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CLASSICS

*A Tribute to*

# BENNY GOODMAN

THE JULIAN BLISS SEPTET



# A TRIBUTE TO BENNY GOODMAN

ARRANGED FOR THE JULIAN BLISS SEPTET BY NEAL THORNTON

1	<b>Don't be that way / Stomp'n' at the Savoy</b>	Benny Goodman, Edgar Sampson	[4.26]
2	<b>Caprice No.24</b>	Nicolo Paganini, Original Arr. Lloyd "Skip" Martin	[3.05]
3	<b>Up a Lazy River</b>	Hoagy Carmichael, Sidney Arodin	[4.41]
4	<b>The World is Waiting for the Sunrise</b>	Ernest Seitz, Eugene Lockhart	[4.25]
5	<b>Moonglow</b>	Eddie De Lange, Will Hudson, Irving Mills	[4.20]
6	<b>Lady be Good (Riff tide)</b>	George & Ira Gershwin	[4.14]
7	<b>Seven come Eleven</b>	Benny Goodman, Charlie Christian	[2.42]
8	<b>Here's that Rainy Day</b>	Jimmy Van Heusen, Johnny Burke	[5.29]
9	<b>Sheik of Araby</b>	Ted Synder, Harry B. Smith, Francis Wheeler	[3.24]
10	<b>Goodbye</b>	Gordon Jenkins	[3.34]
11	<b>Avalon</b>	Al Jolson, B.G. De Sylva, Vincent Rose	[2.37]
12	<b>Soft winds</b>	Benny Goodman, Fred Royal	[2.47]
13	<b>After you've gone</b>	Henry Creamer, Turner Layton	[4.17]

Total timings: [50.03]

JULIAN BLISS SEPTET  
JULIAN BLISS CLARINET

NEAL THORNTON PIANO    JIM HART VIBES  
MARTIN SHAW TRUMPET    COLIN OXLEY GUITAR  
TIM THORNTON BASS    MATT SKELTON DRUMS

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## NOTES FROM THE PERFORMERS

When you're a seven-year old boy on your first trip to New York City, a relentlessly exciting destination, even for an adult – there are perhaps more obvious souvenir choices than a copy of Benny Goodman's Greatest hits. But it fascinated me. As a classical clarinetist in the making – learning the ins and outs of stage etiquette and composure, I couldn't help but stare at that man on the front cover, reeling back, clarinet in the air, grin on his face; breaking all the rules. By bedtime, I had heard every track – and I was hooked.

14 years later, a cracked, dusty CD case found its way back onto my desk. It was Benny – still reeling back, still grinning, still swinging. That was all I needed. Within days I found Neal, someone who was as enthralled with Goodman as I was – and that was it. Within weeks we had a band. Within months we were recording an album; a collection of Benny's Greatest Hits. And here it is.

That wide-eyed seven-year-old boy on his first trip to the big apple? What I wouldn't give to show him this...

*Julian Bliss, 2012*

About 18 months ago a bright and energetic young man came to see me suggesting we might collaborate on a project performing the music of Benny Goodman.

A strange throwback to my own early years when I'd been a classical clarinet player who outraged my headmaster at school by being the first person to play non-classical music at an end-of-year concert when I played a Goodman transcription.

The life coincidence seemed too good and Julian looked like an enthusiastic and straightforward guy to work with so the project was born on a handshake between us.

Over the next few months we listened to hundreds of tracks of Goodman and many others playing the great music of their time and had a ball getting to know the style whilst soaking up the good time energy of the swing era. I learned a lot of new tunes and grew to really respect the apparently effortless virtuosity and ensemble playing of these great musicians.

We knew we wanted to focus on the small group sound and so concentrated on the Sextet

recordings, but you can't really pay tribute to Goodman without some big band tunes so we hit on forming a group which included trumpet as well as the classic Goodman sextet lineup of clarinet, guitar, vibes and rhythm section.

