





# JAZZPHILIA

Studi e ricerche sul jazz

Collana diretta da

ANTONIO LANZA, GIANMARCO LANZA e ANSELMO R. PAOLONE



Michael Leonard Keepe Antonio Lanza Anselmo R. Paolone

# PROSPETTIVE SUL JAZZ

Tradizioni stilistiche e formazione  
dei musicisti

*Tre studi*





Aracne editrice

[www.aracneeditrice.it](http://www.aracneeditrice.it)  
[info@aracneeditrice.it](mailto:info@aracneeditrice.it)

Copyright © MMXVII  
Gioacchino Onorati editore S.r.l. – unipersonale

[www.gioacchinoonoratieditore.it](http://www.gioacchinoonoratieditore.it)  
[info@gioacchinoonoratieditore.it](mailto:info@gioacchinoonoratieditore.it)

via Vittorio Veneto, 20  
00020 Canterano (RM)  
(06) 45551463

ISBN 978-88-255-2341-6

*I diritti di traduzione, di memorizzazione elettronica,  
di riproduzione e di adattamento anche parziale,  
con qualsiasi mezzo, sono riservati per tutti i Paesi.*

*Non sono assolutamente consentite le fotocopie  
senza il permesso scritto dell'Editore.*

I edizione: maggio 2019

## Indice

- 9 The Hollywood Saxophone Quartet  
Its History and Involvement in West Coast Jazz during  
the 1950s-1960s  
*Michael Leonard Keepe*  
Introduction, 11 – 1. The Musical Climate in Los Angeles, 12 – 2. The  
Hollywood Saxophone Quartet, 17 – 3. The Musical Climate for Hollywood  
Studio Musicians, 21 – 4. Influences, 23 – 5. Documented Performances, 25  
– 6. Repertory, 29 – 7. Recordings, 31 – 8. Disbandment, 38 – Conclusion,  
39 – Appendix A: Members Biographies, 40 – Appendix B: The Hollywood  
Saxophone Quartet Jazz Library, 48 – References, 50
- 53 Per un'altra storia del jazz  
*Antonio Lanza*  
1. Il complesso del razzismo alla rovescia, 55 – 2. Il primato artistico e  
tecnico degli esponenti del West Coast jazz nel jazz posteriore al Bebop  
ed al Cool, 71 – 3. Jazz statunitense e jazz del resto del mondo, 84 – 4. Le  
cause della decadenza del jazz, 93 – Conclusioni, 111
- 113 Pedagogia della jam session  
Come i jazzisti apprendono, riflettendo sull'esperienza  
dell'improvvisazione  
*Anselmo R. Paolone*  
1. Sull'apprendimento esperienziale e il "riflettere sull'esperienza", 118 –  
2. Descrizione della jam session, 122 – 3. Una "sistematica" per le "dritte"  
sull'improvvisazione, 129 – 4. Progressioni armoniche, *hints*, riflessioni:

il “gergo” attraverso cui i jammers apprendono a improvvisare, 133 –  
Conclusioni, 160 – Riferimenti bibliografici, 163



Michael Leonard Keepe

THE HOLLYWOOD SAXOPHONE QUARTET  
Its History and Involvement in West Coast Jazz  
during the 1950s-1960s



Liberty Records promotional photograph showing from left to right: Russell Cheever, Jack Dumont, Morris Crawford, William Ulyate.  
Photograph provided by the Ulyate family.

## INTRODUCTION

The Hollywood Saxophone Quartet performed primarily in the Los Angeles area from 1951-1961 and included four of the most highly respected studio musicians in Hollywood. The group included Russell Cheever (1911-1987), Jack Dumont (1918-1985), Morris Crawford (1921-1975) and William Ulyate (1921-1970), performing on soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones respectively (For full biographies, please see APPENDIX A). They created and performed a body of classical and jazz repertoire intended for the formal concert hall. Their jazz offerings, in particular, differentiated them from ensembles whose primary performance venues were jazz clubs. It should be noted that The Hollywood Saxophone Quartet began as a classical chamber ensemble enlisting local composers to write for the group in the classical genre. However, the group attracted many of Hollywood's jazz composers, and their influence helped to establish this ensemble as a medium for serious chamber music within the United States in both classical and jazz genres. Their activities in jazz will be the focus of this study.

