

Gerry Mulligan

Pleyel Concert Vol. 1 Quartet

- 1 • Bernie's Tune (Miller) 4'50
- 2 • Presentation of the Musicians 0'51
- 3 • Walkin' Shoes (Mulligan) 4'50
- 4 • The Nearness Of You (Carmichael – Washington) 4'34
- 5 • Motel (Mulligan) 4'57 / Utter Chaos (Mulligan) 0'51
- 6 • Love Me Or Leave Me (Donaldson – Kahn) 5'52
- 7 • Soft Shoe (Mulligan) 4'16
- 8 • Bark For Barksdale (Mulligan) 5'29
- 9 • My Funny Valentine (Rodgers – Hart) 4'52
- 10 • Turnstile (Mulligan) 6'30 / Utter Chaos (Mulligan) 0'53
- 11 • I May Be Wrong (Sullivan – Ruskin) 4'50
- 12 • Five Brothers (Mulligan) 4'39
- 13 • Gold Rush (Mulligan) 6'27
- 14 • Makin' Whoopee (Donaldson – Kahn) 3'43

GERRY MULLIGAN QUARTET :
Gerry Mulligan (baritone saxophone)
Bob Brookmeyer (valve trombone)
Red Mitchell (bass)
Frank Isola (drums)
1-10 Recorded at Salle Pleyel,
Paris on June 1, 1954.
11-14 Recorded at Salle Pleyel,
Paris on June 3, 1954.

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Gerry Mulligan Quartet Pleyel Concert Vol. 1

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quartet

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Today, almost 40 years after the event, it is difficult for us to imagine the then challenging novelty of the piano-less Gerry Mulligan Quartet. Yet, despite the shock-waves it created, the Mulligan music held an immediate appeal, conquering Paris audiences from the very first concert, something the leader has never forgotten. «Agreeably surprised», was the way Charles Delaunay described the crowd's reaction, going on to say: «Contrary to so many modern musicians, whose attitude can seem to be one of utter boredom, the members of the Mulligan quartet showed their evident pleasure in what they were playing.»

These young musicians – Mulligan was then 27, and Brookmeyer 25 – served up a modern jazz that by its colour and instrumentation offered up numerous surprises, but the roots of which were firmly planted in fairly traditional rhythmic and melodic values. This quiet revolution was far cry from the stirring, but profoundly disturbing, sounds of the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band in this same Salle Pleyel six years earlier. Moreover, the keener enthusiasts were already familiar with the Mulligan quartet's music from its first records, made with trumpeter Chet Baker in 1952. Indeed, many of them had been expecting Chet in the line-up in Paris.

But the new frontline voicing of baritone-sax and valve-trombone proved just as acceptable, all the more so since both soloists – each also an excellent composer and arranger – displayed such total ease and relaxation. Their breathtaking mastery of harmony and counterpoint soon made listeners forget the absence of a piano. Moreover, the rhythm section Mulligan had brought to Paris played a by no means negligible role in the considerable success the quartet enjoyed: the fluid yet driving brush work of drummer Frank Isola, and the firm beat and reliable harmonic ear of bassist Red Mitchell, all the more crucial in the absence of both piano and guitar. A real treat for all, and one admirably captured by a good-quality recording.

The man responsible for getting this Mulligan group across to France in the first place was pianist Henri

Renaud. During the winter of 1953-54 he had visited the Blue Note in Philadelphia, where the quartet was appearing, to invite the leader to take part in Paris's third «Salon du Jazz», programmed for the following 1st to 7th June.

The Gerry Mulligan Quartet duly performed five Salle Pleyel concerts during the course of this festival, sharing the bill with such other talents as Thelonious Monk, Martial Solal, Don Byas, Michel de Villers and Mary Lou Williams, plus the orchestras of Jack Diéval, Henri Renaud and Kurt Edelhagen. Four of the Mulligan concerts were recorded by Vogue, and they are now being issued in their entirety – and in programme order – for the first time.

The repertoire of this Volume 1, in which we hear all of the first concert – the concert of discovery! – and the first four numbers of the second, includes no fewer than seven Mulligan originals, plus an eighth (Utter Chaos) used as a closing theme. Five of these had already been committed to disc by the quartet with Chet Baker in 1952-53: Bark For Barksdale, Walkin' Shoes, Soft Shoe, Turnstile and Motel. Among the pieces from the pens of others composers are the famous Bernie's Tune, which opens the first concert (and of which the baritone-saxophonist had recorded the definitive version at his first session with Chet), and My Funny Valentine. This latter piece, recorded at the second of the studio sessions with Chet, was destined to become a hit – and a major discographical success – both for the quartet as a whole and for the trumpeter.

The second of our two volumes will present an interesting range of other compositions, as well as subsequent versions of some of those already on offer here. These repeat performances, which bear tangible testimony to the considerable freedom to four musicians enjoyed, demonstrate the immense improvisational skills Mulligan had at his disposal, yet at the same time the admirable discipline of a quite exceptional group.

Adapted from the French by **Don Waterhouse**

