

Marsh, Konitz, capture crowd



photos Grant Wurm



Above: Lee Konitz, Wayne Marsh Quintet at the Art Gallery Theatre. Top right: bassist Dave Young
Bottom left: Wayne Marsh.

by Bongo Watkins

A nearly packed Centennial Library Theatre dug every note of the Lee Konitz/Wayne Marsh Quintet presented by the Edmonton Jazz Society Sunday night. New York alto saxophonist Konitz and Los Angeles tenor artist Marsh teamed up with the bassist Dave Young and pianist Wray Downs, both of Toronto, as well as Edmonton drummer Kjell Gjertsen to create some of the finest jazz to be heard in this city in quite some time.

The program consisted entirely of standards,

which were given stimulating interpretations by the veteran reed-men. Konitz was usually there with his famous clear, fluid tone, but it was Marsh, with line upon line of imaginative solo improvisation, who carried the crowd away. Playing themes in tandem, the two were sheer bliss. The rhythm section laid down a consistently energetic foundation, coming up, every now and then, with some inspired solos, particularly from Downs and Young. Drummer Gjertsen, though somewhat heavy-handed at times, was quite palatable. It was an evening of fine music; perhaps the jazz society is finally taking off.

Elly Ameling in Edmonton

by John W. Charles

Elly Ameling, the distinguished singer of classical songs was in Edmonton last week with Dalton Baldwin, pianist, for a recital with the Edmonton Chamber Music Society. GATEWAY spoke with her Thursday noon.

GATEWAY: How long is your present tour?

AMELING: It's about ten weeks. I come to North America twice a year, visiting Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Each visit is usually six to ten weeks. This time I'll be going to Japan for two weeks as well.

GATEWAY: How often will you be singing on the tour?

AMELING: Almost every other day. I wouldn't be able to sing more as I'm travelling between engagements. I go to Des Moines, Iowa, from here, for example. You have to be well rested to sing well, it's not just the voice, the whole body must be rested. The whole body must work for a singer.

GATEWAY: Do you sometimes need several days for your voice to adjust to a different kind of singing?

AMELING: Not usually. I sing with an orchestra for some engagements, as recently in Seattle and next month in Mexico City. For orchestral singing your tone must be capable of larger gestures, but the kind of repertoire I perform doesn't involve the stylistic changes that moving from Mozart to Wagner does for an opera singer.

GATEWAY: What works do you sing with an orchestra?

AMELING: Often I perform Mozart's *Exultate Jubilate*, and his concert arias. Mozart wrote a number of arias to be inserted in other composers' operas, but since these operas have long been forgotten the only way of performing Mozart's inclusions is by themselves. Some are dramatic, others are comic and the variety makes them a joy to sing. Then there's Bach. I also sing Bach cantatas.

GATEWAY: Are you interested in singing opera?

AMELING: Not generally. There are so many opera singers already. Many young singers begin with *lieder* and *melodies*, but when they have the opportunity they sing opera most of the time. There aren't many singers these days who concentrate on the song. I've sung Ilija in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, and may sing, someday, the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Melisande in Debussy's *Pelleas et Melisande*. But I don't foresee much else.

GATEWAY: If I recall correctly you're originally from Rotterdam. Do you still live in Holland?

AMELING: Yes, we live in the country not too far from Rotterdam. It's classic Dutch landscape: cows, sheep, willow trees, it's very beautiful. Our neighbours have a cattle farm. In fact their son Arie Korevaar is marrying a girl who lives near Edmonton! I was busy in the airplane before we landed trying to take photographs for him. So

I already have a connection with Edmonton.

GATEWAY: Who would have thought? In your repertoire do you tend to favor French or German songs more?

AMELING: I try to keep a balance. In Edmonton my program is half Ravel and half Schubert and Brahms. In Europe I sometimes sing all-Schubert programs, and at Aix-en-Provence I have sung all-Faure programs. But that much Faure is demanding for an audience. On one hand the *lieder* of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Wolf and on the other the *melodies* of Faure, Ravel, Debussy, Duparc—they're so different that I like best to contrast them.

