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Mail Bag

Gerry Mulligan is quite right that the *Scythian Suite* was obscured by closely following Stravinsky's *Sacre*, although *La Mer* preceded it by a decade. *La Mer* was pretty heady stuff too, but *Sacre* created more stir because of its ballet's racy nature.

I join you both in lamenting the demise of jazz, radio, and by extension civilization as we have known it (I'm fifty-eight). I would interject that the death of KJAZ, while tragic, has not left Bay Area without an alternative. The NPR station KCSM in San Mateo is alive and well, plays jazz all day and most of the night, and in fact may be a (but not the only) reason for KJAZ's funeral. It includes Dick Hadlock, Al Collins, Dick Conte, and Pat Henry (KJAZ's founder) among its spinners and has just completed a successful fund drive for a new transmitter that will increase its range, which already was comparable to KJAZ's. It may well be that this is the only way jazz radio can survive, as a publicly-supported venture. When you think about it, KJAZ's thirty-five-year survival as a commercial station has been a minor miracle.

Your series on Mulligan was fascinating. I thought he grew up in New York and had no idea of his itinerant youth, even including a brief stretch in my home town, Chicago. My last residence there was right in his old neighborhood, around the Drive and Irving Park. I'll never forget hearing that ten-incher with Chet Baker when it came out, changing the life of a high school kid who thought music began and ended with Benny Goodman.

The reference to Red Nichols' *Battle Hymn* also was intriguing. The Nichols version I know, put out by Capitol in the fifties, ured a bass saxist, the grossly overlooked Joe Rushton, who was a classmate and occasional cohort of my dad (a very amateur clarinetist of the Albert system persuasion) at Evanston (Illinois) High School in the mid-twenties.

Your ruminations about jazz's roots being severed by a generation's passing rings sadly true. If the music itself can survive in some appealing form, that may be all the consolation we can expect. No one alive today remembers Brahms or Tchaikovsky, but that doesn't diminish what they left behind. It isn't the same thing, of course — jazz's essence is improvisation. Maybe a better parallel would be Paganini and Liszt, by all accounts the unequaled players of their day, but we'll never know. Time's march may dwarf all human endeavor, but we still have the recordings and the literature. Thank heaven for microfilm.

John Hillyer, Oakland, California

KCSM is not the only thing that is alive and well. So is Buddy Clark, and living in New Jersey. I last heard from Buddy in a letter saying he was ill with a malady he'd been advised was terminal, and then I heard that he was gone. My apologies to Buddy, if anyone knows how to reach him. He and Mel Lewis certainly made a fantastic rhythm section for the Mulligan band.

The Making of Roger Kellaway
Part II

We stayed with Roger and Jorjana at the house in Thousand Oaks for a few days, then took an apartment in Woodland Hills, a San Fernando Valley community that is part of Los Angeles. Roger and I soon determined that it took twenty minutes to travel between our two places. I did some magazine freelancing and drew an advance on my song royalties to keep going.

Then Roger came under consideration to write the score for a children's animated cartoon feature based on Russell Hoban's wonderful symbolic novel *The Mouse and his Child*, about a little mechanical mouse and his child exiled forever from the toy store where we first encounter them. Roger proposed to the company, Murakami Wolf — an important animation house, working in television commercials — that it be a song score, with lyrics contributing to the narrative. He must have done quite a sales job on my behalf: the company's principals asked to meet me. We talked to them at their office in Hollywood and we got the job.

As elated as children, we got into his car, a gray Mercedes Benz sedan, and instead of taking the freeway we drove up to Mulholland Drive and followed it along the crest of the mountains, looking down at the Los Angeles basin on the left and the San Fernando Valley on the right. It was like flying, in every sense of the word.

We went to work on the score immediately. Roger wrote a main title theme and played it for me. I had grown very tired of composer's egos. I thought, 'This relationship is going to live or die in the next few seconds, because I'm going to tell him the truth.'

"It's excellent and it's wrong," I said.

"Why?" he said, a little defensively.

"This picture is about a child. And that's bebop. It's too sophisticated."

Pause. "You're right," he said, and in the next half hour wrote one of the most glorious melodies I have ever heard. To be sure, it was a three-two samba, but it *seemed* naive and gentle and simple. I called it *Tell Me My Name*, and wrote lyrics for both the main title and the closing credits. From that moment on, Roger and I would never hesitate to criticize each other's work.

Fred Wolf and Charles Swensen came out to Roger's house. We performed the song. I kept trying to see Fred Wolf's face, to divine whether he liked it or not. A husky, bearded, powerful, impressive man, Fred came from a family of New York policemen. He had even been a cop, but he hated the work and went back to his first love, art. At this time, however, I had no idea of his sensitivity. He kept turning away from me, and my heart sank: I thought he hated the song.

When it ended, he turned on me and said with attempted ferocity, "What the hell are you looking at?"

There were tears streaming down his voice.