We eventually narrowed down the choice of songs to a group of about 20 which we felt would make a good evening's concert and the majority of them are here on this album.

We've had such fun researching, preparing and performing this material. I hope that comes out in these recordings as it surely does when we get the chance to perform these songs live.

*Neal Thornton, 2012*

## BENNY GOODMAN

For a kid who liked jazz, Chicago was a great town to grow up in. Musicians had begun working their way north from New Orleans about the turn of the century, and by the early 1920s giants like "Jellyroll" Morton, Sidney Bechet, "King" Oliver and Louis Armstrong were playing in Chicago and making history. Kids who paid attention to this development were going to make history themselves in a few more years — Bud Freeman,

Davie Tough, Eddie Condon, Milt Mesirov (Mezz Mezzrow), Gene Krupa, "Muggsy" Spanier, Jimmy McPartland, Jess Stacy — and a kid in short pants who played the clarinet.

Benny Goodman was only 10 when he first picked up a clarinet. Only a year or so later he was doing Ted Lewis imitations for pocket money. At 14 he was in a band that featured the legendary Bix Beiderbecke. By the time he was 16 he was recognized as a "comer" as far away as the west coast and was asked to join a California-based band led by another Chicago boy, Ben Pollack. Goodman played with Pollack's band for the next four years. His earliest recording was made with Pollack, but he was also recording under his own name in Chicago and New York, where the band had migrated from the west coast. In 1929, when he was just 20, Benny struck out on his own to become a typical New York freelance musician, playing studio dates, leading a pit orchestra, making himself a seasoned professional.

By 1934 he was seasoned enough to be ready for his first big break. He heard that Billy Rose needed a band for his new theatre restaurant, the Music Hall, and he got together a group of musicians who shared his enthusiasm for jazz. They auditioned and got the job. Then Benny heard

that NBC was looking for three bands to rotate on a new Saturday night broadcast to be called "Let's Dance", a phrase that has been associated with the Goodman band ever since. One band on the show was to be sweet, one Latin, and the third hot. The Goodman band was hot enough to get the job, but not hot enough to satisfy Benny. He brought in Gene Krupa on drums. Fletcher Henderson began writing the arrangements — arrangements that still sound fresh more than a half century later. And the band rehearsed endlessly to achieve the precise tempos, section playing and phrasing that ushered in a new era in American music. There was only one word that could describe this band's style adequately: Swing.

After six months of broadcasting coast to coast the band was ready for a cross-country tour. The band was ready but the country was not. The tour was a disaster until its last date in August, 1935, at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles. The only plausible explanation for what happened there is that "Let's Dance" was aired three hours earlier on the west coast than in the east. The kids in Los Angeles had been listening, and thousands of them turned out to hear the band in person at the Palomar. They hadn't even come to dance; instead they crowded around the bandstand just to listen. It was a new kind of music with a

new kind of audience, and their meeting at the Palomar made national headlines. When the band headed east again, after nearly two months at the Palomar, they were famous. They played for seven months at the Congress Hotel in Chicago, where Teddy Wilson joined them to complete the Benny Goodman Trio. Back in New York Lionel Hampton made it the Benny Goodman Quartet, and the band was a sensation at the Hotel Pennsylvania's Madhattan Room.

The band made it even bigger at the Paramount Theatre, where lines began forming at breakfast time and continued through the last daily show. It was grueling for the kids who waited for hours to dance in the aisles. It was more grueling for the band; they returned each night to the Madhattan Room for still more swing. At the age of 28 Benny Goodman had reached what seemed to be the pinnacle of success. The new radio program, "The Camel Caravan", was scheduled in prime time, and the whole nation listened not only to the band itself but to the intelligent commentary by some of the most influential critics of the day, including Clifton Fadiman and Robert Benchley.