For more information on their classical contributions please refer to this author's 2012 dissertation *The Hollywood Saxophone Quartet: Its History and Contributions to Saxophone*

*Quartet Performance in the United States*<sup>1</sup> from which this research is drawn.

Until the study mentioned above, little research existed that chronicled The Hollywood Saxophone Quartet (hereafter, HSQ). The members of the group, and all but two composers who wrote for the quartet, died before documenting the group's activities. Most of the compositions written for the group were believed to be unpublished and copies of the existing jazz scores were donated by the group to various institutions and individuals across the United States. These scores have since been copied, traded, and shared with performers around the world for more than forty years. This phenomenon created an "underground" following for jazz aficionados and jazz inspired saxophone ensembles around the globe. HSQ's four albums (2 classical, 2 jazz), which were released between 1955 and 1959, are rare and coveted by collectors. However, aside from liner notes found on the record jackets of their four albums, their history has been little more than hearsay. The authors' 2012 study was the first to formally document the group. This paper is intended an extension of that document.

## I. THE MUSICAL CLIMATE IN LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles has long been considered to have one of the most vibrant classical and jazz musical cultures in the United States. For the purpose of this study, focus will be given to the decades of the 1950s and 60s when West Coast Jazz was at its height in Los Angeles, and the Hollywood Saxophone Quartet was most active. There were performance opportunities at many

1. Visit [www.mikekeepe.com](http://www.mikekeepe.com) for more information.

venues in and around Los Angeles for innovative composers and musicians seeking to expand the boundaries and quality of their art-form. Due to the Hollywood studios, composers and musicians remained close to home. Many had left touring bands for the steady work of the Hollywood environment. This allowed composers and players to experiment and innovate. Top quality studio musicians allowed composers to write and record more demanding and complex music. Former lead alto player for the Stan Kenton Orchestra, Lennie Niehaus, remembers:

«As a saxophonist and composer, I found the West Coast jazz scene of the '40-'60s to be a very exciting, innovative time. There were many outstanding West Coast and East Coast jazz musicians, and playing styles. Every jazz musician and composer during this time made many fine and innovative contributions».<sup>2</sup>

The jazz environment in Hollywood and Los Angeles was eclectic. Many terms were introduced in an attempt to describe the jazz atmosphere such as West Coast Cool, California Hard, and Los Angeles Underground. Cultural centers for jazz arose in the heart of Hollywood at drummer Shelly Manne's Manhole, in Los Angeles at the Haig, and in Hermosa Beach with bassist Howard Rumsey leading the Lighthouse All-Stars at the beachfront bar, The Lighthouse Café.

The release of Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool* recorded 1949-1950 in New York and released in 1957, had a profound effect on jazz of the day. The album featured a nonet of trumpet, trombone, French horn, tuba, alto saxophone, baritone saxophone, piano, bass, drums. Its more "classical" ensemble

2. Lennie Niehaus, correspondence with author, 1 October 2017.

approach to composition with more linear melodic lines and balanced textures, brought a new era to jazz. This modern sound was at the heart of West Coast Jazz, particularly in Los Angeles. Many musicians and composers began to experiment with various instrumentations to explore more instrumental color combinations. Lennie Niehaus notes:

«On one octet that I recorded was a composition consisting of three saxes (alto, tenor and baritone), as well as trombone, French horn, tuba, bass and drums. I used linear lines and contrapuntal material as a whole».<sup>3</sup>

