Gene Lees
# Jazzletter

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## Mail Bag

Gerry Mulligan, in your splendid "take", said that Chet Baker "had one of the quickest connections between mind, hand and chops that I have ever encountered." I would add my own experience to testify that Chet had ears that could hear paint dry.

In the sixties I was doing PR for The Trident, a lovely waterfront jazz club in Sausalito that booked Chet in a duo with the Brazilian pianist Joao Donato. Chet arrived in late afternoon of the opening night. He had never met Donato, whose English was at best marginal. I know there was no rehearsal. For the opening set, Chet perched on a high stool at the curve of the piano with his back to Donato, who kicked off a series of exclusively bossa nova tunes, mostly up tempo. As everyone knows, these songs of Jobim, Bonfa, Baden Powell and company, are demanding. With Bix-like precision, Chet played the head of every number in unison with Donato, like coupled stops on a baroque organ. Every set.

Your Mulligan piece also brings to mind his appearance at the 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival when I handled its publicity. He was scheduled for a jam session Saturday night with Jack and Charles Teagarden, Pee Wee Russell, and Joe Sullivan. A rehearsal was called for that afternoon. Mulligan had never met these legendary survivors who, of course, had played together for several decades.

Within minutes of being introduced, Mulligan took charge, organizing the rehearsal, even calling the order of the solos. As Joe Sullivan strode into his *Little Rock Getaway*, Mulligan turned to me and said, "That old sonofabitch can play!" And when the rehearsal was over, Sullivan told me: "That Irish kid can blow!" The jam session that night was an unalloyed delight.

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## The Making of Roger Kellaway
### Part I

*What a thing friendship is, world without end!*
*— Robert Browning*

One can speculate on the reasons for it. We embody the suspicion in the expression *Jack of all trades and master of none*, though it has been discredited by artists throughout history, spectacularly by Leonardo da Vinci. Studies have shown that those with artistic procilivities in one field usually manifest them in several. In most careers, the artist eventually is forced by the constraints of time to concentrate more on one of his abilities than the others.

Singer Meredith d'Ambrosio is a painter, along with actors Tony Curtis and Anthony Quinn. Actor Dudley Moore's degree from Oxford is in music, and in England he composed some exceptional film scores. Actors Tom Tryon and William Shatner became novelists. Novelist Anthony Burgess is a symphony composer. Steve Allen's abilities extend into so many areas that it is hard to follow them. Songwriter, comedian, novelist, he is also an excellent playwright, although this aspect of his work is little-known. The Swiss symphony conductor Ernest Ansermet was a distinguished mathematician. Novelist Lewis Carroll, under his real name, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, wrote several books on mathematics, his real profession. Novelist Somerset Maugham was a doctor. Composer Alexander Borodin was a chemist, a professor at the Medical-Surgical Academy. Rimsky-Korsakov, a naval officer, wrote his First Symphony on a three-year cruise with the Russian navy, and Joseph Conrad wrote his first novels while he was a master mariner in the British merchant service. In the jazz world, pianist Warren Bernhardt has a degree in chemistry, pianist Don Asher is a novelist, and pianist Les McCann is a photographer and painter. Conrad Janis is a trombonist and actor, James Lincoln Collier a trombonist and writer.

A tendency to patronize or be skeptical of wide-ranging talent is pronounced in America, where it has flourished along with a supposed antithesis between jazz and classical music. This is part of the mythology of jazz, although from the very beginning, as witness the career of Will Marion Cook, a thorough knowledge of and interest in classical music has been commonplace in jazz musicians and composers: Earl Hines, Don Redman, James P. Johnson, Fletcher Henderson, Bix Beiderbecke, Artie Shaw, Joe Venuti, and many more. Hank Jones was, like virtually all jazz pianists, trained in classical music and might have become a concert pianist had that world not been closed to blacks. So too Milton Hinton, originally a violinist. And on the other side of it, Itzahk Perlman, an Art Tatum fan, has just recorded an album with Oscar Peterson. The British concert pianist Peter Pettinger is an authority on the music of Bill Evans. Shelly Manne told me once that at home he listened only to classical music, and many jazz musicians would say the same. Charlie Parker wanted to study with Edgard Varèse, and William Grant Still did. Hale Smith is a classical composer, trained (along with Jim Hall) at the Cleveland Institute of Music; he is also a very good jazz pianist. Keith Jarrett has recorded on outstanding album of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Classically trained in the first place, Benny Goodman played "both kinds" of music and recorded the Mozart A major quintet.

Gil Evans and Eddie Sauter were in love with the Russian composers, including Prokofiev. Allen Eager's great love was Prokofiev. Stravinsky has been a powerful inspiration to jazz musicians. The entire Woody Herman band of the *Caldonia* period was in love with his work, among them Neal Hefti and Ralph Burns. It is probable that Stravinsky wrote his *Ebony Concerto* for the Herman band because he had heard Ralph's *Bijou*. Ralph told me a few months ago, "It sounded like Stravinsky. It had his sound. Not a copy of any notes, or anything. It was what Stravin-

sky did that nobody else did. All the grunts and cheeps and everything. *Rites of Spring, Petrouchka.*" The vaunted flatted fifth chord of bebop was used by Stravinsky early in the century, and it probably came from him.

