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VIENNESE COOKING

written by Willis Conover

Professor Doctor FRIEDRICH GULDA called to the waiter, "Dry martini!" The waiter, thinking he said "Drei martini!" brought three drinks. It's the only time Gulda's wishes have ever been unclear or unsatisfied.

The whole city of Vienna, Austria snapped to attention when Gulda, the local Leonard Bernstein decided to run an international competition for modern jazz.

For patrons he got the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Education, the Lord Mayor of Vienna and the Amtsführender für Kultur, Volksbildung und Schulverwaltung der Bundeshauptstadt Wien. For his committee of honor he enlisted the diplomatic representatives of 20 countries, the directors of 28 music organizations, and Duke Ellington. For expenses he obtained an estimated \$80,000. For contestants he got close to 100 young jazz musicians from 19 countries - some as distant as Uruguay and Brazil. For the jury: six well-known jazz musicians from the United States and a chairman from Poland. For an orchestra for the final concerts: 13 musicians (plus the rhythm section on his jury) from seven countries.

And for co-ordinating all this, his general secretary, Siegmund Berfelt, got a heart attack. After all - a bunch of American jazz stars and Frederick Gulda?

In one whack Gulda and the city of Vienna did for Jazz what some American promoters may spend a dozen years promising. And he did it in Austria, a country without a jazz scene and without money to throw around.

I'm not even talking about the press, radio, and television coverage, or the full-blast food-drink-and-speeches reception by the Lord Mayor in Vienna's gothic Town Hall, or the presentation of jazz in the Vienna Konzerthaus while a Mozart concerto played next door.

I'm talking about the opportunity for young musicians (aged 15 to 25), amateur and professional to be heard and judged by artists they know and respect; to play the music they want with a swinging band; and to compete for the added sweetness of big cash prizes. In six categories - piano, bass, drums, saxophone, trumpet, and trombone - first-place winners each received \$1,000 (in equivalent Austrian currency) and a partial scholarship to the Berklee School of Music in Boston, Mass. Six second-place winners received \$600 each. Gulda also got the winning pianist a brand-new piano and the winning drummer a full set of drums. Well, of course, they worked for it.

In the preliminary eliminations each contestant played three numbers: a blues, a ballad, and a jazz standard or original. He rehearsed with his choice of accompanists; if he preferred, a professional rhythm section was provided.

He played for seven men he couldn't see: the jury was behind a screen. Since they couldn't see him either, no juror knew his name or his nationality. They were judging only his performance, scoring each of his selections on a point-scale from 1 (poor) to 19 (excellent). The contestant would have to score an average of at least seven points from each jury

member to qualify for the final eliminations. Then he'd have to go through it all again.

The jurors were altoist Cannonball Adderley, trombonist J. J. Johnson, flugelhornist Art Farmer, pianist Joe Zawinul, drummer Mel Lewis and bassist Ron Carter. The jury chairman who wouldn't vote except in a tie, was critic Roman Waschko. The jury's refreshments were mineral water, king-size cokes, and Viennese coffee. For three days that was all they drank from 9:30 am till early evening. The jury took its duties seriously.

A dialog across the screen might go like this.

Young lady in the organization (escorting contestant): "Mr. Waschko?"

Waschko: "Yes?"

Young lady: "Candidate No. 14"

Waschko: "Fourteen" (members of the jury noting).

Young lady: "Piano"

Waschko: "Piano"

"First number, Oleo."

"Oleo"

"Second number Ernie."

"Ernie"

"Third number, Bag's Groove"

"Bag's Groove. Thank you".

The contestant would begin his set. He had a maximum of 15 minutes. When the jury felt it had heard enough to score the performance fairly. Waschko would interrupt by striking a cowbell and calling "Thank you. Next number, please". The interruption meant neither approval nor disapproval; it meant every juror had graded the performance. The best performers would be heard again later, in full.

For me - outside with the contestants in the conservatory courtyard, jazz coming from "our" window, Bach from a window upstairs - there was drama in the situation. Six famous instrumentalists were inside, weighing tile performances (the prestige back home, the possible heartbreak) of 100 young musicians they couldn't see. Was human compassion warring with strict critical standards? Say a jury member thought a performance was worth 6.5 points: should he raise it a half point to make it 7, to pass the contestant into the finals? Or if the performance was worth a passing grade but he thought another juror might grade it lower, should he raise his own score to compensate? Which is better: to be wrong (maybe), but on the side of humanity; or to be right (maybe), but on the other side? The letter or the spirit? All this was only speculation. Inside, six beings were listening, feeling, thinking and scoring in honest conscience.

And however dramatic the situation for them, it was pure trauma for most of the contestants.

"Man!" one performer said stumbling into the courtyard.

"That's the roughest thing I've ever gone through in my life! Playing to a blank screen knowing who's listening on the other side. And that damn cowbell! Like a guillotine - three times!"

The results of the judging were posted later each day. Some

of the disqualified left for home. Many stayed to hear the final eliminations, which, unlike the preliminaries would be open to the public.

