, rhythmic shifts, climaxes, and conclusions. Never wanting to overpower his audience with his interpretations, Art always sought the best expression possible. From the beginning, his way of making music moved me. I felt happy, fulfilled and inspired.

"After his stint at the Old Eden Saloon had come to an end, Art was engaged at the Dugs Night Club. I had already had a one-year run in the club's house band with drummer Joe Nay, one of Kenny Clarke's students, and bassist Dieter Gutzkow. At our first afternoon rehearsal Art made us play new compositions by Carla Bley, which had just been recorded in New York with Steven Kuhn, Pete LaRoca, and Steve Swallow.

"Even though Art had composed many pieces at that time - among them the twelve-bar blues 'Farmer's Market,' which was made world-famous by Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross - he continued to take lessons with George Russell. He constantly searched for new themes that would help him develop his musical capabilities, for example George Russell's 'Nita' featured on the album Portrait of Art Farmer.

"During rehearsals, Art Farmer only pointed out the most important things. He himself was extremely focused and very well prepared, but gave us the utmost freedom to develop our musical ideas. He exuded an indescribable calmness. By engaging the band members in interplays and through signals and skewed intervals, he created the necessary tension in the pieces. In spite of his extraordinary musical vocabulary, he never ceased to surprise us with new melodic inventions."

"'You have to keep things alive and interesting,' was his motto. He practiced several hours every day to achieve this goal. I will never forget how easily and fluently he improvised on themes at a breakneck speed. When I participated in the Competition for Modern Jazz in Vienna in 1966, which had been initiated by Friedrich Gulda, I met Art Farmer again. He was one of the jurors at the contest. I won the first prize for jazz piano. In 1968 Erich Kleinschuster founded his new sextet. Thanks to Mr. Kleinschuster's work at the ORF Broadcasting Station and the Conservatory of Music in Vienna, jazz saw a revival in Vienna. Art Farmer and Duke Ellington's former bass-player Jimmy Woode settled in Vienna and I was able to return to my hometown as well.

"Ever since that time, Art Farmer showed interest in my own compositions. He recorded the tunes 'Confab' and 'Whole Tone Stomp' for his album *From Vienna with Art*.

"I think that one of Art's dreams came true at that time: he recorded an album of ballads for Mainstream Records at the ORF Studio with musical director Johannes Fehring. All the musicians involved were quite startled when Art slowed the original tempo of most tracks by more than half. I remember Art interrupting us several times by saying in unmistakable earnest, 'Slower! Much slower!' Thanks to the wonderful arrangements, the sensitive conductor Johannes Fehring and Art's wise intentions, we completed a record that is marked by an enchantingly calm mood. Its title track 'Gentle Eyes' is one of my own compositions. While recording the string part of the track 'God Bless the Child,' Art suddenly whispered to me, 'Play something.' As if guided by a magic power, I improvised some melodic bows over the string part. At that time, we also went on tour with Art and his trio. A young ambitious saxophonist named Harry Sokal showed up in our circle at that time. One day I introduced him to Art. This is how the Art Farmer Quintet was founded. Paulo Cardoso played the bass and Joris Dudli percussion. We then landed an exclusive contract with the Viennese jazz club Jazzland, which enabled us to perform there for a week at least twice a year. This contract lasted until last year.

"Between 1976 and 1986 I was a frequent guest in Pavel Polansky's radio program 'Musik zum Träumen.' Art and I recorded several duos for this show. This is how our duo album *Azure* came into being. It was recorded at the Konzerthaus Studio in Vienna. Art chose all the tracks. He and his wife Mechthilde invited me to stay with them in their house during rehearsal and recording time. That is why we were able to thoroughly prepare ourselves. As Art was given to self-criticism and a drive for perfection, we went back to the studio to record some tracks anew. Art worked intensively with the musical material and provided ornaments for my compositions 'Night Time,' 'Sound with an Empty Room,' and 'Song of Praise.' I was also able to play a piano solo for variations on the Austrian folk song 'Blaue Fensterln,' which I renamed 'Blue Windows.' It would take a long time to list all our activities. With the quartet, we toured Brazil for a week and with the quintet we performed at the New York jazz club Sweet Basil's. We received rave reviews. All the band members deeply regret that the Art Farmer Quintet no longer exists. Art Farmer's sound, our rich memories and his wonderful personality will outlive his passing."

Photo far left: Art Farmer (center) with Fritz Pauer (right) and Ray Brown; © Peter Brunner, Vienna.

Fritz Pauer and Wolfgang Weitlaner, who is a journalist, both live in Austria.