A problem in earlier days was that many of the people who wrote about jazz, such as Ralph Gleason and George Hoefer, knew nothing whatsoever of classical music, and thought jazz musicians had invented what they had merely adapted. Yet the first serious evaluation of jazz came in the 1920s from two men, Carl Engel and R.D. Darrell, who were trained in classical composition.

The idea that jazz and classical music are separate and unrelated musics has been persistent, and has damaged some careers. When André Previn was conductor of the London Philharmonic, so often did British writers refer to him as "former jazz musician" that he quipped, "Is there a statute of limitations on this?" That is merely amusing, but when he was conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, it was written into his contract that he could not compose or perform jazz. When he became conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic, he gleefully went back to playing jazz gigs when he could, and lately has re-emerged as the great jazz pianist he is, better now than ever before. André suffered too at the hands of the jazz critics. His records were treated with condescension, although they found favor with the public — which indeed was taken to be the final proof of their mediocrity.

No one, however, has suffered as much from the propensity to pigeonhole art and artists as Roger Kellaway. Kellaway has all his life refused to be placed in categories.

When I said to Gil Evans, shortly after *Sketches of Spain* was issued, that some persons didn't know whether to call it classical music or jazz, he said, "That's a merchandiser's problem, not mine. I write popular music." Gil was wrong, however: it becomes the artist's problem because if the record store's manager doesn't know in which bin to put an album, he is liable to put it nowhere. And thus it has no chance of becoming "popular" — in the strict sense of the term — music.

So too with Kellaway's work. And to make things harder on himself, he often mixes the idioms. If his jazz playing reflects his knowledge of twentieth century composers from Stravinsky and Ravel to Lutoslawski and Cage, the inflections of jazz are heard in his classical music.

These works include *Songs of Ascent*, written for and performed by the New York Philharmonic and tuba virtuoso Warren Deck; *Portraits of Time* for jazz quartet and orchestra, performed by the group Free Flight with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; *David Street Blues* for jazz quintet and orchestra, performed by the National Symphony Orchestra; *PAMTTG*, a ballet commissioned by the late Georges Ballanchine and performed by the New York City Ballet; *Memos from Paradise* for clarinet, string quartet and jazz quartet and recorded on the GRP label by Eddie Daniels; *Fantasy Absolut*, performed by the New York Pops Orchestra; *Two Moods of Blues* for cello and jazz trio, which he played at Carnegie Hall with cellist Yo-Yo Ma; and *The Morning Song*, for F tuba and piano, commissioned by yet another tuba virtuoso, Roger Bobo of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Kellaway has written a considerable body of works for tuba, and there are classical tuba players all over the world who play them without knowing that he is also a jazz pianist, composer, and arranger.

But none of recordings has caused as much bemusement as his Cello Quartet albums. Merchandisers just don't know what to make of them.

In 1964, two Russian jazz musicians, alto saxophonist Boris Midney and bassist Igor Beruchtis, defected to the west, and since the U.S. State Department was always enthralled by such defections for their propaganda value, the two were given a red-carpet treatment that American jazz musicians never get from their government. But having got them here, State didn't know what to do with them. I suggested that Helen Keane, Bill Evans' manager, should take over direction of their careers, if any, in America, and she in turn set up a record date on the Impulse label, appointing Roger as music director and pianist. The album was released as the Russian Jazz Quartet.

Boris Midney married Tanya Armour of the Armour meat family, began to dress beautifully, and disappeared from the jazz world. Igor Baruchtis became a teacher and also disappeared from jazz.

But the album allowed Kellaway the chance to do something he had long had in mind: use a cello in a jazz context. A bass player himself, he had an affinity and sympathy for the cello. And on two tracks of that album, he used cellist George Ricci, brother of the violinist Ruggiero Ricci. Ricci could phrase jazz, so long as it was written for him. (As far as I know, only Fred Katz has ever been able to improvise jazz on the cello.)

A few years later, Herb Alpert crossed Roger's path. Having, with his Tijuana Brass records, made a fortune for himself and the label, of which he was a co-owner, he wanted to indulge his love of jazz.

"In 1969, I wrote some music for cello and piano," Roger said. "I wanted to do something more for cello, but my way. Edgar Lustgarten would come by my house and we would play through it. The piece *Seventide*, in seven-four, which was recorded in *Come to the Meadow*, was one of the first pieces I wrote for him. Also *Jorjana Number 2*. That was the birth of the Cello Quartet.

"With the addition of bass and marimba, the group would include only instruments made of wood. The only cymbal I let Emil Richards play was a little tiny seven-inch splash cymbal. At the time, I still had my other quartet, with Chuck Domanico, John Guerin, and Tom Scott. There were two piles of music. One pile of music was called the sax quartet, the other pile the cello quartet. And that's where the name came from."