We went to work on the full score, with Roger composing in the studio and me sitting by the swimming pool, with a tape recorder, working on the lyrics. One scene in the film shows rat characters in a city dump, symbolizing hell, I suppose, listening to an old record on a windup phonograph. Roger wondered what kind of music we should use, since this was a "source cue". I suggested we listen to Bing Crosby and the Rhythm Boys with Paul Whiteman, which we did. Roger came up with a Dixieland tune, but I couldn't think of a lyric to suit it. He even came up with a title: *Skat Rat.*

I stayed overnight. Just before I went to bed, Roger gave me a book of John Cage's prose. I found myself enjoying it, as odd as it was. I began thinking about Laurence Stern's *Tristram Shandy*, Lewis Carroll's *Jaberwocky*, and Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake.* I went to sleep, awoke in the night, and wrote a lyric that at first made sense. Then I began transposing syllables so that it didn't, yet seemed to. It had an odd, surreal, allusive effect. I left it on the kitchen table and went back to sleep. When I got up in the morning, Roger had already read it and was ecstatic about it.

And I knew I had made a step into freedom.

Roger and I loved working with Wolf and Swensen. We completed the songs, Roger orchestrated the score, and it was recorded with some superb musicians in the band, including Chuck Domanico on bass and Gene Cipriano on tenor. The film was completed and released, but never got the attention it deserved. It is undergoing a certain revival, and you can get it on videotape in Europe.

The money from that score saved my life.

Roger and I wrote together through the rest of the 1970s. In 1977, he was signed to write the underscore for Barbra Streisand's *A Star Is Born.* As it progressed, he realized that for two source cues (music that comes from a source actually in the film, such as a radio or a juke box) he needed lyrics. They had to be rock songs. He asked me to do them and I did: both are satires on rock lyrics, but nobody noticed. For his work on that picture he received an Academy Award nomination.

But there were problems. Not that my own character is beyond reproach; hardly. But when he had been drinking (and we consumed huge quantities of Johnny Walker's Black Label in those days) he could unpredictably turn angry, sarcastic and unpleasant, not just to me but to others as well. It seemed that whenever he began to feel free in a relationship, he would test it, to see whether the person could be easily alienated.

Then came a crisis, a step beyond that moment when I'd told him the main title was wrong. We'd been working on one project or another and went for a late lunch. We were sitting at an outdoor table in a cafe by a lake in bright sunlight. He was doing martinis, and began to turn hostile. I ignored it with a patience that is not normally an element of my nature, then fixed him with a stare and said, "Look, you can keep on testing all you want, *but you can't alienate me.* I've heard your music *and I know who you are.*"

Something changed in our relationship. Neither us ever, after that, distrusted it, and we never turned back. And I watched Roger grow constantly more at ease with himself, happier, more open, and funny.

He got an assignment to write the score for a television movie called *Sharon: Portrait of a Mistress* for Paramount. Its cast included Trish Van Devere, Patrick O'Neil, and Sam Groom. Roger wanted to use lyrics in some sequences, and got approval. We wrote a main-title song called *The Days Have No Names*, and, luxury of luxuries, got Sarah Vaughan for our vocalist. The band included Lew Tabackin, Shelly Manne, and Bob Brookmeyer, among others. The movie is numbingly banal, one of the worst pieces of soap opera ever put on film, and it still turns up on television. Avoid it if you can, unless you are willing to tolerate the corn to get to some good fragments of jazz in the underscore, including a remarkable performance by Sass.

By now I'd bought a house in Tarzana, a town absorbed into Los Angeles, whose terrain was once the ranch of novelist Edgar Rice Burroughs, who named it after the "jungle lord" who'd made him a millionaire. At the back of the property was a large separate building that I used as a studio.

Then, to my astonishment, Roger and Jorjana broke up. He asked if he could store his equipment, including his piano, in that studio. I agreed of course, and Roger and all his records and scores moved in. He occupied a small room off the garage when he was there, but much of the time during that period he lived in London, where he had taken a flat.

One day Chuck Domanico called to tell me that Edgar Lustgarten had died of a heart attack and asked if I knew where Roger was. At that moment, he was in London. I called him. Roger was having a party; there was laughter in the background. I told him about Ed.

"I remember that call," Roger said. "I was completely devastated by it."

It seemed the Cello Quartet was dead.

Roger lived in London for a year, staying at my house in Tarzana during his trips back to California.

We had good friends, a lot of them, including Thumbs Carllile. Thumbs was one of the greatest of all country-and-western guitarists. He played with the instrument resting flat across his lap, like a dobro, pressing down on it with his left hand and picking the notes with his right. His use of both thumbs in his playing was the reason for his nickname. He once retuned my guitar so that he could play it and when, later, I picked it up, I found that the open strings constituted a kind of E-flat major chord. Thumbs could play voicings available to no other guitarist. Furthermore, he was also a superb jazz musician, although he was always a little in awe of jazz. Still, it was strange to hear him in a country-and-western band, blowing out lines in the style of Charlie Parker. He played

completely by ear and, like Wes Montgomery, couldn't read a note of music or explain to you what he was doing.