Gerry Mulligan, who arranged many of the pieces for Miles Davis' Nonet, moved to Los Angeles to sell his charts to Stan Kenton who had also settled in the area. Mulligan began playing at the Haig on Wilshire Boulevard in LA in the Spring of 1952. His pianoless quartet of trumpet (Chet Baker), baritone saxophone, bass and drums soon became the trade mark of West Coast Jazz. Author, Ted Gioia, mentions:

«Today the omission of a harmony instrument does not sound unusual, and other virtues of this group are more salient: its effective use of counterpoint, its understated rhythm section, its melodic clarity, and its willingness to take chances. Not since the days of New Orleans ensemble playing had the individual members of a small combo been so willing to merge their personal sounds into a cohesive whole. These characteristics, rightly or wrongly, became viewed by the jazz public as trademarks of West Coast jazz».<sup>4</sup>

3. *Ibid.*

4. T. GIOIA, *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California 1945-1960*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1998, p. 174.

Soon Mulligan's chamber music approach was attracting more serious music listeners of the era.<sup>5</sup> This pianoless sound lent itself perfectly to the cohesive sound of four saxophones, bass and drums, which would attract many to write for the Hollywood Saxophone Quartet. In fact, Russell Garcia, wrote many classical and jazz pieces for the group and noted that when he wrote *Miniature Symphony*, «I was so enamored with what the four were doing, this just flowed unasked out of my pencil».<sup>6</sup>

Though the members of the HSQ's names might not be as familiar as those normally associated with mainstream West Coast Jazz in Los Angeles, such as Gerry Mulligan, Shorty Rogers, Shelly Manne, Bud Shank and Buddy Collette, they were involved in many aspects of the jazz scene. As studio musicians, they were in high demand for composers who were in need of musicians who could record their music with little or no rehearsal. The HSQ member's names are found on the albums of Pete Fountain,<sup>7</sup> who often would show up to play duets with Russ Cheever at his house.<sup>8</sup> Gus Bivona's *Ballads Bounce and Bivona* of 1959, features the HSQ members as the entire saxophone section.<sup>9</sup> Composer, Lyle "Spud" Murphy released many albums which featured members of the Hollywood Quartet such as his 1955 album, *Gone With The Woodwinds*, which lists the talents of Buddy Collette, Abe Most, Russ Cheever, Jack Dumont, Chuck Gentry, Andre Previn, Curtis Counce, and Shelly Manne. The liner notes mention

5. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

6. R. Garcia, questionnaire provided by author, Kerikeri, NZ, 16 August 2010.

7. P. FOUNTAIN, Liner notes for *The Best of Pete Fountain* (MCA Records MCA2-4032, 1980).

8. Terry Cheever, phone conversation with the author, 17 August 2011.

9. G. BIVONA, Liner notes for *Ballads Bounce and Bivona* (Warner Brothers W1264, 1959).

the «The horn players are some of the finest Hollywood musicians of the day».<sup>10</sup> For Murphy's album *New Orbits in Sound*, released that same year, Morrie Crawford joins Russ Cheever and Bill Ulyate along with Frank Morgan, Buddy Collette and Bob Gordon to complete the saxophone section.<sup>11</sup>

Outside the studios, members of the Hollywood studio orchestras often formed their own groups, either for performing, or just reading for enjoyment. One such group was Abe Most's<sup>12</sup> Tuesday Night Band with which the members of the HSQ often "sat in". A 1955 article in «Metronome Magazine» mentions:

«[...] his band of eighteen fabulous musicians (jazz background generally) play some really great arrangements. They don't get paid. And they aren't rehearsing per se. Each performance is their best and that is their object. It's *their* band. And, although Abe does most of the arrangements, the book is augmented by scores by Maury [sic] Crawford, Russ Cheevers [sic] and other writers in the group.

[...] Although the band has never made any public appearances or records and has no active plans at the present, it is most certainly ready and, according to Abe: "Deep down inside... it would mean a lot to me if something *could* happen with the band".