The group with Tom Scott made an album in 1967 called *Spirit Feel* for the Pacific Jazz label. With Paul Beaver adding taped

*musique concrète* effects, it is one of the earliest examples of the use of electronic sounds in jazz, and since they were added randomly, reflected Kellaway's interest in John Cage and the aleatory. Most striking to me at the time were the title tune, Milt Jackson's blues *Spirit Feel,* and the ballad *Comme Ci Comme Ça.* The former demonstrated that Kellaway, then twenty-eight, was one of the most powerfully swinging and inventive pianists in jazz, the latter that he was a ballad pianist of uncommon lyricism and sensitivity. In *Comme Ci Comme Ça,* I discovered his flawless time. He takes the tune at one of those ballad tempi dear to Carmen McRae. If you listen to it a few times, you discover that the rubato is completely centered. What he steals here, he replaces there, and you may find yourself tapping your foot very, very slowly. The album is long since out of print, and Blue Note, which now owns the Pacific Jazz material, should reissue it on CD.

Then:

"Herb Alpert and I would run into each other in the studio," Roger said. "He was interested in my music. I proposed five projects. He asked me which one I most wanted to do and I said, 'The Cello Quartet.' And he supported that all the way through to a thirty-eight-piece orchestra on three tracks. I even have a letter announcing how proud they were to have the Cello Quartet as part of the label.

"We did the album and the next letter I got said, 'We don't know what to do with this. Would you mind doing, for your next part of our agreement, an album more like what we're used to promoting?' Steve Goldman was my producer, and we did anything from Luciano Berrio to Spike Jones for the next album."

The resulting LP, *Center of the Circle,* using a big orchestra, is very funny, weirdly so. It satirizes what record companies were at that time trying to sell, including rock and roll.

"I did it to appease them," Roger said. "For $70,000 we did seventeen completed masters. I know exactly what I want when I got into the studio. I'm not trained to go in with a monstrous budget and guess all the time, as in the theory of an infinite number of monkeys. The people who don't have very much talent somehow always get that opportunity. But the people who have been trained to understand what the sound is from the beginning don't get that chance.

"So we did *Center of the Circle.* It sold about five copies. Then we went back and did the second Cello Quartet album, *Come to the Meadow.*"

The personnel on the Cello Quartet albums comprised: Kellaway, piano; Emil Richards, marimba; Chuck Domanico, bass; and Edgar Lustgarten, cello.

Ed Lustgarten was one of the world's great cellists and a major teacher of the instrument. When he was very young, he played under Toscanini and later worked extensively in the movie studios. Again disproving the myth of separation, Ed, like Itzahk Perlman, had a great love of jazz. And, like George Ricci, he would phrase it, so long as it was written for him. Had Roger not found Ed, that group probably never would have existed.

The first of the two albums was reissued on CD a couple of years ago and then mysteriously disappeared from the market. Both are out of print now. "I'm hoping to buy the masters and put them out again," Roger said.

The Cello Quartet was recorded again in an album with the Singers Unlimited titled *Just in Time* for the MPS level. Then, with Joe Porcaro added on drums, it made a fourth album called *The Nostalgia Suite* for the Denon label. (It is available in CD format on the Voss label.) For one track of that album, Roger transcribed a Serge Chaloff solo he had always admired. Edgar studied the original record and played the solo with Chaloff's phrasing. The album, produced by Jeff Weber, was done direct-to-disc, each side made without interruption and no possibility of splicing.

It was fascinating to watch the group record, particularly under that kind of pressure. Ed, incapable of improvisation, would go into an inner panic when Roger would take off into some of his wilder fantasies, afraid he would not come back in at the right place. But he never missed. How he loved that group. He said to me that day, "I call Roger the bottomless pit of melody."

Roger Kellaway was born in Waban, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, on November 1, 1939, one of three children. He has two sisters. The family background ultimately is Scottish; the name Calway was Anglicized to Kellaway, and the actor Cecil Kellaway was a distant cousin.

His father was a painting contractor. Both of his parents played piano. "It was my father's playing of *The Bells of St. Mary* that led to my taking piano lessons," Roger said. "I had learned to play it on my own." He started the formal study of piano at seven. At the age of twelve, already listening equally to jazz and classical music, he decided that he wanted to spend his life in music. He attended Newton High School, at that time ranked the number three high school in the United States, studying college-level music theory and playing double bass and percussion in the school orchestra, performing works by Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach, and playing bass in an extra-curricular big band. At one point, he and a fellow student had a Jackie and Roy kind of vocal duo. The girl was Meredith d'Ambrosio, now a successful singer and the wife of pianist Eddie Higgins. Another schoolmate was cornetist and future journalist and jazz historian Richard Sudhalter, who would co-author a major biography of Bix Beiderbecke.

Dick vividly remembers those days.

"Roger was gawky, angular, with a brush cut that wouldn't quite behave and an enthusiasm that wouldn't quit," he said. "He was a year behind me at Newton High, class of '57 to my '56. He lived up in Waban, a generally quite well-to-do part of the city. My only memory of my few visits to his home is of an utter absence — can I be wrong about this? — of musical environment. I'd been used to a family that lived and breathed music. Besides

my father, my brother played the saxophone, my sister the flute, and we all played the piano.

"We had a big band that met after hours at the high school, usually playing Basie, Goodman, and Glenn Miller stocks. More memorable was a sextet, which took on the name The King's Men when we played dances. Me on cornet, Dave Shrier on tenor, Don Quinn on clarinet (when we couldn't get young Frank Nizzari, a prodigy from nearby Needham), Fred Giordano on piano, Anthony 'Bud' Farrington on drums, and Roger on bass.

