

## Canadian Saxophonist Darcy Hepner To Recreate Charlie Parker's Famous "Bird With Strings" Program In Free Outdoor Concert at Fieldcote Museum

Canadian saxophonist and educator Darcy Hepner will present "Bird With Strings" in a free outdoor concert at the Fieldcote Museum on August 27. A recreation of an historic program originally recorded on November 30, 1949 and later presented at Carnegie Hall in 1950 by the jazz icon and master improviser, *Charlie Parker With Strings* was a groundbreaking marriage of classical and jazz that resulted in the bebop innovator's biggest commercial success of his career. Accompanied by three violins, viola, harp, oboe conducted by Charles Cozens and a rhythm section of pianist Don Thompson, bassist Pat Collins and drummer Kevin Dempsey, Hepner will perform lush and romantic interpretations of such beloved jazz standards as "Just Friends," "April in Paris," "Summertime," "Autumn in New York" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me," utilizing the original session arrangements written by Jimmy Carroll and Joe Lipman for the great Charlie Parker, also known by generations of jazz fans as Bird. The concert is part of the Music at Fieldcote summer series at the Fieldcote Museum (64 Sulphur Springs Road in Ancaster, Ontario). All performances for the ongoing series take place on Sundays at 7 p.m. at the Fieldcote bandshell amongst gardens and woodland (bring a lawn chair!).

Featured artist Darcy Hepner brings both a classical background and a jazz pedigree to bear on this challenging recreation of Charlie Parker's masterwork. Originally a cellist who played in the Symphony Hamilton, founded by his father, the renowned conductor Dr. Lee Hepner, Darcy switched to saxophone while studying at the University of Miami and subsequently worked during the early '80s with such legendary figures as B.B. King, Aretha Franklin, Sergio Mendes and Henry Mancini. From 1985-1989 he taught at the Berklee College of Music in Boston and from 1996 - 2005 lived in New York and worked on the Big Apple jazz scene as well as on various Broadway and off-Broadway shows. From 1999-2004 he toured as a regular member of the world renowned ensemble Blood, Sweat & Tears.

Says Hepner of the landmark Bird session, "It's a brilliant, beautiful recording. His playing certainly is impeccably lyrical on it in ways that transcend the music itself. The first jazz record that I ever had was a Best Of Charlie Parker on Verve that someone had given me, and two of the tracks on it were from that famous *Charlie Parker with Strings* recording. And as an 11 or 12 year old, hearing that music for the first time just struck me so deeply."

While critics charged that *Charlie Parker With Strings* was a commercial sell-out thrust upon the bebop innovator by Verve producer Norman Granz, Parker maintained that the idea was indeed his own: "When I recorded with strings, some of my friends said, 'Oh, Bird is getting commercial.' That wasn't it at all. I was looking for new ways of saying things musically. New sound combinations. Why, I asked for strings a far back as 1941 and then, years later, when I went with Norman, he okayed it."

Parker was clearly fascinated with classical music and in awe of symphony musicians. His admiration of Stravinsky and Bartok, as well as his exposure to Beethoven, Brahms and Bach, motivated him to bridge the two worlds of classical and jazz. Furthermore, as Hepner explains, Parker's encounter with strings was also a kind of proving ground in the sax master's own mind. "My understanding of it is that Bird was exploring classical music and strings and probably felt a little bit legitimized by it," says Hepner. "He had always wanted to work as a soloist with an orchestra. That was a dream that he had and he later said that it was his favorite recording. So the speculation of him living (Parker died in 1955 at age 34) and continuing in this direction is very compelling."

Hepner, who studied privately with such great jazz saxophonists as Lee Konitz, Sonny Stitt, Don Menza and Bob Mintzer, is currently a Professor of Music at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario.

For more information on Darcy Hepner visit: <http://www.darcyhepner.com/>

7pm, August 27, 2006  
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