But it was not quite the pinnacle. On January 16, 1938, Sol Hurok, the most prestigious impresario in America, booked the Benny Goodman band into

Carnegie Hall. For generations Carnegie Hall had been the nation's greatest temple of musical art, home of the New York Philharmonic and scene of every important artist's debut (even if they had played in a hundred other concert halls first). So this was a debut not only for Benny Goodman but for jazz. Though many others followed him to Carnegie Hall, there has never been another concert with such an impact. It even made his "classical" Carnegie Hall debut more newsworthy a few years later when Benny returned there to launch his second career, as a soloist with major symphony orchestras and chamber groups.

Benny Goodman was indisputably the King of Swing – the title was invented by Gene Krupa – and he reigned as such thereafter until his death in 1986 at age 77. Over the years he played with the greatest figures in jazz: Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Mildred Bailey, Bessie Smith and countless others. Many of those who played with him as sidemen later achieved fame as leaders of their own bands, as soloists, or even as movie or TV actors – Harry James, Ziggy Elman, Gene Krupa and Lionel Hampton to name a few. A list of Benny's hits would fill a book. In fact it filled several books by his devoted discographer/biographer Russ Connor.

That crowded career, spanning more than six decades, had an almost unparalleled impact on popular music and the importance of the clarinet in both jazz and classical music. Thousands of youngsters throughout the world were influenced to play the clarinet through listening to Benny Goodman's recordings and live performances, and the style of those who turned to jazz was universally patterned after what they heard Benny play, whether or not they realized it. The popularity of the "big band" format is another of the legacies of this musical giant.

*© The Estate of Benny Goodman.*

## JULIAN BLISS

Firmly established on the international concert scene Julian Bliss has already appeared as soloist with a number of important orchestras including the London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, BBC Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, NHK Symphony, Munich Chamber, Gulbenkian Orchestra, Malaysian Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony, and the Bergen Philharmonic.

In recital Julian has appeared at such prestigious venues as the Wigmore Hall, Cadogan Hall, the Louvre in Paris, Montpellier Festival, Jerusalem Music Festival, Bad Kissingen, Rheingau and Mecklenburg Festivals, where he was awarded the audience prize and is now a regular guest. He recently gave a very successful debut recital at the Lincoln Center in New York. As a prolific chamber musician, Julian has collaborated with artists such as Joshua Bell, Steven Isserlis, Misha Maisky, Steven Kovacevich, Elena Bashkirova, Julian Rachlin, Simon Trpceski and Helen Grimaud.

Julian's recordings for EMI have been greeted with critical acclaim and of his most recent



© Nick White

release with Sabine Meyer as recording partner was said "Spohr Clarinet Concerto no. 2 in C minor, colourfully played by Julian Bliss, is full of instrumental invention, pitting the clarinet against some highly original effects and so requiring much care in balance as well as finger dexterity." (Gramophone)

Julian has appeared on national television on numerous occasions; at the Queen's 80th Birthday at the BBC Proms in front of a live audience and a television audience around the world in forty

countries, in a three-part documentary about his life for Channel 4 entitled 'Gifted', and he was among the distinguished artists invited to perform at the Queen's Golden Jubilee Celebrations at Buckingham Palace on 1 June 2002.

In 2007 Julian was invited by Conn Selmer to design a range of affordable clarinets bearing his name. The BLISS range of clarinets was recently launched world-wide and have received much praise.

## NEAL THORNTON

Neal studied Physics at Balliol College, Oxford before coming to London to study at the Guildhall School of Music. An interest in music gradually gave way to a full-time commitment to it and Neal now plays with many top musicians in London's jazz venues as well as teaching. Neal's regular performances include cabaret accompaniment for many singers, duo concerts with the guitarist Richard Bolton, as well as his weekly spot at the Soho Pizzeria on Thursday nights with "Men from Up North". In his many cross-style collaborations he has appeared in concert with Paul McCartney, has toured with Indian/Jazz singer Najma, and performed with Griff Rhys Jones and Janie Dee.



