

Art Farmer

"What I try to do with a song, is to get as much enjoyment out of playing as I can. It's hard to verbalise, but the degree of enjoyment that I get out of it depends on just how natural it seems to me, and the natural feeling of playing this horn comes from really losing yourself in it, getting to the place where the song is second nature and you don't have to think about it." - Art Farmer

Over 40 years into his professional career, Art Farmer has made good on all counts. He has made over a hundred recordings and the pleasure in his playing is palpable on all of them. His facility and emotional depth is unmatched on the trumpet, the flugelhorn and now a combination of both: the "flumpet". A curiously named, but beautiful sounding instrument with the dark, lustrous sound quality of the flugehorn incorporated with the bright edge of the trumpet, specially developed for Art by US master brass craftsman, David Monette.

Art was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1928, into a musical family that included his twin brother, the respected bassist Addison Farmer, who died in 1963. He grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, where he studied piano and violin in grammar school. Soldiered into playing the bugle for flag-raising ceremonies, young Art was assigned the sousaphone in the school marching band and was soon handed the cornet. At the age of 15 he joined a dance band that played stock arrangements from the Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Jimmie Lunceford bands. Art was completely won over to jazz by the sound of a trumpet in a big band and the excitement of jam sessions, both of which he heard when the big bands came through town.

During the summer before their last year in high school, Art and Addison ventured west to Los Angeles and were soon immersed in the thriving jazz scene around Central Avenue. They met such greats as Hampton Hawes, Sonny Criss, Eric Dolphy and Charlie Parker and soon Art was playing in the bands of Horace Henderson, Flyod Ray and Jimmy Mundy.

With bandleader Johnny Otis, Art made his first trip to New York and stayed long enough to win a job in Jay McShann's band. Landing back in Los Angeles, Farmer took various day jobs when necessary in order to play with musicians that he could learn from... Benny Carter, Gerald Wilson and Dexter Gordon. He recorded his first sides, including his heralded original "Farmer's Market" with tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray.

By 1953, Art was settled in New York and playing in the Lionel Hampton band, alongside Clifford Brown, Quincy Jones and Gigi Gryce, amongst others. He learnt unerasable lessons during that period, especially when he played with tenor giant, Lester Young. Other musicians Art played with during the mid-fifties included Coleman Hawkins, Thelonius Monk, Charlie Mingus and Art Blakey.

After organising a quintet with Gigi Gryce, playing in the Horace Silver Quintet and the Gerry Mulligan Quartet, as well as mastering "avant-garde" experiments with Teddy Charles, Teo Macero, and George Russell, Farmer earned a reputation for being able to play anything.

Greater fame came in the brief flourishing of the Jazztet, the legendary sextet that he and saxophonist Benny Golson founded in 1959. In the sixties, Art formed a quartet with guitarist Jim Hall, but by the middle of the decade, he notes, "the bottom was falling out of jazz in New York". He had toured Europe several times and in 1968, after being invited to join a radio orchestra in Vienna, Art emigrated to Austria. He still lives there today, but continues to maintain a full schedule with concerts, club dates,

clinics and festivals throughout Europe, the United States and Japan.

In June 1994, Art was awarded "das Goldene Verdienstzeichen des Landes Wien"..."The Austrian Gold Medal of Merit."

A concert honoring his lifetime musical achievements was held at the Lincoln Center in August 1994. Among the musicians who participated were his contemporaries Gerry Mulligan, Benny Golson, Slide Hampton, Ron Carter, Jim Hall and Jerome Richardson. Wynton Marsalis, Geoff Keezer and Lewis Nash also performed.

Art still plays and records with large orchestras. He recorded the Brandenburg Concertos with the New York Jazz Orchestra and in september 1994 he performed Haydn's First Trumpet Concerto with the Austrian-Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic Orchestra.

Whatever the context, Art Farmer treats each composition with the same meticulous melody and harmony, with a unique sense of swing and grace.