"Of course we knew he played piano, and inevitably every evening he'd play a few solo numbers. Roger, we said, was too 'modern', though, ironically, the pianist at some of the frequent jam sessions held in my basement was Steve Kuhn, a year ahead of me at Newton. Looking back, and listening to tapes of some of our efforts, I think a more accurate explanation is that he was too busy. He'd not yet learned how to feed soloists, how to leave room for others to breathe. The impression, heard now, is that he needed to fill every available hole, play every clever alteration and substitution.

"Giordano, though perhaps half the pianist Roger was, played very spare, rhythmic stuff, and basic harmonies, leaving maximum latitude for the soloist. Even Shrier, who loved Prez and Wardell Gray, Hank Mobley and Sonny Rollins and other contemporary guys, found Roger crowded him by saturating the background and leading him too much harmonically. It was mostly because of that, I suspect, that Roger wound up playing bass most of the time.

"On several occasions we played at the Friday afternoon 'Teen Age Jazz Club' sessions run by George Wein and Father Norman O'Connor at Storyville, in the Copley Square Hotel. Opposite us would be whatever major jazz attraction was being featured at the moment either there or downstairs at Mahogany Hall.

"One session stands out. After our warmup set, the Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet and the Herb Pomeroy-Boots Musulli-Serge Chaloff sextet did a set apiece; then Serge and Clifford did one with Richie Powell, Everett Evens — Herb's bassist — and Max.

"Our Dave Shrier, never short on *chutzpah*, asked to join them. He lasted, I think, about four choruses of a Mach-two *Indiana*, then withdrew from the field and let Serge and Clifford get on with it. An extraordinary day."

Roger said: "I remember that session. Steve Kuhn and I both sat in for a bit. I wanted a piece of that."

"Roger in those years was an omnivore, open to everything," Dick said. "The older styles interested him as much as the new stuff, as evidenced by the ease with which he later took to associations with a wide range of musicians. His capacity for absorption was limitless — procedurally, a little like Dick Hyman's, in that he'd figure out how a style worked, how a sound was produced, then just add it to his arsenal of skills. Small wonder that those two guys have gotten along so well through the years."

(Roger and Hyman like to play two-piano duets, and have recorded in that format.)

Sudhalter continued:

"I always felt that the amount of time Roger spent around me had much to do with the fact that I was steeped — nay, submerged — in one general period and set of musicians. He was determined to find out everything he could about it, and to become adept at whatever it had to offer.

"One time Bud Farrington (later to become a top-ranking USAF strategic officer) went off for a fortnight's vacation, leaving his drums in my basement. Roger and I were at them every day after school, taking turns at playing along with records. He later became quite skilled as a drummer, and to this day could doubtless swing a rhythm section."

This bit of information startled me. Dick had undoubtedly given me the clue to the astonishing rhythmic — no, polyrhythmic — independence of Roger's two hands. He can play the most complex rhythms of any pianist I've ever heard.

"In general," Dick said, "Roger spent a lot of time at our house. Though my father, Al Sudhalter, had been out of professional music for nearly twenty years at that point, he remained a respected figure, one of the finest saxophonists to come out of Boston in the late twenties, long-time friend of Hackett, Kaminsky, Gowans, Pee Wee Russell, and the rest. Toots Mondello credited him with having inspired him to play alto.

"Roger caught the attention of my father, who immediately pronounced him 'a real talent'. My father was still playing wonderfully, working now and then, whenever the urge took him. During our basement sessions, if he was at home, he'd await his moment, then saunter down the stairs and ask with studied nonchalance, 'You fellas mind if I join in for a number or two?' The answer was always yes, and of course he always blew us away."

Roger said, "Those were very fond times for me, very impressionable times. Dick was introducing me to Bix and Dixieland music while Dave Shrier was pushing me in the modern direction.

"I also can remember listening to George Shearing's *I'll Remember April*, and Billy Taylor's *A Bientot*, and the whole series of *Oscar Peterson Plays*. I wore out the songbook albums on Verve, Duke, Gershwin, all those trio records. And! André Previn in there.

"One of the most important times of my life was being with Dick Wetmore and Sam Parkins, playing Dixieland, but leading to doing jazz and poetry with twelve-tone rows. Dick was teaching me who Django Reinhardt was. Meanwhile I was still listening to Schoenberg and Berg and Spike Jones. I was teaching myself how to play percussion. I almost played percussion in the Massachusetts All State Symphony. I did play fourth bass in the All State Symphony.

"I enjoyed piano music, but I listened mostly to orchestral music. The Budapest String Quartet playing the Ravel String

Quartet was one of my favorite albums. I had a timer on my phonograph and I'd wake up in the morning to *Le Sacre du printemps* followed by Woody Herman and the Third Herd. Or maybe Schoenberg followed by the Boston Blowup with Herb Pomeroy, Serge Chaloff, Boots Musulli, and Ray Santisi, that Boston bunch."