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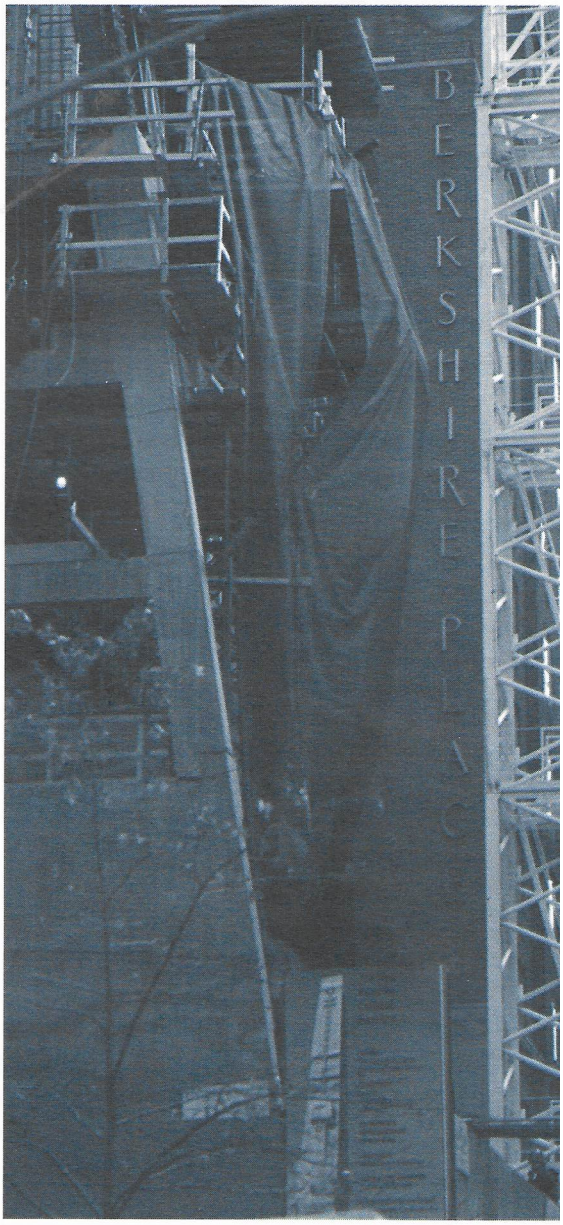

Building The Future

Raimund Abraham's project for the new Austrian Cultural Institute is now under construction at 11 East 52nd Street in Manhattan. It promises to become one of those rare buildings combining timeless significance with highest relevance to the era it is built in. The photograph, taken in mid-December 1999, shows the building having reached the seventh of twenty-three floors.

Fashion Fast Forward

Is fashion something we wear, or does it wear us? This and other questions are the topic of an unusual show from Vienna on view in San Francisco.

Exporting Export

Enfant terrible and crowd-shocker since the sixties, feminist conceptual artist Valie Export is still going strong.

Everywhere At Home

Sociologist and composer Ernest Manheim has so perfected the art of adapting to changing surroundings and circumstances that he can inspire us all.

Concert Tour: Artis Quartet

The Austrian Artis Quartet will be on a concert tour in the United States this February. They will perform works by Joseph Haydn, Dimitri Shostakovich, Ludwig van Beethoven, Alexander Zemlinsky, and Anton Webern. Following is their schedule: February 11, The Smithsonian Associates, Washington D.C., 202/357-4800; February 12, The Maestro Foundation, Santa Monica, CA, 310/319-9278; February 13, Chamber Music Albuquerque, Albuquerque, NM, 505/277-3052; February 15, Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC, 704/434-2361; February 17, Miami Friends of Chamber Music, Miami, Fl, 305/373-3101; February 18, Sebastian River Performing Arts, Vero Beach, FL, 561/562-0045; February 20, Music at Kohl Mansion, Burlingham, CA, 650/343-8463; February 23, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH, 216/421-7340.

Concert Tour: Affetti Musicali

The Austrian early music ensemble Affetti Musicali, consisting of members Marianne Rônez, baroque violin, Johannes Kubitschek, baroque cello, and Ernst Kubitschek, cembalo and organ, is on a concert tour in the United States this February. They will mainly play German and Austrian baroque music of the late 17th century on period instruments. Following is their schedule: February 13, Congregational Church, Evanston, IL, 773/774-5706; February 16, Columbia College, Chicago, IL, 773/774-5706; February 18, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, VA, 804/963-4690; February 19, State College, Utah Valley, UT, 801/222-8347; February 28, Queens College, New York, NY, 718/997-3800.

Commemoration: Project Mauthausen 2000

On May 7, 2000, the Vienna Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle will perform a special act of commemoration when they play Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in the quarry of the former concentration camp at Mauthausen, Austria. For further information please contact the Jewish Welcome Service, Stephansplatz 10, A-1010 Vienna, Tel.: +43/1/533-8891 or read the article in the upcoming issue of *Austria Kultur*.

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