

# arts & entertainment

## Jazz jam sessions bring musicians into the open

By Bonnie Lutz

A saucy saxophone player soloing a sentimental jazz piece conjures up images of Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong.

One can almost see smoke-filled ballrooms and men with duck-tailed hair and wearing zoot suits, tapping shiny size 10 shoes to the blues—the Jazz Era.

Minus formal wear, talented musicians and appreciative audiences are making a place for jazz while bringing jazz out into the open.

Wednesday, Nov. 9, the Lincoln Jazz Society sponsored a jam session by jazz musicians at the Gaslight, 22 S. 9th St. Ken Winston, a Jazz Society member, said the monthly Wednesday night sessions at the Gaslight raise money for the Society and "give local musicians a chance to be heard."

One group of musicians has jammed in Charles Phillips' basement for about eight years. About 10 men played at various times on Wednesday. Some are professional musicians and others like Phillips, in his 70s, just play.

The men jokingly call themselves the Corporation, each session being a board meeting, with chairman of the board Russ Gibson, on piano. When Gibson sits down at the piano bench, everyone knows the meeting is called to order.

### What to play

At the microphone, Phillips explained, "We call it the Corporation, but you can see it's because of the disorganization, trying to decide what to play."

When the musicians were not needed to solo, or "tail-gate" a piece, they wandered into the crowd, greeting friends and encouraging the musicians on stage.

Phillips said they like jamming together, playing what they like, instead of catering to an audience.

"They play the way they want to, just for the fun of it," Phillips said.

He went on to describe their sessions as being jazz or melodic.

"It's a hodge-podge," he said. "There's as many different kinds of jazz as there are automobiles," he said. "It is an American creation."

### It's a gift

Phillips played clarinet in a group until 1930, then



Photo by Mark Billingsley

Piano player Russ Gibson carries the Corporation with Dennis Schneider on trumpet and Dick Young on bass.

went into a professional job not related to music.

Being a fine musician is "a gift more than anything," he said. "I came to the conclusion that I couldn't read the tunes by memorizing."

Phillips said he thinks all the formal training he could have could not teach him to be a good musician.

"The best way to learn tunes is to hear them," he said.

"Soon, the musician will hear tunes in his head, and playing comes easy."

Jazz is something special for Dennis Schneider, a UNL professor of brass instruments.

"I was introduced to music by jazz," Schneider said. The musician finds jazz "a means of expression that can't be found in other music. I'll probably play until my teeth fall out," he said.

Ken Winston said he thinks the Corporation plays music which is "closer to the roots of jazz than many other jazz groups. By offering jam sessions, Winston hopes it will widen the jazz spectrum in Lincoln, exposing the music to a wider range of ages.

Even if the Corporation goes back to playing in Charlie Phillips' basement, the men are keeping jazz alive.



Photo courtesy of National Theatre of the Deaf.

National Theatre of the Deaf, actors, (from top) Paul Johnston, Joe Sarpy and Ed Waterstreet, perform in the skit "Parade."

## 'Trouble in Tahiti' to open at the Lincoln Playhouse

A contemporary opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*, by Leonard Bernstein will open tonight at the Lincoln Community Playhouse Gallery Theatre.

The play was written in 1952 and concerns the lives of Sam and Dinah, a typical suburban couple trying to rediscover their lives together.

Director Craig Lowe said the opera has a universal theme making it a light, delightful musical that is suitable for audiences of all ages.

The cast includes Paula Morris as Dinah and Rob McMaster as Sam. Bill Davis,

Laurie Norton and Deanna Mumgaard perform in the chorus.

Musical accompaniment is provided by Kay Parente on piano, Chuck Kuba on bass and Patty Barfels on flute. Scenic design is by Don Yanik, choreography is by Mike Donaghy, light design is by Doug Pipan and Tom Curtright is stage manager. Melodee Landis is assistant director.

The play will run through Sunday and Nov. 18-20 with performances at 8 p.m.

Tickets may be obtained by calling or visiting the Playhouse box office, 489-9608, 2500 S. 56th St.

## Anniversary celebration set for Theatre of Deaf

The National Theatre of the Deaf will perform a free-spirited rendition of the novel *The Three Musketeers* at 8 p.m. Saturday in Kimball Recital Hall.

The production marks the tenth anniversary of performances by the National Theatre of the Deaf, a company that creates magic by using eloquent and graceful sign language in addition to the spoken script.

This irreverent adaptation of *The Three Musketeers* concerns D'Artagnan, a kind of Don Quixote, who sets out on a quest to taste the riches of the world. He leaves armed with only a magic ointment, fifteen gold crowns and a letter.

On his way from innocence to experience he meets three men and three women who aid him in his quest. According to the National Theatre of the Deaf's rendition, D'Artagnan is a character made of parts of men such as Sir Gawain, Humphrey Bogart

and Batman.

The company also will present a free lecture-demonstration 7:30 p.m. tonight in the Nebraska Union.

The National Theatre of the Deaf has performed on stage, film and television, both national and international. The group has made 19 national tours, two Broadway runs, and ten tours of Europe, Asia and Australia. The actors are regular performers on the "Sesame Street" television show and they also were seen in a CBS-TV special of Dylan Thomas' "A Child's Christmas in Wales."

The company has received acclaim from many critics and last June it won a special Tony award for theatrical excellence.

Tickets for the show are \$2.50 for UNL students and \$4 for general admission. They are available at the Kimball box office, 113 Westbrook Music bldg. or by calling 472-3375.