If the contestants were unnerved by the screen, in the finals they faced worse. They would face their judges - who had been instructed to show no response.

"I thought I'd played pretty well" one contestant said after his final performance. "Then I looked down at that table in front of the stage, and there were J. J. Johnson and Cannonball Adderley and Art Farmer and the others sitting there, just looking at me. No applause, no smiles nothing! - except writing my fate on their ballots"

There were 40 musicians in the finals. The United States with nine and Czechoslovakia with eight had the most. Holland was represented by five Austria by four, West Germany four, Poland three and Brazil two. Denmark, East Germany, Yugoslavia, Sweden and Switzerland each had one finalist. This time the contestants would appear in alphabetical order. This time each musician could play up to 20 minutes; he would be interrupted only if he played longer. He would play the same music offered in the preliminaries. If he wanted, and time permitted, he could add a fourth selection.

I was not a member of the jury and didn't see the jurors' votes. I am not a jazz "expert" whatever that is; and I'm a critic only in the sense that anions is a critic who listens and responds. I did hear most of the finalists however. I listened to them as I listen to new records for my radio program: would I broadcast that? My private point system allowed for a "genius" top, dropping fractionally to a low of "call the cops!" I heard no geniuses - haven't heard a new genius anywhere for years - and the cops weren't ever necessary: the preliminary elimination had taken care of that. The average rating was somewhere between the two extremes - what I called "professionally acceptable".

Omitting the winners for a moment, here are my notes (without ratings) on a few finalists. The notes may show why some contestants didn't win assuming the jury's reactions were similar to mine.

Altoist Filho Victor Assis, of Brazil, played in a passionate Charlie Parker style.

Czeslaw Bartkowski, of Poland, played light loose swinging, tasteful drums; and if he'd played with a stronger bite, I'd have marked him nearer the top in his category.

Bob Degen from the United States was an acceptable pianist but not by Bill Evans standards which Degen seemed aware of.

Louis Dikker, of Holland, was Evans again, with less technique but a bit more strength than Degen.

Dutch drummer Martin Dynhofen was more mannered and less swinging than I like. But six or eight other contestants chose Dynhofen for their rhythm sections.

Jurgen Karg, a good bassist from West Germany, was an accompanied soloist rather than a bassist swinging a combo. Although he played pizzicato for the whole set, he used a lot of glissandi, perhaps to hide the fact that his intonation was off sometimes; he had a lovely tone, though.

Joachim Kuhn, East German pianist, revealed himself as a real musician with a fondness for the horizons beyond. I was sorry he was eliminated.

Albert Mayr, Austrian pianist wasn't very original (Bill Evans on ballad, McCoy Tyner on the fast ones) but he knew what he was doing.

Claudio Roditi, Brazilian trumpeter might be more at home with the gentle beauty of Brazilian music than with the different demands of jazz.

Rudolf Rokl, Czechoslovakian pianist, was crisp swinging, imaginative, humorous. I wished him a place among the winners.

Polish fluegelhornist Tomasz Stanko has sounded surer with the Andrzej Trzaskowski group, with which he usually plays, though the feeling was there.

Ludvik Svabensky, piano, Czechoslovakia, reshaped Night and Day imaginatively. He had a skillful touch and good taste though not especially original he is a well-grounded pianist and jazzman.

As a private listener I agreed with the jury: all the winners deserved to win. The first place winners were:

Trumpet: Franco Ambrosetti. He was born in 1941, in Lugano, Switzerland. An economics student at the University of Basel, Ambrosetti plays in quintet led by his father, industrialist alto saxophonist Flavio. He has played at festivals in San Remo, Bologna, Lugano, Zürich, Comblain-la-Tour, Warsaw and Prague. A Clifford Brown - Fats Navarro man with great facility, his Blues for Ursula helped win the finals, I think.

(Some member of the jury suggested a special prize for Ursula, who was pleasantly present).

Saxophone - Eddie Daniels. He was born in 1941. A native of Brooklyn, N.Y., he has degrees from Brooklyn College and Juilliard. Daniels played tenor with Tony Scott, the Bill Evans Town Hall concert orchestra, and is now with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis band. He blew the roof of the Schubertsaal with his first note; the closest comparison might be Sonny Rolling.

Piano - Friedrich Pauer. Born in Vienna in 1943, he worked with Jimmy Deuchar, Tubby Hayes, and Herb Geller. Now at Dug's night Club, Berlin. Pauer broke the piano finalists' Bill Evans mold; if any influence showed it was more Oscar Peterson's though in Pauer's original Ernie he chose rhapsodic Stan Kenton.

Bass - Miroslav Vitous. He was born in Prague in 1947 (the youngest winner in the Vienna competition), and now is a Prague Conservatory student.

How did the jury sit still thorough Virtous' set? It was as close to perfect as one could expect a bassist to be - sensitive swinging. I joined the jury in nonapplause. I sweated in my palms, instead.

Drums - Klaus Weiss. He was born in 1942, in West Germany. He has his own group but has worked with Leo Wright, Johnny grime Don Byas. Kenny Drew, Attila Zoller, Bud Powell and Klaus Doldinger. He kept good time in the finals, and that's important.

