

The Company's Jazz Bronze Medal Competition

**PIZZA ON THE PARK,
3 JULY 2005**

Tonight we were treated to some of Britain's finest young jazz musicians. Each performer was technically brilliant but what was most impressive was the mature, relaxed confidence with which most of these musicians played. This is not normally present at such an age, truly world-class playing at times.

The players/contestants (four of whom are ex-National Youth Jazz Orchestra – I hope that Bill Ashton felt proud of his protégés) were Sam Bullard on tenor sax, Robbie Robson on trumpet, Gareth Lockrane on flute, Gwilym Simcock on piano, Phil Donkin on bass & Troy Miller on drums.



**Bronze Medal winner
Troy Miller**

The music, as always at these events, was worked out by the musicians on the day, (probably after a few mobile calls to each other to see who can bring what). Robbie, Gareth & Gwilym supplied us with two sets of mainly ultra-modern, New York Hard Bop; I believe Gwilym did his arrangement on the day of the concert on the train. Four of the tunes on the night were by the great trumpeter and composer Tom Harrell, *Up Swing*, *Angela*, *Vista* and *Blues in Six*, which gave the soloists a simpler chord sequence to solo on. We all like to play the blues.

Empty Pockets was composed by the pianist Herbie Hancock, who always comes up with the goods. There was one classic standard *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square*, as you've never heard it before, with a much more complex harmonic structure and rhythmic twists. The finale was Monk's *I Mean You* which in its quirky way was a great closer and always great to play over.

I wonder if any of the musicians were nervous tonight. As I recall my adventures in the competition back in 1994, I remember getting the call to take part and when I heard who else was in it, immediately dismissed my chances of winning it. I still took part as I knew the musicians, and we don't turn down a gig with great players, do we! Well, as you do, some of us took down music so it sounded like a formed band rather than a free-for-all Jam Session. I was not nervous as it was just a gig (with a free meal!) and with some fine musicians too. It still comes as a shock, the fact that I won it, I don't think I'll ever get over that one.

It only goes to show that in Jazz it is very hard to pick a player; it comes down to personal tastes rather than technical ability or great harmonic development. Well,



**Tommy Whittle with
Pastmaster Nigel Tully**

I know that personally speaking, I am going to find it almost impossible to pick someone tonight, it will be liked

drawing a name out of a hat, but you're not seeing who I've picked!

Thank you Nigel Tully for, as always, great Intros and Outros throughout the evening and lots of work behind the scenes that made tonight a most enjoyable occasion.

Last, but not least, to the presentation of the Company's Silver Jazz Medal to the wonderful saxophonist Tommy Whittle. To give this prestigious Medal tonight was an old friend of Tommy's, John Dankworth. In his speech, John told the audience of when he first met Tommy back in 1944 at The Feldman Club (now the 100 Club), when Tommy had just moved to London from Scotland. As John heard Tommy play he thought, as a musician, that this was a great example of what to do on the tenor saxophone. They worked together that same year at the Paramount, Tottenham Court Road.



**Bill Ashton with
liveryman John
Dankworth**

Tommy thanked John for the trip down Memory Lane, thanked his wife Barbara Jay, and thanked his grandfather, who was his first musical influence, "He used to play Irish Reels on the fiddle," Tommy recalled. He also said a few words about his parents who helped buy his first tenor sax. "My dad wasn't a musician and when he came to hear me play, he said 'Don't know what it was you were doing, but nobody left till the end' – his way of saying well done".

Tommy Whittle has given over 60 years service and is still playing great jazz. And congratulations to Troy Miller, the Bronze Medal winner. What a night!

by Andy Panayi, Freeman and former Bronze Medallist.

Company developments on the jazz front

Following passing reference by Jazz Committee member liveryman Stephen Plumb to the work of the Jazz Committee in the last issue of Preserve Harmony, he continues this month to update readers regarding recent developments in the Committee's strategy

The Company's jazz committee is pleased to report two exciting items of news regarding our continued involvement in the British jazz scene.

Firstly, due to the generosity of an anonymous liveryman, the annual Bronze Medal award to an outstanding up-and-coming British jazz performer has now been increased, for a period of three years, to the equivalent of £1000.

Secondly, as a consequence of a perceived need, the Jazz Committee has decided to recruit a team of established,

renowned jazz artistes and educators, effectively to be the "eyes and the ears" of the Company; to keep a steady supply of young jazz talent, carefully steered to the attention of the Jazz Committee. The situation now is that whilst the day-to-day running of our jazz programme is managed by the Jazz Committee, the actual recommendation of nominees for our Bronze Medal for rising British jazz talent is now effectively in the hands of what is known as the "Jazz Awards Panel". The composition of the panel like that of other

awards committees within our Company is comprised of liverymen, freemen as well as friends with appropriate expertise from outside our Company.

This exciting development is set in place within the context of the Company's now having facilitated two concerts at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre; a concert last year at Guildhall, as part of the City of London Festival and our involvement in NYJO's concert at the Palace Theatre, the latter being part of our then-sponsorship deal with NYJO. The Jazz Committee is pleased to be able to report to the Livery that none of its concerts, to date, has lost the Company money. Good news in these lean times!

So, with the jazz committee now vitalised by the awards panel, this injection of keen-eyed jazz musicians into our midst has