But something *is* happening, *within* the band. A very important musical contribution and a definitely stimulating indication of the trend of tone tastes; the Saxophone Quartet of Hollywood: made up of Russ Cheevers [sic] Maury [sic] Crawford, Bill Ulyate and Jack Dumont (only one not at Fox). They wanted to give dignity to the saxophone in America. They not only succeeded but the beau-

10. L. MURPHY, Liner notes for *Gone with the Woodwinds* (Contemporary C3506, 1955).

11. L. MURPHY, Liner notes for *New Orbits in Sound* (GNP/Crescendo GNPD 9056, 1957).

12. Abe Most was also a clarinetist with the 20th Century Fox Orchestra.



ty achieved can be related only to the Saxophone Quartet of Paris. As a matter of fact Marcel Mule<sup>13</sup> sent a letter complimenting the four on recordings they had mailed to the Frenchman». <sup>14</sup>

The article goes on to describe the quality of Most's group, its music, and the composers who were contributing to the group. The HSQ was one of many groups who evolved from the Hollywood studio orchestra environment. In addition to their quartet and Abe Most's band, the Hollywood String Quartet and the Los Angeles Woodwinds were very active during this time.<sup>15</sup> In fact, these ensembles in particular may have been influential in the Hollywood Saxophone Quartet's creation.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. THE HOLLYWOOD SAXOPHONE QUARTET

The Hollywood Saxophone Quartet was active in the greater Los Angeles area from around 1950 until 1970. A

13. Marcel Mule (1901-2001) was an iconic classical saxophonist who taught at the National Conservatory of Music in Paris from 1942-1967. His saxophone quartet created what is now standard repertoire for the classical saxophone quartet medium.

14. F. KELLY, *Jazz Scene at 20th Century Fox*, in «Metronome Magazine», July 1955, p. 16. It is unknown what was included on these recordings. Given the date of this article, their only professionally recorded material would have been for their first Liberty release in 1955 which featured all jazz. They had however, made a practice of recording rehearsals at Morrie Crawford's home. Since their performances before 1955 consisted of all classical works, much of which was written for the Mule quartet, it is fair to assume that the recordings sent to Mule consisted primarily of classical repertoire.

15. Both the Los Angeles Woodwinds and the Hollywood String Quartet were created by members of the 20th Century Fox Orchestra and multiple references are made throughout D. CHRISTLIEB's book *Recollections of a First Chair Bassoonist: 52 Years in the Hollywood Studio Orchestras*, Sherman Oaks, Christlieb Products, 1996.

16. Duanna Ulyate and Uan Rasey, interview with author, Studio City, CA, 30 July 2010.

precise date of formation is unknown; however, the earliest documented performance is from 1951.<sup>17</sup> Russ Cheever, Morrie Crawford and Bill Ulyate were staff musicians with the 20th Century Fox Orchestra performing on principle clarinet, bassoon, and bass clarinet respectively.<sup>18</sup> Jack Dumont was a freelance musician who played with many of the Hollywood studio orchestras in film and television.<sup>19</sup> They formed the quartet for personal enjoyment, to challenge themselves, and to explore the saxophone quartet as a serious chamber music medium. Bill Ulyate mentions in a 1955 program:

«Our musical experiences run the gamut from jazz – Benny Goodman, Ray Noble, Dave Rose, etc., to symphony – Toscanini, Igor Stravinski, etc.

The object of our quartet is to play good music in a legitimate style much the same as in a string quartet or other chamber music group. We are trying to stimulate good musicianship and playing, and show it can be done even with saxophones. Our material is the biggest draw-back, but we are getting more composers to write for us and hope it will show composers the possibility of the saxophone for good, serious works».<sup>20</sup>

In a radio interview, composer Lyle “Spud” Murphy mentions the following reasons for the group’s creation:

17. The group’s first documented performance was of Jean Françaix’s *Gague-nardise* and the world premiere of Russell Garcia’s *Miniature Symphonie*, given on 19 May 1951 at the West Hollywood Park Auditorium for *The Bohemians of Los Angeles*.