In 1980, my wife and I decided to move to Ojai. Roger returned from London and prepared to take a house in the Hollywood Hills area. By fortuitous coincidence, every neighbor on all four sides of that half-acre property, which was walled, was a jazz fan. We decided to throw the damnedest, loudest party we could possibly arrange before leaving there, and invited all the neighbors. We prepared immense quantities of chile and rice and green salad and awaited the revellers.

Everyone came. As we had foreseen and indeed planned, a jam session broke out. There were a lot of pianists there, Mike Lang being one of them. Chuck Domanico played bass. Oscar Castro-Neves and Thumbs Carllile played guitar. John Guerin hadn't brought drums, but Thumbs' daughter Cathy (a great blues singer who has never had proper recognition) had a set of student drums in the car, and we pressed them into service. Dick Nash, self-effacing as always and insisting that he wasn't really a jazz player, played some of the hottest jazz trombone anyone ever heard.

The party went on late into the night. Our actor friend Michael Parks said he'd never seen anything like it. As dawn broke, there were warm bodies sleeping on the carpet in the studio. And that period of our lives was over.

For a time Roger lived in a little house on the beach at Malibu. Then he and Jorjana reconciled and, eventually, moved to New York, where I'd see him whenever I was there.

Abruptly, in 1984, he quit drinking. Completely and permanently, and on his own.

Whenever I had to go to Los Angeles airport, I'd pass the little house in Malibu where we'd had some good times and written some good songs, and I would always feel a twinge.

Yet we continued to work together, by telephone when necessary.

It fell to me to tell Roger of the loss of yet another friend. Thumbs Carllile died, like Ed Lustgarten, of a heart attack, a unique musician and a great loss.

The respect in which Roger is held by jazz musicians can be perceived in a remark Cedar Walton made about him: "He can do with either hand what I can only do with one." Meaning, of course, the right hand. Since Cedar Walton is a formidable pianist, the compliment is not to be taken lightly.

Oscar Peterson esteems Kellaway just as highly. Kellaway's name came up in an interview I was doing with Oscar. He said, "I love Roger Kellaway!" Oscar is severe in his judgments of pianists, and so I said, "Why?"

Oscar gave a remarkably apt summation of Kellaway's playing: "He knows the tradition and he's not afraid."

At the time, they had never met. Knowing that Oscar had been one of Roger's early idols, I excerpted Oscar's comment and sent a taped copy to Roger, who was thrilled by it.

Kellaway's attitude to Peterson reveals much about his own playing, which is consistently, unfailingly powerful. And, like Oscar, he can swing at very slow tempos.

On April 8, 1984, Roger and I found ourselves in Milan. Oscar was to play a concert that night. I'd seen him earlier in the day and he'd asked me to bring Roger by the hotel to meet him. We were crossing the Piazza del Duomo, the magnificent paved square in front of the famous Milan cathedral when I asked Roger what it was about Oscar's playing that had appealed to him.

"It was the whole trio," he said. "It was the will to swing. It wasn't just Oscar. It was Oscar, Ray Brown, and Herb Ellis. I was listening to the *Stratford Shakespearean Festival* album the other day, and I got to reacquaint myself with an awesome trio and pianist. It certainly could have defeated me when I was young, because it was so brilliant. But it was the will to swing that I picked up from them, basically. I remember going into Storyville in Boston in the early 1950s to hear Oscar, with the intent of sitting in. And I never sat in. And that evening I did feel defeated."

Oscar, I pointed out, had been similarly intimidated the first time he heard Art Tatum.

"Understandably," Roger said. "I think Oscar comes as close as anybody could to Art Tatum. But I couldn't compare Art Tatum with anyone. Or Oscar either, for that matter. Oscar is his own person. The dexterity and the cleanliness of the sound are just impeccable, always. The will to swing. To get on the stand and pull it all together and have that kind of energy has always been to me the most astounding thing. One of the reasons I revere Oscar is that he plays the *piano*. He is a total musician. And in his relationship to the instrument, he plays what I call two-handed piano. All the things that differentiate the men from the boys. It's a mind-blower. He's absolutely complete as a pianist. It's a kind of tradition that I feel is my responsibility too, now.

"You know, the artist rarely has the opportunity to be acknowledged by one of his heroes, and that's already happened because of the tape you gave me, where he said, 'I love Roger Kellaway.' I still have it. That was a milestone in my life already. And now to meet him, at a hotel, and in Italy, to boot. It feels like life on the road."

We reached the hotel, I introduced him to Oscar, and that night we attended Oscar's concert. They have been friends ever since. And I stole a phrase from Roger: I called my biography of Oscar *The Will to Swing*.

