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## Art Farmer – *Council Bluffs' Jazz Hall of Famer*

For a person to have a contented life they have to find something that challenges them and respond to it.

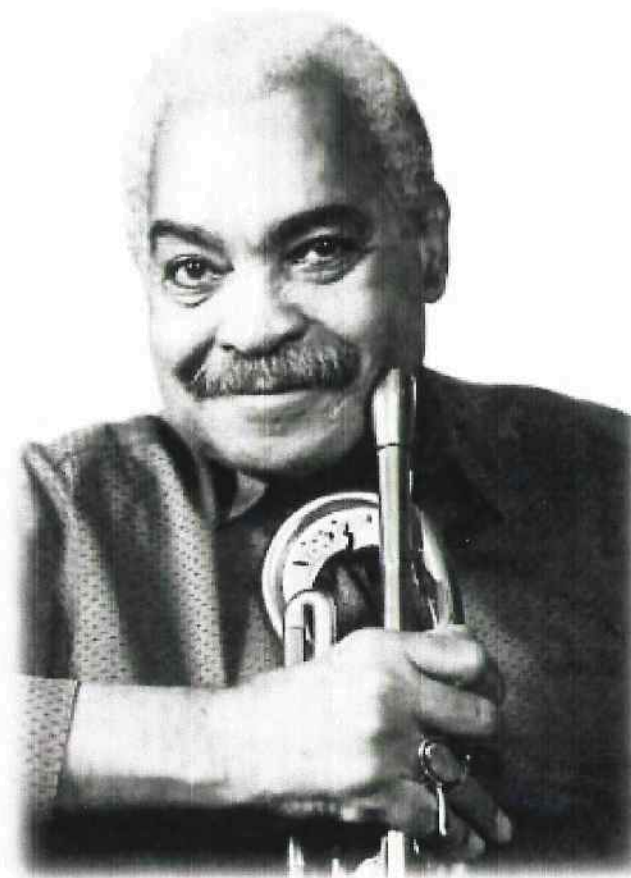
- Art Farmer, 1995

Few people in this city would know that one of the world's leading jazz musicians was born at 2201 4th Avenue in Council Bluffs in 1928. Art Farmer and his identical twin brother, Addison, went on to become two of the most respected jazz musicians in America and Europe.

Art Farmer always considered Council Bluffs his hometown although the family moved to Phoenix, Arizona when the brothers were youngsters. The boys grew up in the Phoenix area, where they studied piano and violin in grammar school.

In high school, Art often played the bugle for flag-raising ceremonies and was assigned the sousaphone in the school marching band. It was not long before he was handed a cornet, which helped launch his long and brilliant career.

Art and Addison joined a dance band while in high school and before their senior year, traveled west to Los Angeles to experience first hand the thriving jazz scene on Central Avenue. Shortly after meeting jazz greats



*Art Farmer with his flumpet, March 19, 1999.*

*Photo: © Berit Bolt*

Hampton Hawes, Sonny Criss and Charlie Parker, Art was playing in the bands of Horace Henderson, Floyd Ray and Jimmy Mundy.

In those youthful days, Art and bandleader Johnny Otis went to New York, where Art took music lessons and played for a short time with the Jay McShann Band. He recorded his first sides in the early 1950s, including the famous, "Farmer's Market" with tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray. He joined the popular Lionel Hampton Band and was soon sharing the bandstand with the likes of Clifford Brown, Quincy Jones and Gigi Gryce. The rising Iowa star also played in the mid-fifties with such headliners as Coleman Hawkins, Thelonius Monk and Art Blakey.

Farmer's work with the Horace Silver Quintet and the Gerry Milligan Quartet earned him a reputation for being able to play anything. He soon formed his own sextet, The Farmer-Golson Jazztet, which he co-directed with saxophonist Benny Golson. It was one of the most popular bands of the bop era.

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Tragedy struck in 1963, when Art's twin brother Addison died of a brain aneurysm at the age of 35. In his short career, he had become a highly regarded bassist, playing with such notables as Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Teddy Edwards and Gerald Wilson. Addison was also the bass player for the Farmer-Golson jazztet.