18. D. CHRISTLIEB, *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

19. John Dumont, questionnaire provided by author, Los Angeles, CA, 16 September 2010.

20. William Ulyate, program notes, 15 March 1955 (Tempe, Arizona State College, 1955).

«The Hollywood Saxophone Quartet, that is the members, all work at 20th Century Fox in the reed section. They play other things besides saxophones of course, but they are all progressive musically, and above all, they like music. So, when they were through working, which is a long day out there as everyone knows connected with the business, they used to get together and try to play classical string quartets and had other things transcribed for them. Everybody in town became interested in that. That is the composers and arrangers, and they all took a stab at it and I got especially interested and I've written a lot of things for them. But that's just the four saxophones. No rhythm, no jazz, no nothing (Laugh)».<sup>21</sup>

Though Murphy's intentions were honest, there were two misconceptions with his statement. First, Jack Dumont was not a member of the Fox orchestra. While he recorded with them on occasion, he was not employed as a full-time member of the Fox orchestra. Second, there is no evidence that the quartet ever tried to play string quartets. Though it would seem logical to perform string quartet transcriptions, none have been found in the groups archives. They did, however, have ample access to many of the French masterpieces of the time as seen in their concert programming.<sup>22</sup> This latter mistake, on Murphy's part, could be attributed to the general misconception of composers of this era, particularly in the United States, assuming a vacancy of classical saxophone quartet repertoire. At the time, the primary source of new

21. Lyle Murphy, Interview: *The Green Room with Professor Lyle "Spud" Murphy on "The Inner Ear"*, [http://hollywoodsaxophonequartet.com/page\\_history.php](http://hollywoodsaxophonequartet.com/page_history.php). (accessed 9/18/2011).

22. The first documented performances of the group show a strictly classical program featuring many French works written for the Marcel Mule Quartet as well as those written for the Hollywood Quartet.

repertoire was through the efforts of the Marcel Mule Quartet in France, whose primary mission was to establish the medium through the creation of new repertoire since their inception in 1928. Commissioning composers like Murphy to write contemporary classical music for this genre was the Hollywood Quartet's attempt to create a similar environment in the United States. Furthermore, in the interview Murphy laughs slightly when mentioning that there was no jazz involved. This suggests that the concept of the classical saxophone ensemble was unusual at the time for Murphy, and for the general public in the United States. Interestingly, when Murphy is asked to pick a representative piece to play on the air, he selects Lennie Niehaus' *There Will Never Be Another You*, a jazz arrangement that features a rhythm section.<sup>23</sup> When asked why this particular recording is a favorite of his, he explains:

«I have several reasons. First it is an absolute masterpiece of technical proficiency. But beyond that, the impressive part of it is that everything written there is played, and played with feeling, and played correctly. But, more important is the fact that anyone who doesn't like this, doesn't like music!»<sup>24</sup>

23. Lyle Murphy, interview posted on Hollywood Saxophone Quartet website, [http://hollywoodsaxophonequartet.com/page\\_history.php](http://hollywoodsaxophonequartet.com/page_history.php) (accessed 10/18/2011). There is no documented date for this interview which was aired on a local Los Angeles radio station. However, it was most likely conducted before the 1957 release of the group's *Warm Winds* album which featured Murphy's suite of this same title. *There Will Never Be Another You* was released on the group's first album released in 1955. Morrie Crawford obtained a recording but the station and date are unknown. The recording is posted by Crawford's daughter Ellen on the Hollywood Saxophone Quartet website.

24. Lyle Murphy, interview posted on Hollywood Saxophone Quartet website, [http://hollywoodsaxophonequartet.com/page\\_history.php](http://hollywoodsaxophonequartet.com/page_history.php) (accessed 10/18/2011).