A year after that, in 1985, Dizzy Gillespie took Roger on tour Israel in a group that included Ray Brown, Mel Lewis, and Frank Foster.

"I was curious about being in Jerusalem," Roger said, "since you have three of the world's great religions there. It was interesting being with Mel Lewis, since he was Jewish, and I was developing an interest in the Jewish aspect of being there. It was

the only time in my entire relationship with Mel that I actually hung out with him and let him tell me everything he had to tell me. Most of the time, when you started a conversation with him, you were kind of looking for the bailout point.

"I got back and a dancer friend of ours said, 'If you're interested in Judaism, read a book called *Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* by Abraham Heschel. And that's what did it for me. From there I started going toward the mysticism, and that's how I now spend every day of my life. There are some wonderful values that I appreciate.

"I wrote a piano trio dedicated to Jerusalem, of which the movement *David Street Blues* was orchestrated for the National Symphony Orchestra for the fortieth anniversary of Israel. David Amram conducted. It was a beautiful experience.

"One night, Dizzy started to give this incredible buildup to the audience, talking about a musician he wanted them to hear. It went on and on, and I began to look around to see who was in the wings. And it turned out to be for me. I couldn't believe it.

"I just loved working for Dizzy. I have found playing accompaniment to be rewarding. Most of the time, that is!

"I've always been looking for whatever the lesson is in playing with everyone. Clark Terry is different than Bob Brookmeyer. I love to work with Eddie Daniels because he can do absolutely anything.

"Sonny Rollins is different from Gerry Mulligan. Working for Sonny Rollins was a wonderful time of my life.

"I was a big fan of Sonny's. I thought he in fact was *the* giant tenor player. It was never Coltrane for me. Even to this day, I am much more sympathetic with players who come out of Sonny than out of Coltrane. Most of the Coltrane devotees come out of the *My Favorite Things* aspect of his life. So many people who have adopted that way of playing have no sense of editing whatsoever, and they're such a bore to play for. Fortunately, being a pianist, I can lay out a lot of the time — just let them foam at the mouth for twenty or thirty minutes and then I can come back in.

"But I'd much rather play for somebody influenced by Sonny.

"I liked playing for Mulligan. Jimmy McPartland. Yank Lawson. Cliff Leeman. There are ways to play with people who play drums. Mel Lewis. There are just lessons you can learn by being a rhythm section player and being co-operative, looking for what the whole experience is. And I just love working for Benny Carter."

Roger had recently worked for him for a week in Oakland, California.

"It was fabulous. It was like going to school. It was the second time we'd done that.

"He's one of the most interesting musicians I've ever worked with. Out of all the players I've played with, he's in the top of the list. He's imaginative. He's never let his curiosity dwindle. It's absolutely fascinating, the lines he comes up with. Maybe it has to do with the fact that I'm only partially familiar with his upbringing, in terms of his coming up through the 1920s. All that staccato kind of stuff in the saxes in that period, and the way he weaves that into the phrases he plays, causes you to learn something different about music, because you can't comp for him in the same way. So in order to get the lesson, you have to go to a new space.

"All the great players do that to you. It's not only the notes that the person plays but the sound that they play with. You would not play the same way behind Ruby Braff that you would play for Clark Terry or Joe Newman. They're completely different styles, and *deserve* to be accompanied in a different way. And if you in fact look for the right way to accompany them, there's a lesson in how music goes together.

"The main thing for me is that I want music to win. When I criticize the way somebody plays now, it's not like the way I criticized someone twenty years ago in wanting to justify the fact that I knew more about music than they did, or at least that's what I assumed from the way they played or wrote. It's not a matter now of being right or wrong. It's a judgment on what the potential of music is and how far someone goes with it. If I feel that they have the potential to go farther and they don't even take the chance to try to do that, music loses. And that hurts me. It's a different kind of judging. And I'd like to remove judging completely."

I can testify to Roger's sympathy and flexibility as an accompanist, since I've sung with him a great deal. We spent most of the weekends of one pleasant summer singing and playing at the Montecito Inn in Montecito, a suburb of Santa Barbara. Roger had a nine-foot Yamaha at his disposal and the gig was thoroughly enjoyable. In the afternoons we could walk by the sea and talk, usually about music. We did an evening at Green Street in New York, and a week at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa. We recorded an album of our songs (plus two by Dave Frishberg) for Gerry Macdonald's Choice label.

Roger's imagination is endless.

When Roger was a young bassist, his idol was Red Mitchell, the immensity of whose talent, the depth of whose intellect, and the length of whose shadow tend to be underchronicled in jazz. Since Scott LaFaro was one of his protegés, and LaFaro's influence is enormous, that alone qualifies him for a higher rank in the history books.

