

ON GETTING RUSTICATED "OUT IN PA."

Although Mays Wilson & Wind isn't a Wall Street brokerage house, this co-op trio has produced an Initial Public Offering* that's definitely worth a substantial investment of your time.

Here's the story in something less than a nutshell. Bill Mays first encountered Martin Wind in 1992, when both appeared (as members of different groups) at Holland's North Sea Festival. That same year, Illinois native Matt Wilson arrived in New York, where he quickly began winning attention from (and work with) highly demanding leaders like Dewey Redman, Lee Konitz and Cecil McBee. Since Martin's move from Germany to the U.S. in 1995, he and Bill have often played together on duo gigs - and both had enjoyed Matt's work in various musical contexts. But though you'll find it difficult to believe when you hear the interplay on this disc, the session which produced it was the very first time they'd ever played together as a unit. What's more, there was virtually no rehearsal of this often-challenging original material before recording began. And you're hearing first takes on almost every tune. Remarkable indeed.

So what's on the menu? Martin notes that "Beat" came together for him after he'd begun studying the composition process with the much-admired pianist Kenny Werner. "It was one of those rare occasions," Martin says, "when the music was unfolding itself naturally - when I was only receiving instead of dictating." Bill's rubato opening on piano - written out rather than improvised - is the first melodic strain. A second emerges as bass and drums begin to play in tempo. Though it's primarily a piece in 4/4, there are brief moments of 6/4 and 3/4 as well. And check Martin's jewel of a pizzicato solo - as perfectly in tune as you'd expect from a man whose teacher was principal bassist with the Berlin Philharmonic.

The beguiling waltz "Gemma's Eyes" is the felicitous result of a commission Bill received from Gene Baker, a longtime fan in Connecticut who wanted a special gift for his wife.** Matt does a bit of solo waltzing himself.

"Out in Pa." is Martin's after-the-fact reflection on several days' relaxation at the rural Eastern Pennsylvania bungalow which Bill now calls home, replete with rafting on the Delaware River, Scrabble in front of the fireplace and bear-watching in the back yard. Could that be an owl we hear? And was there, perchance, some Bach keyboard music played on the stereo in the evenings? The presence of a beguiling young woman named Maria - whom Martin had met a few days earlier and subsequently married - doubtless added immensely to these bucolic pleasures.

Though Cy Coleman's "Witchcraft" is most often remembered as a late-Fifties Sinatra hit, it's never sounded more bopplish than it does here. Bill and Martin had been featuring it during their duo gigs at New York's Knickerbocker a few weeks before this recording session. "So when we were in the studio," Bill recalls, "I said what the heck, let's do it, and just counted it off. Harmonically, it's a lot simpler than the other stuff we were playing and really enjoyable to blow on. Attentive ears will notice that Bill's done a wee bit of reharmonization in the last eight bars of the bridge.

The exquisite "Zingaro" (aka "Portrait in Black and White") is Jobim's composition. Bill had admired a solo version that pianist Jim McNeely once recorded at Maybeck Hall and decided to assay it here.

While the writing on "Liberation" is relatively complex, the improvisation is pleasantly relaxed and loose. Martin says this piece began as an exercise suggested during his first lesson with Werner. "Imagine the composer's worst nightmare: sitting with an empty sheet of manuscript paper in front of you, waiting for some sort of inspiration to magically move the pencil. I can only say thanks, Kenny, for opening me up big time!" By the way, Martin remembers writing most of the piece during a subway ride*** (a setting in which he was unable to try out his work on an instrument), then editing it later.

Pianist Russ Freeman, who composed "The Wind," once recorded it with Chet Baker. Bill knew the tune from having played it on gigs with the stellar Canadian guitarist Ed Bickert. Matt's ever-so-subtle percussion effects are a quiet delight. "This guy is such a great listener," marvels Bill. "And so intuitive! Sure, he knows the standard bebop vocabulary. But because he has experience in rock and R&B and free music, along with some symphonic training, he's not bound by any single approach."