From high school Roger went to the New England Conservatory, where he studied piano with Roland Nadeau, bass with Georges Molleux (principal bassist with the Boston Symphony), composition with Judd Cooke, and chorus with Lorna DeVaron, performing the works of such composers as Stravinsky, Honneger, and Hovhannes, as well as the more traditional repertoire. As a member of the New England Conservatory Chorus, he sang bass-baritone with the Boston Symphony under Charles Munch.

One of Roger's teachers at the New England Conservatory made his students improvise in two keys simultaneously. This became second nature to Roger, and one of the characteristics of his playing is a tendency to slip into passages of bitonality, which no doubt is disconcerting to those who want their jazz conventional. He has a sharp sense of how long to stretch these excursions, returning to simplicity just when you think he might snap the thread and lose the concentration of the audience.

After two years at the conservatory, he went with cornetist McPartland.

"The most interesting bass players to play for," Roger said, "are those who play *the bass*. A lot of the younger players remind me of the Barney Kessel line to a bass player after a duo gig: he said, 'Hey man, you and I need a bass player.'

"While I was with McPartland, I was starting to play like Scotty LaFaro. Jimmy was drinking in those days, and he was loaded. He turned around to me on the bandstand and said, 'Play the fuckin' bass.' I knew that he wanted me to play the lower register, but it took me a long time to realize that what he wanted me to do was play the *function* of the bass.

"A lot of young players want the amplification to be the energy. When I played bass, there were no amps, you had to put the energy into the instrument."

"Would it punch through?" I asked.

"I dunno. After Jimmy McPartland, I went with Ralph Marterie's band. When I got my night, and everybody got one, Marterie said, 'Hey, kid, you've got a small combo sound.' I got that from him all night.'"

"Was he rough to work for?"

"Oh yeah."

I said, "Don Thompson, being both a bassist and a pianist, said to me that he thought that a lot of young bass players had picked up on Scott LaFaro's techniques without understanding what he was doing and why. Ray Brown said to me once, 'Scott LaFaro can walk when he wants to.'"

"Actually, he could," Roger said. "There seems to be a renaissance going on, a return to acoustic bass and the tradition of what the bass is about. I enjoy this, when I come across those players. Neal Swainson in Toronto is one of the greatest bass players I've heard in my life. He can play the upper register any time he wants, but he never leaves the whole bass behind. And he always plays interesting, meaty solos.

"I am so thrilled to have had the chance to play bass in a big band. A big band is a real experience. A band doesn't sound like a band without the bass. You can take the drums out. Drums are not the focal point of the rhythm section. It's the bass. It's a thrill to play bass in a big band — I think more so than the piano, when it's really swinging. It's one of the great forces of all time.

"Joe Farrell was is in that band with me. The gig lasted about six months. Six months with Jimmy McPartland, six with Marterie, then on to New York."

Roger began freelancing on piano and never really played the bass again. By the age of twenty-two he was one of the busiest — and respected — pianists in the city, playing record dates and working with singers such as Lena Horne.

In 1962, he became a member of the Clark Terry-Bob Brookmeyer Quintet. He recorded two albums with that group and his first album as a leader. He played piano on many albums during that period, including Sonny Rollins' *Alfie*, Oliver Nelson's *More Blues and the Abstract Truth*, and Wes Montgomery's *Bumpin'*.

It was at this time that I met Roger. The first singer ever to record a lyric of mine was Mark Murphy, to whom I had been introduced by his manager, Helen Keane, later Bill Evans' manager and producer. She showed Mark the tune, which had music by Warren Bernhardt and heavily reflected the bossa nova influence to which we had both been exposed on a recent trip to South America. Roger played piano on that date.

Though I immediately respected his playing, he struck me as being sullen, withdrawn, and isolated. He hardly spoke to anyone, and though he did his work beautifully, he did it with what one might call a bad grace.

I asked Roger recently, "Why were you so closed in on yourself when I first knew you? It was like a locked door."

"Yeah," Roger said. "Nobody could get in."

"You were awful young. That was 1962."

"I was twenty-two. I'd already been with Patty for a couple of years." Patty Hale was his first wife.

"I was that way probably until 1971. It took Jorjana" — his second wife — "six or seven years to pry open all this stuff. I started to become happy at that point.

"I was attacked a lot in that first marriage. And in defense, rather than attack back, I withdrew. I withdrew to protect my music with my personal being. It was at that time that I began to separate the two. My feeling was, 'Okay, you're going to attack me, and you can get me, but you're never going to get my music.'

"At that time I became much more interested in avant garde music. And the more I played it, the more Patty hated it."

"She was Zoot Sims' cousin, as I recall."

"Yeah. The Sims family still think of me as part of the family."

Zoot's brothers included trombonist Ray and trumpeter Bobby.

"There was still another brother, wasn't there?"

"Yeah," Roger said. "Gene Sims. A guitar player."

All of them could sing, and Ray was prominently featured as a vocalist with Les Brown. They were from a family of vaudevillians. It is then unsurprising that Patty Hale was a singer.