In the late 1980s, Roger began a close professional and personal association with Mitchell. It took him repeatedly to Scandinavia. They recorded eight CDs, five of them in Stockholm, where Red was living. They made an album in Norway with singer Magni Wentzel and another in the United States with Helen Merrill. They played together in clubs, including Bradley's in New York. Their rapport was conspicuous and immense, for Red was a bassist who had been a pianist and Roger was a pianist who had been a bassist.

"For the last six years of his life," Roger said, "we were partners. I once told him, 'We should sound good together — you trained me.'

"I wish Red had played with the bow. I wish he had been more interested in experiment. But I was able to give him the space he demanded, and he gave me a lot in return, especially the bass tuned in fifths."

When Red died in October, 1992, it came Roger's turn to call me and tell me about the death of one of our friends.

In 1990, Roger was assigned by WDR — West Deutsche Rundfunk, the major German broadcasting network — to write a show on the music of Kurt Weill. WDR maintains three full-time orchestras, a magnificent jazz band many of whose members are Americans, a full symphony orchestra, and an orchestra devoted to what the British call light music. Knowing that I had made a fairly deep study of Weill in the process of writing a biography of Lerner and Loewe, Roger asked me on the phone for advice. Following some of my suggestions, he researched the music and wrote the score. The singer with whom he worked was Caterina Valente. They were to become good friends.

"You know," he said, "until I did that show in Cologne, and wrote for the WDR band, I never thought I was a big-band writer. But I sure did after that show. I loved that! And to study Kurt Weill's music. To do all that reviewing that you and I did, and talking about it. That was a high point of my life, just as the ballet for Ballanchine was a high point. The commission from the L.A. Philharmonic, the commission from the New York Philharmonic.

"If I were to think about what my goals really are, I certainly want to write a great symphonic piece of music. I'm trying to figure out what it is I want to do stylistically as a writer, because I've done so many different kinds of things. What I have to be wary of is not to write the way I think I *should* write. You can get intimidated by the European concept, which has affected a lot of American contemporary writers.

"There's such a sense of craft in the classical music world. If the craft isn't there, you're dismissed. I want to go in ten directions. I have no less a definition of myself than anyone else. It's just that I like to include the twentieth century's classical music along with Berio and George Crumb and the rest. George Crumb is probably the most imaginative of all the contemporary American composers. Crumb is fascinating. Imagination is one of the things that interest me. I admire the path someone takes that's simple. Let's say all they want to be is a great symphony composer. I want to be that too. But along with that I have to put out what it is I know about the piano, how much I love to play the piano, how much I love to improvise.

"It takes me back to the time when I used to listen to Erroll Garner and Oscar Peterson and identify them in a second. But I couldn't identify myself. That bothered me for maybe twenty years, until I realized there are just more spokes to the wheel, if you want to think of each person as a single soul that's metaphorically like a wheel. I choose to express myself in more different ways, so it's even harder for myself to identify myself. But I arrived at that point finally."

"I don't know," I said. "from day one, I found your playing identifiably distinctive."

"Yeah, well you did. I didn't. Being diversified has made my life extremely interesting, but difficult for people who are trying to market me, for they keep looking for the ultimate category I'm in, and I'm not in one. They're trying to put me into Urban Something, or New Age, or Jazz or Classical. They're trying to find the overall bin, because that's the way society is going: towards the compartmentalized mind. And it's not where I'm at. And if you want to talk esoterically about The Oneness, that's too abstract for the industry."

"André Previn suffered from it too," I said.

"One of the greats of music," Roger said. "And Leonard Bernstein too. My favorites. I've been a fan of André Previn since I was probably thirteen. But when he became the conductor, the composer, and all of this, I admired him even more, because he's done so many things."

In 1991, Roger was again commissioned to write a work for the WDR Big Band, as it's called. The producer, Wolfgang Hirschmann, wanted him to create a musical portrait of New York City, again utilizing Caterina Valente for at least part of it. Roger didn't want to assemble the usual songs about New York, and had asked Hirschmann to let me work on the project with him. Hirschmann had agreed.

Roger was trying to find a thematic approach to the piece. I suggested he think about the Doppler effect of one of the express trains of the New York subway when it roars through a local station. An imitation of that effect became the key motif of the music. Meanwhile, I wrote a long, very free poetic reflection on the nature of the city itself.

To find an idea, I peered, as writers usually do, into my own past. I remembered going out to Orly Airport in Paris. There on a bench, all alone, sat Erroll Garner. "Erroll!" I said, and his face lighted. He too was going home. We found we were on the same flight. We managed to get seats together and crossed the Atlantic in the night. In the pre-dawn darkness, we decided to share a cab into town. When the driver asked where he was going, he said, "Seventy-first and West End Avenue." I laughed. I was going to the same corner.

We got out of the cab at early light. Erroll lived in a glassy modern apartment building on the north side of 70th between West End and the West Side Highway. So, I knew, did Roger Kellaway. Erroll and I shook hands and parted. I lit a cigarette and sat down on the stone steps of the brownstone in which I had a basement apartment and watched the day arrive, inhaling the smells of New York. I tried to capture that moment in the lyric. Roger and I called the the song *New York Night*. It takes a weary and realistic look at the city.