As arranger and composer he has produced three albums with Sally Burgess and three stage shows including *Something Wonderful*, a Richard Rodgers centenary tribute, for Opera North and ENO in 2002 and *Harold Arlen – who?* for the Barbican in 2003. He presents a concert programme with Willard White – "a tribute to Paul Robeson" – which has been broadcast by the BBC, and recorded as The Paul Robeson legacy (Linn records). His first operatic work *Sonya's Story* was performed in 2010 and his full-length opera *Uncle Vanya* is nearing completion.

## JIM HART

Originally from Cornwall, Jim Hart began playing drums and piano at age four and soon furthered this to include tuned and orchestral percussion.

A founder member of London's LOOP collective he is one of the most in-demand musicians on the British scene as a soloist and as a sideman on both drums and vibes. He has recored three albums under his own name with his own bands Gemini and The Jim Hart Quartet and his other major projects include The Cloudmakers Trio, Stan Sulzmann's Neon Quartet, The Liquorice Allsorts with Alan Barnes and Paul Clarvis and the Ivo Neame Quartet. Jim can often be found as a guest with other Loop collective bands such as Phronesis (on drums) and Fringe Magnetic (on vibes).

Jim has toured extensively with many visiting American musicians in the last few years including Ralph Alessi, Joel Frahm, Jaleel Shaw, Terrel Stafford, Logan Richardson and Richie Barshay and he was recently a special guest with Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Centre Jazz Orchestra as part of their London residency with the Barbican Centre.

Jim was nominated for musician of the year in the 2011 Parlimentary Jazz Awards. A British Jazz



award-winner in 2006, 2007 and 2008 he also received the Worshipful Company of Musicians Bronze medal in 2006. He was also selected to be a participant of the Jerwood/PRS Foundation Take Five Initiative in 2009.

He has also played with Phil Woods, Clarence Penn, Jonathan Blake, Walter Smith III, Franco Ambrosetti, Julien Arguelles, Iain Ballamy, Dominic Miller, Shaun Escoffery, The Herbaliser and The Heritage Orchestra, to name a few.

## MARTIN SHAW

Martin Shaw studied at the Royal Academy and the Guildhall School of Music. In a busy performing career he has played in a wide variety of settings both live and on recording. He has played live with a long list of artists including Brand New Heavies, Natalie Cole, Jools Holland, Jamiroquai and more recently Jamie Cullum. On recordings he has also performed with Marc Almond, Billy Ocean and Gabrielle among many others. He is a regular in many bigger band settings including Stan Tracey, John Dankworth and Cleo Laine, Michael Garrick, The Bert Kaempfert Orchestra and the BBC Big Band. In between these performing engagements Martin manages to find time to teach at the Whitgift school in Croydon, on the Wavendon Jazz course and is Professor of Jazz trumpet at Birmingham Conservatoire and the London School of Music.



## COLIN OXLEY

Colin Oxley studied at London's Guildhall School of Music, graduating in 1990. In that same year he was voted 'Best Soloist' in the National Big Band Competition and has gone on to pursue a highly successful musical career.

As a long-standing member of Stacey Kent's group he recorded several albums as well as touring worldwide, including appearances at Festivals such as Montreux, North Sea, Nice and Vienne, as well as residencies in New York and San Francisco. He is currently a member of Steve Fishwick's Quartet, the Dave Newton Quartet, Alex Garnett's Quartet, Mark Crooks' Quintet, the Back to Basie Orchestra, Simon Thorpe's Swing Band, a duo with Martin Speake, The Skelton/Skinner Big Band, Simon Woolf's Sextet and Eriko Ishihara's Quintet. He also regularly performs with Dutch violin virtuoso Tim Kliphuis. With conductor John Wilson, Colin has performed with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, Northern Symphonia, CBSO and RLPO. He appeared with John's own orchestra at the 2009 Proms.

Colin has his own trio featuring bassist Dave Chamberlain and drummer Steve Brown. He has also performed with American legends Scott Hamilton,



Harry Allen, Hod O'Brien, John Bunch, Houston Person, Warren Vache, Jeff Hamilton and Boborough, as well as many of Britain's top players.