"Being only nineteen when I got married, I didn't know how to deal with the personal assault. It was like playing emotional chess with someone and realizing that six moves down the line, you'll still lose. But I still felt that it was a situation that I should tolerate because I should be able to find a solution. This is what my personal make-up was about, and that's why people couldn't get in, 'cause I was extremely protective. It took Jorjana a long time to get me to understand that I couldn't have the musical part of me without the personal part of me. It took her that long to get me back to understanding that it was the same being.

"I wasn't really able to cope with my personal life in those early years. But musically, it was another matter. Around that time, I spent a whole summer with Bobby Hackett. I'd look at his little chord sheets that would say C sixth, and I'd listen to Hackett play four notes and make so much music it was unbelievable. The lessons of simplicity that I was getting! I would really understand it twenty years past that. I was really getting a lot of wonderful lessons."

Years later, in a solo piano album, Roger played Louis Armstrong's *Lazy 'Sippi Steamer Going Home.* He told me it was a little tribute to Bobby Hackett who had made him understand the beauty that could be achieved with triads.

"Maybe a year after that, I was with Bob Brookmeyer and Clark Terry. Brookmeyer never had the thirty-second note chops that a lot of the players had. He'd play quarter notes. Maybe to some people that was negative, but to me it was, Yeah! Quarter notes! Up-tempos, quarter notes! Yeah! A whole new world of time opened up, where you didn't have to do eighth notes or sixteenth notes. Oh, it had been: You have to do sixteenth notes, you're young! You have to show all this speed and versatility!"

Roger told me on one occasion that Brookmeyer was a major influence in another way: the compositional nature of his solos. And Roger's solos do indeed have a compositional logic about them.

"The Mulligan Quartet was another major influence on me," Roger said. "The pianoless groups. Listening without any harmony to two horns blend and making harmonic implications.

"Another major influence was the Jimmy Giuffre Three with Jim Hall and Ralph Peña. I saw them in Storyville as a kid, maybe seventeen. I couldn't believe it. Because Giuffre was beginning to experiment with folk forms. As a matter of fact, that was probably the single most important influence on the Cello Quartet — to changing my thinking about what jazz was about and where I wanted to go in composition. The Jimmy Giuffre Three blew me *away.* Then there was the woodwind album he did on Atlantic where on one track the playing is just clarinet and foot-tapping. I freaked over that, I loved it so much. It was *so* simple."

Patty Hale and Roger were divorced in 1965.

In 1968, Lucia Davidova, a dancer friend of Georges Ballanchine, director of the New York City Ballet, who'd gone to Condon's to hear Dave McKenna, heard Roger instead. She bought a trio album he had recorded for Prestige four years ealier. She played the record for Ballanchine, who, on the strength of it, commissioned Roger to write a work for his company. It was an amazing development.

Roger said, "He gave me almost no instructions or restrictions. The assignment was: 'Write me twenty-two minutes. I'd like to hear some blues. And I'd like to hear the Pan Am radio theme at least once, *Pan am makes the going great.*' No story line. Just images of airports.

"It was a thrilling experience. I feel honored that I had that opportunity, and I'd like to work more with dancers and in the classical field. It's a different kind of . . . well, putting your ass on the line. That's the only way I know how to put it. I don't have all the chops and all the knowledge that a lot of these people have. But I've got a different kind of feeling, something that comes from my jazz background that's inherently American. It's something I can bring to this fusion that will get as much respect as somebody else who can do millions of notes perhaps with no feeling. And there's plenty of that around."

Roger worked on the ballet at Steve Goldman's ranch in Callabasas. One of California's devastating fires broke out, and he and Goldman were not allowed to go into the property. Fire crews told them that everything had burned anyway. Roger assumed that he had lost the sketches for the ballet and the hundreds of symphony and other scores he had been accumulating since his adolescence.

He said, "We're possessive beings, we like having *things*, we're collectors. And suddenly I had to release all that, and go on. And I achieved the release. A few days later they allowed us back in to the ranch, and lo and behold, the house had not burned down. Every blade of grass on 180 acres had burned, but the house was still there. My room was still there, and there was the ballet. I was caught between being thrilled and, having released all of this, accepting the fact that I still had it. Amazing. It was a difficult process.

"The ballet premiered on a Thursday night. On Saturday, the third night, Robert Irving, the conductor of the orchestra, decided he wanted to go to Chicago. And I was told to conduct the ballet. But I overslept that day. When I got to the rehearsal I had time for only one run-through, and that was it, on with the tuxedo, Saturday night, orchestra pit, New York City Ballet. Man, it was like home base! Unbelievable. There are a lot of places where the dancers have to make ready for downbeats. The middle movement was the

blues, and that was completely comfortable for me.

"But I was using Ballanchine's copy of the score, and in the last movement, there were two pages missing! And it was in 11/8. My memory just clicked in. It was so much fun! My hands weren't even sweating."

(Years later, the New American Orchestra, as it is now called, did a rehearsal performance of Roger's music from *PAMTGG*. I surreptitiously taped it for him, and afterwards we sat in his car listening to it. At the end of the music, he said softly, "Well, I guess I have *some* talent.")

In 1968, Roger wrote the music for *The Paper Lion*, the first of his twenty-two film scores. The closing theme for *All in the Family*, titled *Rembering You*, which he wrote in 1970, is still being heard on television around the globe. The problem *it* created is that there are people in this world who think of him as a player of honky-tonk piano.