My poem, if that's what it is, was translated into German for the narrator, but Caterina sang *New York Night* in English. This

work was performed in three concerts in Cologne and nearby cities in the summer of 1991, then recorded for broadcast on the WDR network. The band is superb; the drummer is Dennis McKrell.

Roger still couldn't get the Cello Quartet out of his mind.

"The next experience I had with that music was five years later in New York," he said. "I had a cellist come by my apartment and play the music Edgar had played. I was still drinking in those days. I just got bombed afterwards.

"The next thing that happened was through Yo-Yo Ma, when I wrote *Two Moods of Blues* for him for Stephan Grappelli's eightieth birthday celebration at Carnegie Hall. Something different happened with Yo-Yo because his sound is not close to Edgar's, it's a different way of playing. It was a different time for me, and I was more open to the experience perhaps and could look at the cello in a different way and reacquaint myself with my love of the instrument. So I started writing a bit for him. That takes me on to the formation of the new group with Fred Seykora."

Fred Seykora, a great cellist who had been a friend and professional associate of Edgar's, had often sat in the next chair to Ed's in the recording studios. He had substituted for Ed in the original Cello Quartet during Ed's periods of illness. Seykora has similar musical qualities, including a facility with jazz phrasing written for him, and a gorgeous tone.

When Angel Records approached Roger last year about doing an album for them, the group came back to life, now as a sextet, with Emil Richards on marimba, Joe Porcaro and Robert Zimmitty on percussion, and Fred Seykora on cello. It was issued a few weeks ago. It's called *Windows* and, as I have for a number of Roger's albums, I wrote the notes for it.

And then came another Kellaway surprise. Growing tired of the pressures in New York, he and Jorjana were considering moving permanently back to California, where she was born. They came up to Ojai to visit. They came back again, increasingly struck by the beauty and the quiet of the valley, with its surrounding protective mountains, eleven miles inland from the sea. And they announced that they'd decided to move here.

They found a house and a few months ago took a year's lease. Roger lives about two miles away and I see him constantly, unless he is out of town or I am.

We were engaged to do a joint lecture at the Music Academy of the West in late July. The title I had given it was *First Cousins: Jazz and Classical Music*. We met for lunch at an outdoor restaurant whose balcony overlooks a golf course and the green mountains, to discuss it.

Roger said, "Jazz and classical music were once closer than they are now. There were improvisatory elements in it. I think classical musicians think more about aligning their improvisation to the composition than the jazz musician does. The jazz musician improvises more off the *feeling* of a tune. By and large it's been society that has told us that they're different. The people who define legitimacy and seriousness in such a tight way, in these little boxes, they don't have any variables to include something like jazz, which is improvisation and perhaps to them a completely out-of-control medium. How could you possibly be serious? You're improvising!"

I said, "Glenn Gould explained something to me once, something I had not understood before. He said that the reason for the clichéd nature of the contintinuo played by keyboard players in Bach is that Bach wrote figured bass for those things. He didn't fill the parts in because he was going to play them himself. He was like a jazz musician writing chord symbols, and he knew what he was going to do. Glenn said the clichés became fixed over time."

Roger said, "We know that the figured bass is the precursor t the lead sheet. But don't ever give *me* one! It's a state of mind to read a figured bass. I'd rather read A-minor seven flat five."

"John Mehegan tried to introduced figured bass into jazz and it didn't catch on."

"Too heavy."

"Yeah," I said, "but you know the Roman numeral chord names in all keys. You know what is the five chord of A-flat and the three chord of D-natural. All the guys do, except they may be a little hesitant in some of the sharp keys. So in that sense your mind does work in figured bass, without the inversions specified."

"Yes, that's true, and just a little more complicated than that, we had to learn the dominant of the dominant."

"Secondary dominants, I was taught to call them."

"Now that's classical," Roger said. "I learned that at the New England Conservatory. We're talking about a terminology that you learn in classical music that crosses over into jazz, where we can both talk about the same thing. Mehegan came up with a system that wouldn't permit that, and a lot of people rejected it because of that. Incidentally, the oddest phenomenon about this is tha Nashville is the place that uses the Roman numerals. All the guitar players work by I IV V VI III. That way they're able to instantly transpose to anything.

"When you think of all the studio work we've been involved in, and you have A minor, and they ask you to put that up a minor third, some guys have to think about it a bit. Those guys in Nashville don't. They say, 'Okay,' and bang, they do it. I'm a big fan of a lot of those people. They've got transposition completely covered."

I said, "They're not adding sevenths in most cases either, unless you were Hank Garland or Jerry Reed. If you did, Thumbs Carllile said, they'd give you a funny what-the-hell-was-that look. Remember what Thumbs used to say about it?"

"No," Roger said.