GATEWAY: What do you find most difficult to sing?

AMELING: Most difficult? I can't really answer that. Everything I sing is difficult in a different way. Some singers find a simple Schubert tune hard to sustain. It has to do with your mental outlook, how your voice is placed, and much else. I find Schubert extremely natural to sing. I've always had a preference for intimate, inward songs. This is why I love Faure's songs. Faure says more in one song than Wagner does in three hours, even when they're talking about the same things.

GATEWAY: Then could you say if there is a composer whose songs you find most satisfying to perform?

AMELING: I wouldn't want to miss any of the varied styles, each is wonderful in its own way. If I chose the thrilling, soaring line of Duparc, I would recall the fineness and purity of Mozart's *Abendempfindung*. So I really can't answer that question either.

GATEWAY: Here's one I'm sure you can answer. You've studied with Pierre Bernac the great French baritone. What was it like?

AMELING: Ah, studying with Mr. Bernac is a wonderful experience. He has a very encouraging manner and he has so much vocal experience, as well as first-hand knowledge of many composers. Poulenc wrote many songs for him, and he sang with Poulenc for some thirty years.

Poulenc's songs are very appealing. Often there is a joking style but beneath there is so much deep emotion. So you have a broad range of feelings. Now, Poulenc wasn't always clear in the way he wrote *forte* or *piano* in the score, but Mr. Bernac knows why he used them. He's currently writing a book on Poulenc's songs which will be very helpful to singers.

It's useful to learn the markings in a song, but it's more important to pierce through the music and understand *why*. This is what Mr. Bernac imparts to the whole French repertoire. You also learn a great deal about singing *legato*. Sustaining *la ligne* without losing correct, distinct pronunciation—this is what he works on.

Anyone seriously interested in French *melodies* studies with Mr. Bernac. You would be foolish not to.

GATEWAY: Have you sung a lot of Poulenc?

AMELING: Yes, especially recently. We have just recorded his complete songs on six LPs. The other singers are Gerard Souzay, Michel Senechal, Nicolai Gedda, and a young, very impressive American baritone, William Turner. Mr. Baldwin accompanied us.

GATEWAY: Do you enjoy making recordings?

AMELING: Yes, one always likes to strive for perfection and sometimes you can come closer in a studio, although you never achieve it. But then I miss the thrill of audience reaction. I said that once to Joerg Demus, who often accompanies me in Vienna. And he said in his wonderful Viennese, "But, Elly, I am your most grateful audience!"

My first album of Schubert songs was with Demus. It's eleven years old, but it continues to sell, and people always bring it for me to autograph at concerts. If I had royalties for it I'd have three big villas!

Recently aside from the Poulenc songs, I've recorded the woman songs of Schubert, and another Brahms recital. I like to dig up old treasures and sing less-known songs, but you have to fight for your repertoire. The record companies want the familiar Schubert and Schumann songs again.

GATEWAY: Do you sing works by contemporary composers?

AMELING: Yes, I've sung a cycle by Frank Martin, the Swiss composer who lived in Holland. And there's a Hindemith cycle I perform. I want to sing a group by Charles Ives, his songs have beautiful melodies and a strong sense of mood. And Albert Roussel, although not contemporary, has some lovely songs not well-known over here.

GATEWAY: Do you have any advice for vocal students at the University of Alberta?

AMELING: Yes, there is one area I feel strongly about. I sometimes teach master classes at Westminster College, in Princeton New Jersey, where Mr. Baldwin teaches. I meet many very interesting young singers with sweet, healthy voices, nice technique and obvious intelligence. But again and again there isn't enough knowledge of foreign languages and correct pronunciation. I think every music school should have its own language faculty, and require German, French and Italian for singers. One must know the language, not simply memorize words to particular songs. Pronunciation gives real troubles to North American students.

GATEWAY: It has been delightful talking with you, Mme. Ameling.

AMELING: Thank you, but remember, "it is easier to sing it than to say it." I'm not very fond of interviews in English as I'm afraid I won't convey exactly what I mean.

GATEWAY: I think you're notably successful in both areas. Thank you again.