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# Who Is Jazz King: Benny Goodman or Artie Shaw?

By Julie Jordan

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THE TWINS: (L-R) Will is playing on alto saxophone and Peter on the clarinet. (Carol Rosegg)

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NEW YORK—Growing up with identical twin brothers, I cannot help believing in the mystery of twin talk—and this belief was validated by watching the Anderson Twins Sextet last month. They celebrated the 100th birthday of jazz great Artie Shaw with a two-week tribute at 59E59Theaters and by recording a live CD of the event.

The Anderson Twins demonstrated that identical twins are fascinating beings whose special in-sync abilities and intuitive trust seems to find its truest expression when making music. Trust, grown as it has been from day one, profoundly affects twins' sense of timing, allowing an even freer improvisation in jazz. In this case, with the comfort born of joining extraordinary life-mates to one task, the music from Will and Pete Anderson emerged pure and natural.

Complementing the music, throughout the evening candid comments by the pair created a friendly, down-home atmosphere. The Anderson Twins paid tribute to their presenter, for example, the owner of 59E59 St. Theaters, where the exquisite acoustics allowed playing without an amp and the sound that emerged was sweet, pure, and colorfully round. This was a far cry from their

childhood days when, as Will revealed, the best acoustic chamber in their house was the bathroom where he practiced for hours.

Adding to the joyful music and conversational back stories was the spontaneous sharing by the twins' various mentors and jazz greats as they agreed to bring their horns on stage and jam with the Anderson Twins.

Thus I was thrilled to take in three concerts, Friday, and Saturday nights of the first weekend and the second Sunday wrap. The first week was a show time challenge for eager listeners of "Benny Goodman meets Artie Shaw: Who Was King?" The second weekend was devoted to Artie with vocalist Daryl Sherman.

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### Who Was Jazz King?

With the saxophone noose around their necks, the 23-year-olds from Bethesda, Maryland, simply shifted from clarinet, to saxophone, to flute and back, as they changed-up the original big band sounds of unforgettable American swing songs. These they carefully crafted together and orchestrated for their sextet. Their music oozed with color and swing, as that tempting rhythmic invitation to the dance tugged at all who listened to these wonderful original arrangements.

The Sextet included Peter and Will Anderson (clarinets, saxophones and flute), Jon-Erik Kellso (trumpet), Ehud Asherie, (piano), Clovis Nicolas (bass), and Kevin Dorn (drums).

With Dorn's awesome drumming and Asherie, a pianist who listens for balance with a loose, light lilt, we were led right into jazzy instrumental dialogue through the American songbook of standards like "Avalon," (A. Jolson) "What is This Thing Called Love," (C. Porter), and "Stardust" (H. Carmichael).

The grand range of color and sweep of sound was glorious from Kellso on trumpet as well as the other soloists as they balanced the dancin' music of Peter and Will.

In his note-for-note transcription project for his sextet, Will delivered the "Concerto for Clarinet" that closed the first half of the program; particularly amusing was how the twin teased at the very end when Will and Peter divided that rising pitch "tit for tat" until alas, Shaw's "Concerto" ended one note higher as a response to Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing."

Will said that after the last concert, one audience member said who he believed was king. Speaking to Will backstage, he had said, "You know, young man, I heard both Benny and Artie, and although both of them were Jewish, Artie played more Jewish than Goodman!" Will shared that they then realized the "Concerto" was full of Jewish melodies and scales and he asked us to listen for them.



GUEST MUSICIANS: (L-R) Jon-Erick Kellso, Steve Ash, Will Anderson, Joe Wilder, Clovis Nicolas, Peter Anderson, and Steve Little. (Julie Jordan)

### Other Guest Artists Have Their Nights

Besides the recording artists listed on the CD, the Anderson Twins also welcomed guest performers who played in the same program on various nights of this run: Charlie Caranicas, Mat Jodrell, trumpet; Steve Little, drums; Ryland Kelly, bass and Steve Ash, piano.

There was the 87-year-young clarinetist, Sol Yaged, who was introduced at the first concert during their two-week tribute. Sol had subbed for Benny Goodman in his quartet occasionally.

Will later introduced their beloved teacher, Joe Temperley, who inspired them to study at Juilliard's Institute for Jazz Studies. Temperley, a great in the field, is best known for his baritone saxophone and bass clarinet, but plays other instruments as well.

Perhaps, the most special night was Saturday, when the audience was treated to jazz legend Joe Wilder playing trumpet. As Peter noted, "Joe Wilder is a true legend, and one of the greatest living trumpeters, who has much experience in the classical and jazz fields."

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The audience was in for a huge surprise when Peter revealed that clarinetist Dan Levinson lent him the reed that Artie Shaw used to record his famous record “Stardust” on October 7, 1940.

The program notes explained their special connection to this piece. Will started playing the clarinet at age 9 and wrote Peter, “...the first song we learned was ‘Stardust.’”

When they heard Artie Shaw's rendition from 1941, they were captivated: “His playing on the instrument was incredibly virtuosic and he was playing the clarinet with a big band, a style that eventually lost its popularity after WWII and the big band era.”

Peter further explains: “On January 5th, 2005, my brother and I were featured in a concert on clarinet in Long Beach, California honoring the 2005 National Endowment for the Jazz Masters. This award, held by masters like Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, was being given to Shaw this year. Although he had made plans to fly to California, and receive his award, he passed away on December 30th, 2004, a week before the concert. It would have been a dream for Will and I to play for, meet, and maybe even have a conversation with Artie Shaw in person. However, we feel that we're doing as much for his legacy by being part of his centennial concert at 59E59 Theaters.”

I was also moved by the genuine love the Anderson Twins had for their special program. Sharing is what their group does naturally, and that is the secret to a successful concert—when the performer gets caught up in his tuneful tale and, with eyes closed, revels in the subtle nuances of each show that grew from the last performance.

It was a journey that makes the recording rich with history—not only the history of the royal lineage in the “Kings of Swing” Artie and Benny—but also in the individual mentors who made meaningful contributions to this pair of twins who are now carving their own place in history based on a magnificent blend of several generations of music making.

I highly recommend you give yourself a swing souvenir by contacting [andersonwinsjazz@gmail.com](mailto:andersonwinsjazz@gmail.com) and purchasing the Anderson Twins Sextet Celebrate Artie Shaw's Centennial CD for \$15.

*In addition to their calendar of concerts, you can catch Will and Pete Anderson in New York City Thursday evenings at 59East59 Theaters, upstairs from 10:15 p.m. to 12:15 a.m. for a neighborhood “show after the show.”*

*Julie Jordan is on the piano faculty of The Juilliard School Evening Division and the Burgos International Music Festival. For more information, see [www.juliejordanpresents.com](http://www.juliejordanpresents.com)*

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