

arts/entertainment

Master of jazz casts spell upon Lincoln

The October Pops and All That Jazz, starring Jay McShann and his trio, along with The Lincoln Symphony Orchestra was best described by McShann when he declared. "It's a gas."

McShann, a master of Kansas-City-style jazz for more than four decades, demonstrated once again that his ability at the piano still holds the magic that helped his band surge to the top of the Kansas City jazz scene in the late 30s.

The Lincoln Symphony Orchestra opened its Friday night show at Pershing Auditorium with the overture from "Bartered Bride".

Then, joined by McShann and his trio, the orchestra performed a piece written especially for McShann by UNL music Professor Robert Beadell. Titled "Variations for Jazz Trio, Fluegel Horn and Strings", it creates a wonderful mixture of fusion, jazz, blues and boogie-woogie.

McShann, who rarely plays with an orchestra, let out a low, mirthful laugh and said that playing Beadell's composition, "is exciting, so exciting I was scared to death."

The orchestra finished off the set by playing three dances from the "Gayaneh" ballet.

McSHANN AND his trio, Claude Williams on fiddle, Paul Gunther on drums and Randy Snyder on bass, played the entire second set, giving Pershing the atmosphere of a funky jukebox in the heart of depression-era Kansas City.

The show was more than an opportunity to hear fine musicians.

When McShann played the blues, the audience felt the blues. The feeling created an aura that had the crowd, which included many of Lincoln's social elite, swaying in their chairs or yelling out approval in response to the band's hot licks.

The set included favorite jazz standards like the super cooking "Jumping at the Woodside" as well as the smooth, bluesy, "Georgia on my Mind."

McShann's last tune of the set, "Confessing the Blues" had the crowd clapping in time. When it was ended, the calls for an encore were loud and lasting.

They returned and did "Smooth Sailing" featuring Claude Williams on a red-hot fiddle.

ALSO CONTRIBUTING to the club-like atmosphere were the table seating arrangements, a lower stage, a little greenery and alcohol sales.

However, after the second set, the funky atmosphere was turned into a "Big Red" rally.

Under the direction of Robert Emile, the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra filled parts of the third and fourth sets with selections from "Hair" and a medley made up of "Blue Moon", "Singing in the Rain", "Moonlight Serenade", "Hi-Lilli Hi-Low" and "Love is a Many Splendored Thing".

The chance to conduct the remaining tunes were auctioned off. "Stars and Stripes" brought \$500, "Hail



Photo by MaryAnne Golon

The intensity of Jay McShann's Kansas City style jazz is evident by his expression. McShann played at the October pops concert Friday night at Pershing Auditorium.

Varsity" \$500 and "There Is No Place Like Nebraska" \$650.

The concert was meant to be a fund-raiser for the symphony. And the orchestra did deliver a letter-perfect performance. But it would have been nice if McShann and his trio would have been allowed to play more than one set.

COMMENTING ABOUT the renaissance of Kansas-City-Style jazz, McShann said the 50s and 60s weren't boom years for himself and his music. But, after another deep throated laugh, he said, "It's going again."

He said he and his band are playing "all over". They played a number of jazz festivals in Europe last winter and spring.

He added that he usually spends August in New York and the rest of the time is either in Kansas City taking it easy, or he's on the road. However, he said he likes to

"space off the road when I can."

"Used to be we'd play 80 one-nighters without a break. We got pretty ruffled."

McShann said he got his start in 1936. "I was in Tulsa looking for a job. You know, that was pretty tough back then."

"I'd never studied music. I was just fooling around. I heard music and I followed the sound to the building where it was coming. Upstairs was a band practicing so I sat there and listened to them play. Later I asked if they needed a piano player. They did and so they brought out all this sheet music. I couldn't read music at that time but I'd been listening to them so I just played along. They thought it sounded great."

"But later I was to play a tune that had a piano intro. I was waiting for them to start when they told me the piano was supposed to start it off. It was then that I told them I couldn't read music."

Lost idealism portrayed in new Vonnegut book 'Jailbird'

By Scott Kleager

In nearly all respects *Jailbird*, by Kurt Vonnegut, is a novel of lost idealism. The protagonist, Walter F. Starbuck, moves through tragedy after unescapable tragedy, losing faith in most of the things that had, in his youth, seemed universally good.

The catch, of course, is he feels that since these people, ideologies and institutions are superior to all others, they somehow are incorruptible.

The book includes a prologue that explains, more or less, the inspiration which led to the story and its characters. It is autobiographically interesting and includes intimate sections about Vonnegut's parents. Not surprising is his plaintive attitude toward them, as he seems to have taken the same disposition in previous works.

His father, because he takes to sensations more than

ideas, seems to be "throwing his knowledge and intelligence away, just as a retreating soldier might throw away his rifle and pack."

His mother, (Vonnegut readers are well acquainted with her), reaffirms what one suspects: "My mother, as I have said *ad nauseum* in other books, had declined to go on living."

world. Does anyone know or care who they were anymore? No." This kind of rueful introspection permeates the work.

Stylistically, the novel is true hearted and one will not be disappointed. To those who really care about such things, and hopefully most do, Kurt Vonnegut has not sold out. The humor is rollicking, as usual, and in both the fictional and non-fictional sections of the book, unforgettable, ludicrous gems reoccur.

This does not mean that Vonnegut repeats himself. He seems, instead, to have an endless faculty for looking at all things, whether good or bad, in a comical vein. This adds another dimension to his works, making an otherwise cheerless novel into a self-ironic, and therefore enlightening, piece of fiction.

VONNEGUT AGAIN successfully demonstrates his distinctive, conspicuous method of narration. He consistently begins a paragraph on a subject, then takes it to a refreshing conclusion. One never knows where a paragraph will end up. Just as one never really knows where Kurt Vonnegut will end up, or a character of his will end.

This distinguishing facet of his writing contributes to the light-heartedness of all his stories. Readers consistently find themselves delighting in artistic tendencies.

The reading of Kurt Vonnegut never fails to usher the reader into incriminating situations, and, in this respect *Jailbird* is an outstanding effort by one of America's best writers. His combinations of humor and sadness will have everyone laughing at occurrences which should not be laughed at. And somehow the reader is made to be more aware of the message because of it.

Play respins old tale

Theatergoers attending *The Good Woman of Setzuan* at the UNL Howell Theater will be treated as if they were American dignitaries touring a temple reconstruction site in China.

The play, to be presented at 8 p.m. Oct 19-20 and Oct. 23-27 is Bertolt Brecht's reconstruction of an old Chinese tale about three gods who have come to earth in search of one really good person. Sen Te, a prostitute, is that person and the gods award her with gold, only to force her to deal with spongers trying to consume her modest riches.

Tickets are \$3 for students and \$4 for non students and will be on sale from 1 to 5 p.m. weekdays and from 5 to 8:30 p.m. on performance nights. Howell season tickets are still available.

book review

We are also told of a man who aroused the creation of an idealistic character, known in life and in the story for his "derring-do in strikes and at the protests about the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti, and so on."

True to its thematic hue, Kenneth Whistler, as he is known in the story, eventually gives-up his struggle for labor and social equality. What happened to this man historically is not included.

WHICH BRINGS US to a possible fourth premise on which the novel could be based: Sacco and Vanzetti. After numerous mentions of their trial, specifically regarding Kenneth Whistler's involvement, Walter Starbuck finally gets around to pointing out his cynicism toward its outcome.

It seems that when he was young he felt that their executions would "... cause an irresistible mania for justice to the common people to spread throughout the