Trombone - Jiggs Whigham. Born in 1943, in Cleveland Ohio, he has played with the Ray McKinley/Glenn Miller Orchestra, Kenton, Johnny Richards, Maynard Ferguson, and Les and Larry Edgat. Since September, 1965, he has been with the Kurt Edelhagen Orchestra in Cologne, Germany. He programmed his set wisely: with open horn with tight mute, and with "Tricky Sam" Nanton plunger mute. While Whigham played, J. J. Johnson sat impassively at the jury table, but I could hear him groaning his appreciation. Later, Whigham said Johnson's presence was inhibiting. "Every time I started to get into something, I'd say 'No...can't play that...that's J. J.'s lick!'" ".Whigham was the only trombonist to make the finals. His Berklee scholarship should include a course in irony appreciation before joining Edelhagen's band, Whigham

was considering an offer to teach at Berklee.

The second place winners were Jiri Mraz (Czechoslovakia), bass; Jan Hamer Jr. (Czechoslovakia), piano; Lenart Aberg (Sweden), tenor saxophone and Wlodzimierz Nahorny (Poland), alto saxophone (since there wasn't a second-place trombonist, the jury awarded the prize to one more saxophonist); Manfred Josel (Austria), drums; and Randal Brecker (United States), trumpet.

Miscellaneous Thoughts

The United States' jazz representatives overseas should and could always be from our best. American musicians who also play jazz are not representative. They must be as superbly talented and as passionately involved with jazz as the best foreign jazz musicians with whom they will be compared. It hasn't been 10 years since any US jazz musician went over big with European audiences just because he was American. The best Europeans today are every bit as good as all but our very best.

Some US organization should and could have helped more good Americans to get to Vienna. Contestants from some other countries had their trips underwritten by the minister of culture, by the city councils by - oh, well.

Although it's often said (by me too) that European jazz drumming isn't up to American standards, drums were the only instrument without a US representative in the finals.

Without demeaning first drummer Klaus Weiss at all, I didn't find second drummer Manfred Josel inferior to Weiss, though Josel didn't hit his stride until the Eurojazz Orchestra concert later in the week.

Second bassist Jiri Mraz was right at the heels of first bassist Miroslav Vrous. A firm, steady walker, a good soloist, inventive but not preposterous. Somebody in Czechoslovakia is sure teaching a lot of bass! Both winners in the bass category were Czechoslovakians. (And Down Beat's first-place 1966 Hall of Fame Berklee scholarship was awarded to Czechoslovakian bassist Milan Razabek.

The "house" rhythm section rehearsed and played God knows how many numbers in how many styles behind the contestants and suffered the preliminaries' cowbell cut-off over and over again. All praise then, to them: Wolfgang Dauner piano (Stuttgart); Robert Politzer, bass (Vienna) and Joe Nay, drums (West Berlin).

Of the 130 numbers chosen by the 40 finalists 40 were, of course, blues. Stella by starlight was played by seven finalists Autumn Leaves by six. There were three performances each of Summertime, So What?, Israel, Lover Man, and Polka Dots

and Moonbeams. There's no reason to believe the proportions were different in the preliminaries.

RANDOM QUOTES:

Joe Zawinul: "The bassists were the best".

Cannonball Adderley: "I was astounded to find that the bassists were fully as good as we expect professionals to be".

J. J. Johnson: "We tried to judge each contestant according to what he wanted to do, not what we would have played".

Art Farmer: "I tried to listen to each contestant as if he were trying out for my band. Would I hire him or wouldn't I? That was the most honest way for me to grade someone else's performance".

First saxophonist Eddie Daniels: "Most of the contestants discussed their competitors during the eliminations and decided who they thought should win. Not because I was one of the winners, but the final decisions by the jury were pretty much the way all the contestants felt they should go".

Mel Lewis: "Suggestions for next time? Maybe move the jury further back during the finals so the contestants can't see them in the audience. It must be jarring...There should be more categories. For example, saxophone can't be a single category. Alto and tenor aren't the same, nor is baritone. And maybe someone wants to play vibes or guitar".

The next week, the winners played a concert in Vienna with Gulda's Eurojazz Orchestra. The members of the jury played another concert with the orchestra which featured original music by Gulda and Johnson. This concert was repeated in Warsaw and Berlin.

Symphonic musicians could have played the music accurately, but it would have died. It lived because the Eurojazz men and the jurors are more than superior musicians - they are superior jazz musicians.

And Gulda was the best man for the several tasks he gave himself as dreamer, organizer, composer, conductor, soloist and spokesman. He is Vienna's top musical celebrity and an internationally praised concert pianist. He is also young enough to understand jazz and play it well and is fan enough to admire other jazz musicians without reservation. He is efficient disciplined and willing and able to crack the whip to keep things going. And he is clear of eye.

"The wall between classical music and jazz " Gulda said "is slowly coming down. After all, there was baroque music, classical music, romantic music and impressionistic music. Each was simply a different way of composing and playing. And jazz is just another way of composing and playing".