Although Farmer's reputation soared, jazz was losing its luster in New York and across the country, while rock music was taking over. Farmer began looking for new opportunities, which he discovered during several tours of Europe. His exposure there paid a major dividend when he was invited to join a radio orchestra in Vienna, Austria in 1968. He emigrated to Austria later that year.

Farmer traveled frequently between Europe and America, making over one hundred recordings and playing in a wide array of venues. One of his most unusual concerts was in 1994, when he played Haydn's First Trumpet Concerto with the Austrian-Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic Orchestra. In that same year, a concert honoring his lifetime musical achievements was presented in Lincoln Center in New York City. Among jazz musicians and close friends who played were Gerry Mulligan, Benny Golson and Wynton Marsalis.

To honor him on his 70th birthday, the President of Austria presented Farmer with the country's highest award for arts and sciences. Another major award, the American Jazz Masters Fellowship, was presented to him in 1999 by the National Endowment for the Arts.

A longtime Council Bluffs admirer and resident, chair of Jazz Arts Midwest, Inc., Dr. Wayne Kobberdahl, said of Farmer, "He practiced his trumpet diligently all of his life and was an extremely versatile musician. His playing was characterized by a sweetly lyrical tone and a melodic approach to phrasing. He was a good reader and skilled at improvisation. He had a keen interest in jazz education."

One of Farmer's last performances was a concert April 28, 1999 at the American Embassy in Vienna. He performed with his longtime Austrian friend and pianist Fritz Pauer in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of his favorite composer, Duke Ellington.

Music writer Fred Bouchard wrote in the liner notes for Farmer's CD, "Silk Road," "Farmer found a new horn that combined the firm brightness of the trumpet with the gentle porosity of the Flugelhorn: the flumpet. His unique patternings, feminine phrase endings, soaring meditation, warming humor find full flower on this gold horn."<sup>2</sup> Farmer had the instrument crafted by David Monette in Portland, Oregon.

Art Farmer died of a heart attack in Manhattan, New York on Oct. 4, 1999. Shortly after his death, friends gathered at Saint Peter's Church in New York City for a "Celebration of the Musical Life of Art Farmer." Numbers were performed by Jimmy Owens on the Flugelhorn, a quintet with Ron Blake on the saxophone, a sextet featuring Slide Hampton on the trombone and many others who paid final musical tributes to one of their own.

The musical genius from Council Bluffs, known for his improvisations, once said, "An idea always comes from somewhere; and all you need is one."<sup>3</sup> Ideas flowed through this master of jazz who entertained and thrilled audiences around the world for more than a half century.

## Jazz Festival

Council Bluffs jazz buffs paid tribute to native sons and jazz stars Art and Addison Farmer in mid-August 2002. Thanks to Dr. Wayne Kobberdahl, chairman of the Jazz Arts Midwest, Inc., which organized the event, the Art and Addison Farmer Memorial Jazz Festival was added to the city's growing list of cultural programs. Lynn Mueller of Metuchen, New Jersey, Art Farmer's manager and significant other during his later years, was an important part of this jazz festival.

The event was held at Iowa Western Community College and Lake Manawa State Park. The Council Bluffs Parks and Recreation Department and the Bluffs Arts Council also played an important role in producing the festival.<sup>4</sup>

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**ART ADDISON FARMER**  
**MEMORIAL**  
**Jazz Festival**

**August 16 and 17, 2002**  
**Council Bluffs, Iowa**  
Birthplace of Art Farmer and Addison Farmer

**August 16, 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM**  
*The Contributions of Art and Addison Farmer*  
Festival musicians discuss Jazz Music and film "A Great Day in Harlem"  
Leoff Hall - Iowa Western Community College - free admission

**August 17, 4:00 PM – 10:00 PM**  
*Jazz On The Beach and Under The Stars*  
at the North Shore of Lake Manawa

*Featuring*  
**The Art Farmer Reunion Quartet**  
Geoff Kasper, piano - Peter Blake, saxophone - Jimmy Owens, trumpet  
Kenny Davis, bass - Loren Nash, drums

and  
**Bobby Watson Quartet - Dave Stryker**  
**Dan Knight - Ashanti - Bluffs Big Band**

\$10 per car, \$5 per walk through - Bring a lawn chair or picnic basket!

**CALL 712/325-9893**  **Park opens at 2:00 PM**

[www.artaddisonfarmer.org](http://www.artaddisonfarmer.org)