Among numerous recording credits, Colin has recorded two successful albums with pianists Colin Purbrook and Dave Newton (in San Francisco). In recent years he has toured widely in Japan and produced several albums for a Japanese record label. In the year 2000, Colin was voted Jazz Musician of the year by the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

In between touring and recording, Colin is Guitar Tutor at the Guildhall School of Music in London.

## TIM THORNTON

Bassist Tim Thornton is a regular performer on the British jazz scene and graduate of Birmingham Conservatoire. He also performs and has recorded with many different groups including the Steve Fishwick Quintet, Emma Smith Quintet, Quentin Collins Quartet, Brandon Allen Quartet, Tim Laphorne Trio, Dave O'Higgins Quartet, Ivo Neame Quintet, Joe Pisto Quartet (Italy), Sector 7 and the Julian Bliss Septet.

Tim has previously worked with Stan Sulzmann, Eric Alexander, Jim Mullen, Will Vinson, Guy Barker, Sir Willard White, Nigel Hitchcock, Alex Garnett, Anita Wardell, Georgia Mancio, Derek Nash, Stan Tracey, Liam Noble, Steve Brown, Tom Cawley, Ernesto Simpson, Ross Stanley, Nick Smart, Kit Downes, Leon Greening and Jay Phelps to name a few.

Tim performs at many venues internationally but can most likely be found playing around London at venues such as Ronnie Scott's, Pizza Express Jazz Club, or the 606 Club.



## MATT SKELTON

Matt Skelton is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music. Equally at home in modern and vintage Jazz styles Matt enjoys a diverse musical career that also encompasses Symphonic and Light Orchestral Music.

He has accompanied many leading Internationally-known Jazz figures such as Harry "Sweets" Edison, Kenny Davern, Bob Wilber, Ken Peplowski, Conte Candoli, Red Holloway, Bucky Pizzarelli, John Pizzarelli, Warren Vache, Michael Moore, Harry Allen and Scott Hamilton.

He has recorded and appears regularly with singers such as Marion Montgomery, Dame Cleo Laine, Maria Ewing and in concert for Jesse Norman's Ellington and Gershwin Concert Series (2006). Most recently Matt accompanied Richard Rodney Bennett and Claire Martin in their American Song Book Show.

Matt regularly plays with The BBC Big Band and BBC Concert Orchestra in broadcasts and BBC Proms TV appearances. Matt regularly performs with orchestras such as the Philharmonia, CBSO, Hallé, RLPO, Britten Symphonia, Lahti, RTE Concert Orchestra and Big Band and most recently Radio



France Philharmonic. Matt is the drummer for the Grammy-nominated John Wilson Orchestra, a specialist light music orchestra with which Matt has recorded many film soundtracks including the Kevin Spacey, Bobby Darin biopic "Beyond The Sea" (2003). This year sees The JWO make a return BBC Proms appearance and undertake several music festival concerts.

Matt is a member of Grammy-nominated singer Stacey Kent's group, which is currently touring internationally the release of Stacey's new Blue Note album 'Dreamer, Live in Concert 2011'. On the UK jazz scene Matt plays drums for Jim Mullen's Organ Trio and Quartet featuring Stan Sulzmann. He frequently plays with groups lead by clarinetist Mark Crooks, saxophonists Christian Brewer, Matt Wates and Dave O'Higgins. Matt recently formed his own co-led Big Band with saxophonist Colin Skinner. The Skelton & Skinner All Stars made their Ronnie Scott's debut in November 2009 and later this year will be appearing at the London Jazz Festival with living Jazz Vibraphonist legend Terry Gibbs. He has recently joined trumpeter Damon Brown's new group that recently toured the UK including concerts with saxophonist Steve Grossman.

On this recording Julian Bliss performs on a Leblanc BLISS clarinet.

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