"Well, he said their attitude was:

"Don't play me no sevenths,

"No ninths or eleventhe,

"Just let that E-chord ring!"

"That's lovely," Roger said. "Wow." And after a pause, during which, I daresay, he was thinking of our vanished friend, as I was, he said, "I realize that inherent in my terminology is that I find Nashville music simplistic. That's not so. The truth is I have a great deal of respect for it, and in fact, looking at the last twenty or so years of songwriting, and the abomination of craft reduced to nothing more than style and for the most part not even singing any more, Nashville is one of the few places in the world that still produces songs. They actually have melody and lyrics."

"And sometimes very good ones," I said.

"So," Roger said, "I'm looking forward to doing something about that, not necessarily playing country music, but hanging out more with these people. They may be the last people left on the planet who know what a song is! So, where are we going? We have to go to Nashville. You and I have spent part of our life teaching people what songwriting is. But you'd like to hang out with some people who already know. And let's be clear about it, instead of abstract:

"A song is an entity with harmonic and melodic and lyric elements, and you can take them apart."

"If they're good."

"Each lives on its own. The music lives on its own, the lyric on its own. And when you put them together you have a wonderful marriage."

I said, "The lyric is less able to stand on its own than the music. A poet once said song lyrics, as opposed to poetry, are like water weeds. They have to be sustained by the music. That's generally, but not universally, true. Lots of Mercer's lyrics stand on their own. Howard Dietz's stuff. By the way, there's a terminology that's crept into jazz that I don't like. It's the misuse of the word *song*. A song is a total unit of melody with words. An instrumental composition is not a song. It may be a tune, but it's not a song. That's why Mendelssohn called the piece *Songs Without Words*."

Roger said, "Everything's a song. I can't remember the last time somebody came up to me and said, 'I'm a songwriter,' and I wanted to hear what they wrote. I'm sorry, I don't mean to shut people off, but in most cases I'd have to go into a dissertation on: 'What do you think a song is in the first place?'"

"I don't blame you," I said. "When I meet people, I don't tell them I'm a songwriter. Because it seems like everybody is an aspiring songwriter. Elevator operators, dental assistants, cab drivers. If I say, 'I'm a songwriter,' they'll say, 'So am I! Would you look at some of my songs?' Or, worse yet, 'I just wrote one that would be perfect for Tony Bennett or Jack Jones or whomever. Would you show it to him for me?' And the answer is a fast, 'No!' So I just say I'm a journalist, and let it go at that. It avoids awkward situations."

Roger said, "I've had people write lyrics on things of mine and send them to me. Generally they pick some orchestral melody that's at least two octaves in range, but they love it, and they write a lyric, and it's very difficult to tell them it can't even be sung."

"Oh, I get the opposite," I said. "One musician brought me a tune, wanting lyrics, and I immediately looked at the range. It was a tone over two octaves. I said, 'Nobody can sing it, it's got too much range.'

And he immediately said, quite defensively, 'Sarah Vaughan could sing it!'"

"Or Yma Sumac!" Roger said. "And she isn't around any more either."

"And sometimes," I said, "it isn't just a matter of range. It's the character of the melody. That thing I wrote with Bill Evans, *Turn Out the Stars*, the range is only a tenth, but the character of the melody makes it difficult. I've heard some good singers come to grief on that song. It's a great piece for piano, but not for voice. What is a song? A short story set to music. To me, singing is composed partially of the actor's art and partially the musician's. And when singers dispense with the actor's art and want to be horn players with lyrics, they lose me.

"The only singer to me who has ever been able to alter melodies and intervals and if anything deepen the emotional effect of the lyric is Carmen McRae. She's astounding. You wrote an album for her that I liked a lot."

"I had a wonderful experience with Carmen," Roger said. "We got along."

I said, "You're one of the few people I've known who have worked consciously on their own evolution."

"I want to go faster," Roger said. "I want to know more. I want to be purer, I want to have purer thoughts. I want to totally understand that my reality is created by my thoughts. I want to project healthful things for humanity."

I said, "After we pass fifty, we all know that the numbers are getting smaller. At twenty, you can't even conceive of being fifty or sixty, and life seems to stretch endlessly in front of you. Artie Shaw once said to me, 'Look, I can do the arithmetic as well as you can.'"

"Yes. As you know, in my record company I'm dealing with somebody who's twenty-eight. I'm now the old guard."

I told him about an incident in my life. "On an afternoon in 1958, I was in Nadia Boulanger's apartment in Paris. She had some friends in and she was reminiscing about her career and talking about her age." Boulanger, who quit composing in 1918 after the death of her composer sister Lili, spent the rest of her life teaching. Her influence on American music is inestimable, since she taught so many American "classical" composers, including Roy Harris, Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, Aaron Copland, and Virgil Thompson, and since Leonard Bernstein studied under Piston, the influence is passed on through him. And since she also taught Darius Milhaud, and Milhaud taught Dave Brubeck, her influence was further extended in the United States. But she also taught American composers in jazz and other fields, such as film composition, including Allyn Ferguson and Jack Elliot.

