

Don Butterfield

Biography

Biography

Don Butterfield is among a select group of pioneering New York tuba players who helped bring the instrument into the modern jazz ensemble. Along with Bill Barber and Harvey Phillips, Butterfield convinced artists and arrangers alike that the tuba was a viable jazz instrument and could prove a welcomed addition to jazz ensembles of all sizes. Perhaps best known today for his work with Clark Terry and Charles Mingus, Don Butterfield was a regular on the New York freelance music scene for over fifty years, respected as a versatile and reliable artist in all musical genres.

Don Butterfield studied tuba at the Julliard School of Music under the tutelage of William J. "Bill" Bell. Over a long and distinguished career he has made music with a wide array of diverse artists from Arturo Toscanini to John Cage, from Claude Thornhill to the infamous Moondog. His playing has been featured on literally hundreds of jazz and classical recordings, as well as on radio, television, and film scores. Early in his career he worked in the broadcast studios of both CBS and NBC, and he was a regular member of the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra for many years. He retired from the American Symphony Orchestra in 1991.

His list of jazz recording and performance credits reads like a "Who's Who" of jazz history, including such artists and groups as Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, Kenny Burrell, Bill Evans, Stan Getz, Dizzy Gillespie, Herbie Hancock, Coleman Hawkins, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Teo Macero, The Modern Jazz Quartet, James Moody, Wes Montgomery, Oliver Nelson, Oscar Peterson, Lalo Schifrin, Jimmy Smith, and Stanley Turrentine to name but a few.

*Butterfield was a regular member of Charles Mingus's Jazz Workshop, and his playing can be heard on some of Mingus's most famous recordings including *The Black Saint and The Sinner Lady* and *Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus*. Mr. Butterfield was also featured in the recent documentary film *Charles Mingus: Triumph of the Underdog*.*

*In 1959, trumpeter Clark Terry requested that Butterfield join him on an album produced by Orrin Keepnews for the Riverside label titled *Top and Bottom Brass*. This award-winning recording was one of the first jazz albums to prominently feature a tuba in the front line of a jazz ensemble playing extended improvised solos. Butterfield's playing on *Top and Bottom Brass* opened the door for today's successful jazz tubists and still serves as a model for one solid approach to low brass jazz improvisation.*

In addition to his success as a performer, Don Butterfield has had a lifelong commitment to education. As both a teacher and composer, his work has

helped to expand the horizons for all low Brass Legends working and studying today. His students have included a number of successful musicians who are still working professionally in various aspects of the music industry. As a college teacher, Butterfield held teaching positions at Montclair State University, Trenton State University, Cean College, New York University, Columbia Teachers College, and the Mannes School of Music.

From:

International Tuba Euphonium Association

Honorary Life Members