During this period, Roger was also Bobby Darin's musical director.

Every pianist I have known who is a sensitive and sympathetic accompanist to singers also sings, if only a little. Roger is no exception: he could have made a living as a singer. It is this sympathy to the voice that has led him to write for and accompany an astonishing range of singers, from Melanie, for whom he wrote four hit albums, to Joni Mitchell, Carmen McRae, Mark Murphy, Helen Merrill (with whom he toured Japan), and Darin. He wrote the arrangements and conducted Darin's *Dr. Doolittle* album.

Roger made Darin's life and career make sense to me. I liked Darin personally and respected him as a performer. He had a cocky drive about him that put a good many people off. Born Walden Robert Cassato in 1936 in the Bronx, he had a New York City air about him, and a driving, impatient ambition. It resulted, Roger told me, from his physical condition: he had suffered rheumatic fever at fourteen and knew he could never expect to reach old age. "He tried to crowd everything he could into the time he had," Roger said. Darin's weak heart and strong spirit gave out in 1973, when he was thirty-nine.

"I learned everything I know about stage presence, pacing, timing, all of that, from Bobby," Roger said. "Well, from Bobby and Jack E. Leonard." Roger was also Leonard's accompanist for a year, working a lot in Las Vegas. Roger adored Leonard who, for all his bluster and insult comedy, was a gentle and considerate man in private. He was always, Roger said, concerned for the welfare of the musicians he worked with.

It was the time of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Transcendal Meditation, made famous by the Beatles. Flutist and saxophonist Paul Horn had become deeply interested in it, then became a meditation teacher in the movement. "He was my initiator," Roger said. Roger began to study meditation. In 1969, while touring Britain with Darin, he made a side trip to Bangor, Wales, to meet the Maharishi. Fad of the moment or not, the movement's effects were to be far-reaching, and indeed, some of its results are paralleled in biofeedback techniques and a growing medical appreciation (if not much comprehension of) of the complex interaction of the mind and body — not to mention Christian Science, which anticipated biofeedback by a hundred years.

Roger still practices meditation every morning. For a time he took EST training. Whatever one thinks of these practices, they have contributed to the most remarkable example of inner development I have ever seen in a human being.

The first Cello Quartet album was made in 1971. It was a milestone not only in Roger's life but in mine as well. I had come out to Los Angeles from Toronto to write lyrics for some score or other with Lalo Schifrin. One night, afflicted by depression, I was visiting a friend who also was a friend of Roger's, singer and vocal arranger Morgan Ames. She asked if I had heard the Roger Kellaway Cello Quartet album. I had not. She played it for me. Hours later, I was still listening to it, struck by its pure beauty. I had seen contradictions between someone's music and personality before, spectacularly so in the case of Stan Getz. But something else was happening here. I sensed that Roger Kellaway had an inner musical life that had nothing to do with the man I thought I knew. One of these two impressions had to be untrue. I said to Morgan, "Have you got a phone number for him?"

"Certainly," she said.

I called him the next day. He and Jorjana then lived in Thousand Oaks, a bedroom community of Los Angeles, a hilly, bleak little town of sun-bleached beige grasses and big spiky agaves and dusty palms whose dessicated whiskers rattled in the occasional wind and cowboy-booted rednecks and pickup trucks with bumper stickers bearing such maxims as *America — Love It or Leave It* and beer bars in which Tammy Wynette, or somebody like her, whined from juke boxes about road-house love. It since then has become a city of some substance, with malls and department stores, Cadillac and Lincoln dealerships to serve an accrual of refugees from Los Angeles, a Bob's Big Boy, and a not-bad Japanese restaurant.

I drove out to see him and did an interview for my High Fidelity magazine column. He had converted his garage into a studio, which housed a magnificent seven-foot black Blüthner piano, his bass, which lay on its side under the Blüthner, shelves of music scores, piles of paper, a spinet piano that he had "treated" to produce peculiar pitches, some odd percussion instruments, a tabla, and something I found extremely significant. On the front of the drawer of a filing cabinet was a small card saying *Projects uncompleted due to lack of talent*. I still found him guarded and suspicious, as if he were thinking, 'Why should this guy be doing anything for me and my music?'

I did the interview, finding that he had one of the most interesting musical minds I had ever encountered. He was an eccentric, to be sure, but a brilliant one.

I left, and wrote the column about him. I certainly did not

foresee the countless hours Roger and I would spend working together in that cluttered converted garage.

I next encountered Roger in Toronto in early 1974, when he was on tour with Joni Mitchell. The company played Massey Hall, long the home of the Toronto Symphony, and site of a famous Charlie Parker-Charles Mingus-Max Roach contest.

Roger recalled "I did fifty-five concerts with Joni Mitchell and the L.A. Express — Tom Scott, John Guerin, Robben Ford, Max Bennett.

"I used to wear weird clothes. The Fender Rhodes was set up on the edge of the stage. So however big the audience was, there was nothing hidden about where I was. I started to learn how to use that, to start to dress. I dressed more rock-and-rolly. Joni's manager would say, 'The way you dress, do more of that.' I bought some over-the-knee musketeer boots. I used to play glissandos in some of my solos. Tom Scott's wife at the time used to call me Chicken Lee Lewis.