Boulanger was in her early seventies when I met her, slim and beautiful even then. But she was feeling the weight of time. "And," I told Roger, "since she had opened the subject, I asked her how it felt, trying to foresee, to imagine, the experience of age."

"Well," she said, "it's very strange. I still feel like a young woman. I simply cannot understand how I got into this old body."

"And," Roger said, "we know exactly what she meant by that."

Last year, while visiting his mother in New England, Roger was overcome by violent abdominal pain. He was admitted to hospital, where the doctors told him his gall bladder would have to be removed. They found that gangrene had set in, and Roger almost died. His recovery was not rapid and he told me a few months ago, "This is the first time in a year that I've awakened with enthusiasm for writing."

One of the things about music that astonishes me, I told Roger, is how long chops remain at a peak when other forms of neuromuscular decline have already begun. Vladimir Horowitz was playing well in his nineties, and Benny Carter, apparently impervious to time, is playing superbly at eighty-eight.

Roger said, "Getting older myself, I'm putting out this spiritual vibration that I want in my life, and I'm beginning to meet more people all the time who are of like mind, who are concerned about the planet, about humanity, who are interested in what one might call the wake-up call.

"The earth has supported the human race for a long, long time, and the information we get about catastrophe on this earth is nature telling us, 'Come on!' The planet needs to have more love and attention to it. It's our home, and we trash it. Living out here in nature, seeing the mountains all the time, I'm thrilled and thankful when I wake up and see the beauty of my back yard. I have a completely different relationship, a new respect for the earth.

"I have a lot to be thankful for."

I find it hard to picture Roger in high school with, as Dick Sudhalter said, a brush cut. When I met him he had a full head of dark hair and a beard. The hair still is dark but is progressing toward invisibility on top, and the beard, which he started in high school, has white in it.

Where is that sullen kid I met on that record date?

Gone. Long gone. I guess he was busy in those days, giving birth to himself.

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Recommended Records

The following are available on CD.

Oliver Nelson: *More Blues and the Abstract Truth.* Impulse MCAD-5888. Recorded November 10 & 11, 1964. Personnel: Nelson, composer, arranger and conductor. Thad Jones, Daniel Moore, Phil Woods, Phil Bodner, Ben Webster, Pepper Adams, Richard Davis, Grady Tate, Kellaway.

Sonny Rollins: *Alfie.* Impulse MCAD-39107. Recorded January 26, 1965. Personnel: Oliver Nelson, arranger and conductor; Rollins, Jimmy Cleveland, J.J. Johnson, Phil Woods, Bop Ashton, Danny Bank, Frankie Dunlop, Walter Booker, Kenny Burrell, and Kellaway.

These albums, recorded two and a half months apart, are as fresh as when they were made, and indeed fresher by far than much that is being made today. Roger adored Sonny Rollins and had a close rapport with the late and much-lamented Ollie Nelson, and if he says he could not recognize himself in those days (he was twenty-four), I certainly can hear his identity.

Roger Kellaway Meets the Duo. Chiaroscuro CR(D) 315. Recorded February 27-28, 1992. Personnel: Kellaway; Gene Bertoncini, guitar; Michael Moore, bass. Roger was playing once at a party at Henry Mancini's house. As he got more and more outside, Hank beamed admiration and said, "Roger, you're *crazy*!" One hear what he meant in this superb trio album by three of my favorite musicians. Bertoncini and Moore work regularly as a duo; Roger joined them. A magnificent record.

Roger Kellaway Live at Maybeck Hall. Concord CCD-470. Recorded March 10, 1991. Kellaway, piano.

Roger Kellaway / Red Mitchell. Concord CCD-4561. Recorded May 31, 1992.

Carl Jefferson's *Live at Maybeck Hall* series, now amounting to more than thirty albums, is the most important documentation of the major jazz pianists of the last fifty years, and perhaps ever. He has expanded it now to include duos; this album with Red was the first in the series.

The first album shows Roger in a circumstance in which I love to hear him: alone. You'll hear the frightening independence of the hands that always astonishes me. And another of the album's virtues is that it brings you in close contact with Roger's gorgeous tone.

Roger had a close relationship with Red Mitchell that produced astounding performances, and a lot of them are on this CD. This was Red's last record date, alas.

Roger Kellaway Cello Sextet: *Windows.* Angel CDC 0777. Recorded May 1 and 2, 1993. Personnel: Chuck Domanico, bass; Fred Seykora, cello; Emil Richards, marimba, and Joe Porcaro and Robert Zimmitty, percussion; Kellaway, piano.

This is the most recent incarnation of the cello group, and excepting the Voss reissue of the *Nostalgia Suite*, the only example you'll find on CD. Like its precursors, the album is made up of