Kurt Weill's (and Ira Gershwin's) "This is New" was introduced by Gertrude Lawrence in the Broadway show "Lady in the Dark." As Bill limns the verse, Martin's spot-on bowing nails the roots of the chords. And you'll hear some sparking four-bar, two-bar and one-bar exchanges about halfway through the piece - instead of near the end, where most other trios would, merely by force of habit, place them.

"Kaleidoscope," which dates from the mid-Sixties, was among the earliest of Bill's published pieces and he's been playing it for years. In fact, he's recorded it twice before: in a ravishing 1989 version for Jazz Alliance by a quintet that also includes flute and guitar; and (under its alternative title, "Peace Waltz") on a 1990 duo CD with Ray Drummond for the dmp label. It's a perfect ending for a wonderfully varied program.

Since this recording was made, the now-secure firm of Mays Wilson & Wind has gotten down to business, musically speaking, at the Seven Springs Festival near Pittsburgh, at Alsop Hall in Saratoga Springs, at Cleopatra's Needle on Manhattan's Upper West Side, at the Deer Head Inn in Delaware Water Gap and at the Water Wheel, a congenial dive situated in the very heart of downtown Milford, Pennsylvania. As these notes are being written, the trio's about to fly off to Germany, Belgium and Switzerland for a series of performances. In fact, Matt Wilson's already touring in Europe at the helm of the same high-voltage quartet heard on "Smile," his latest release on the Palmetto label. Responding to a request for comments on this music, Matt faxed the following paragraph - typically witty and succinct - across the waters:

"We did not plan or rehearse. We did not worry. We did not even care what happened. HURRAY! The result is an organic experience we hope you enjoy. Three empathetic musicians playing as one. No oppressive notions of how 'I' think it should go. We opened the flow and allowed ourselves to transcend the roles of both the instruments and the songs. Sometimes it unfolds with little effort and huge results. This was one of those times. And you should hear the live gigs. Wow!"
---Fred C. Dobbs

*Truth be told, these same three constituted the rhythm section on a quintet session that resulted in a superb release called "Family" under Martin Wind's name on the A Records label. You'll doubtless want to hear this one as well. It, too, was recorded within the friendly confines of Michael Brorby's subterranean Brooklyn studio and includes a pair of outstanding trio tracks.

**Want to hear more of Bill's work?
There's some great stuff
in the Concord Jazz catalog.

***For the historical record, it was a
Number 7 train running between
Flushing and midtown Manhattan.

Hear Bill Mays (Concord Jazz): "An Ellington Affair"; "Mays in Manhattan"
Matt Wilson (Palmetto): "Going Once, Going Twice"; "Smile"
Martin Wind (A Records): "Tender Waves"; "Family"

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Mays, Wilson & Wind

Bill Mays: piano

Matt Wilson: drums, percussion

Martin Wind: bass


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Acoustic Recording, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mixed: Bob Ward, Current Sounds, N.Y., N.Y.

Produced: Mays, Wilson & Wind

Cover Photo: Bill Mays / Trio Photo: Judy Kirtley

Notes: Fred C. Dobbs

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- . Beat (8:08) (M. Wind) - Manuskript - GEMA
 - . Gemma's Eyes (7:11) (B. Mays/D. Mower) - No Blooze Music - ASCAP
 - . Out In Pa. (7:27) (M. Wind) - Manuskript - GEMA
 - . Witchcraft (4:26) (C. Coleman/C. Leigh) - Notable Music - ASCAP
 - . Zingaro (5:28) (A. C. Jobim) - Corcovado Music - BMI
 - . Liberation (8:41) (M. Wind) - Manuskript - GEMA
 - . The Wind (7:14) (R. Freeman/Gladstone) - Encore - ASCAP
 - . This Is New (7:21) (K. Weill/I. Gershwin) - Chappell & Co., Inc.
 - . Kaleidoscope (4:20) (B. Mays) - No Blooze Music - ASCAP

**Mays,
Wilson
& Wind**