"That was an experience! Eleven days learning a complete show, learning a different kind of music. But learning a music that was so musical! And working with someone who didn't have the musical knowledge but hired an entire band that did! And it worked perfectly. We all respected one another. She is a very consistent performer.

"And the endlessness of her songs is so far superior to the work of most of the so-called songwriters. You can't even call them songwriters nowadays. There's an innate sophistication about the way Joni writes that's just different. It was thrilling to deal with."

A few months after that Massey Hall encounter, I was again in Los Angeles. I called Roger. One of us suggested that we should try writing some songs. We spent a lot of time together during those weeks, and gradually I came to feel we were becoming friends. He was changing, almost before my eyes. It was about then that I made the decision to move to Los Angeles.

The reasons were several. In late 1969, increasingly disillusioned with the dirt of New York (it never really had recovered from the first garbage strike), its crowding and rising crime, I decided to go back to Canada, where I was doing a lot of work in radio and television. Oscar Peterson warned me against it. Oscar is a Canadian nationalist; but he looks on the country with a jaundiced and critical eye. He said, "Gene, you know what they're like. So long as you're in New York, they'll bring you home to do projects. If you move back here, you'll be the hero of the hour for six months. Then the phone will stop ringing and you'll be just another local boy."

I ignored his advice. And he was wrong: the phone didn't stop ringing for almost two years. Fletcher Markle, the fine film and television director, moved back to Canada at the same time I did, and then, disillusioned, left again. Bernard Slade, the playwright and screenplay writer, left, throwing a curse over his shoulder. About that time I was at one of Henry Mancini's record dates in Los Angeles. One of the keyboard players was Ralph Grierson, from Vancouver, BC, a versatile pianist on call for everything from rock and roll and jazz dates to the most difficult avant-garde classical music.

I said, "Have you been home lately, Ralph?"

"I just got back from Vancouver. I did a Scott Joplin show for the CBC. I've been doing so much work there that I'm thinking of moving back there."

"You know what they're like, Ralph," I said, and quoted Oscar Peterson. "I'm thinking of moving to California." Whether I had any influence or not, Ralph Grierson never moved back to Canada.

After the initial successes in television and radio and magazines, the years in Toronto had damaged me financially. As Christopher Plummer, who was born in Toronto, once said to me, "God, it's a wonder any of us got out of there with our talent intact."

I called Roger from Toronto and told him I was making the move in December. I packed my car, and my wife and I left for California. I drove through bitter winter weather in Texas, then sleet and snow in the passes of the mountains in California. It was the most miserable journey of my life, filled with a sense of foreboding and failure. On the last night, peering past the windshield wipers into the driving wet snow, I kept thinking, "Oh God, if only I can get to Roger's!"

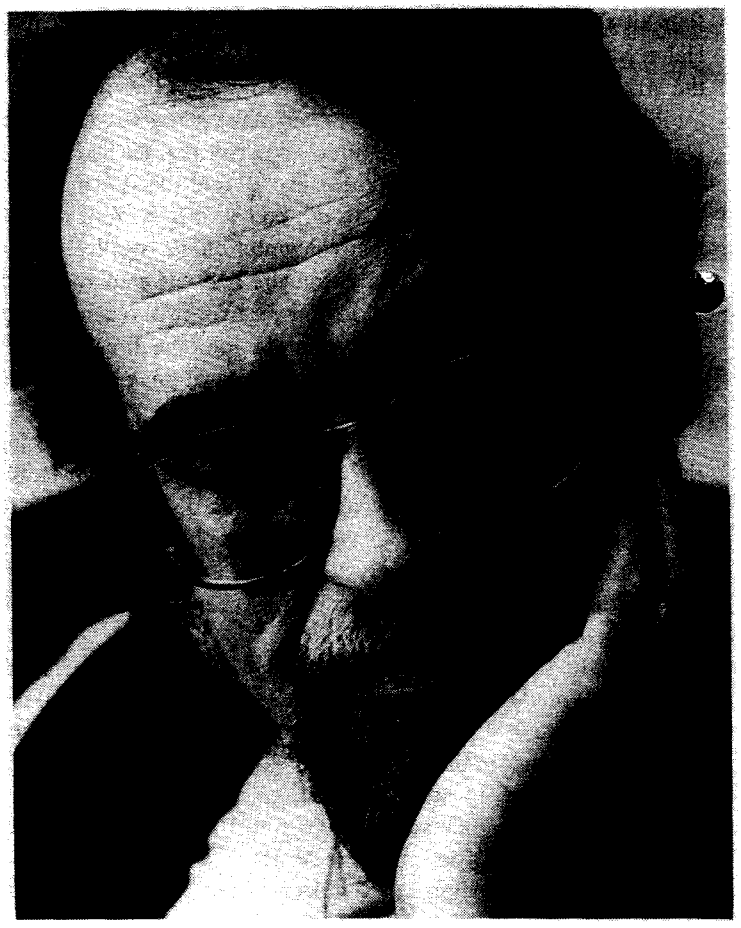

Photo by John Reeves