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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Harold Kenneth Ashby was born March 27, 1925, in Kansas City, Missouri, the last of six children of Herbert Ashby and Anna Lewis. He began playing saxophone and clarinet at an early age and was a protégé of jazz tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, also a Kansas City native. Raised and educated in his hometown, Ashby graduated from R.T. Coles Junior High in 1938 and Lincoln High School two years later, where he was the recipient of the Service Award of the Department of Music in 1939. He graduated from Lincoln Junior College in 1942 and was inducted into the United States Navy the following year. After his honorable discharge in December 1945, Ashby returned to Kansas City to play music.

In the 1950s Ashby moved to Chicago, playing in various bands, often in an R&B or blues-based style. While in Chicago, he played and recorded with Willie Dixon, Jimmy Witherspoon, Memphis Slim, Chuck Berry and Otis Rush. In 1957 he moved to New York to work with, among others, Mercer Ellington. Through that association, Ashby received work from Mercer's father, Duke Ellington, and gained the respect of many of Duke's current and former sidemen. From the late 1950s through the mid 1960s, Ashby recorded with Ben Webster, Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves and Lawrence Brown. In 1968, Ashby became a permanent member of the Duke Ellington band and small groups, and his role progressively grew as the band toured across the country and around the world.

Following Ellington's death in 1974, Ashby continued to perform at concerts and festivals around the world, such as the 1985 Nice Festival, as well as with aggregates of the Duke Ellington band, including the orchestra under Mercer's direction. In addition, Ashby worked with Sy Oliver and Benny Goodman; did tours in Europe, including those with Junior Mance and Kansas City jazz pianist Jay McShann; and recorded under his own name during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Ashby's final performance was on September 14, 2002, at the Folly Theatre in Kansas City, where he was featured with Bobby Watson and the Duke's Men. Ashby died June 13, 2003, in New York at age 78.

Sources:

Collection documents (Series I: Biographical). Box 1, folders 1-2. Harold Ashby Collection, Dr. Kenneth J. LaBudde Department of Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Voce, Steve. "Harold Ashby". *The Independent*, 19 June 2003. Accessed 20 June 2008.
<<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/harold-ashby-548294.html>>.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Harold Ashby Collection was acquired in December 2005 by the Dr. Kenneth J. LaBudde Department of Special Collections through Gary White and his sister Margaret. The collection consists of personal and professional documents, awards and certificates, correspondence, promotional/publicity material and other miscellanea related to Harold Ashby's life and career. Also in the collection are roughly 200 photographs and dozens of manuscript music scores, parts, and fragments to original songs by Ashby, Duke Ellington and others. Other material includes Ashby's stamp collection as well as a thesis by Michael Lukes entitled *Duke Ellington's Orchestra: A Life History Approach*, which references Ashby several times. Sound recordings from this collection are housed in the Marr Sound Archives, the audio division of Special Collections.

SERIES NOTES

Series I: Biographical

This series is contained in box 1, folders 1-3, and consists of personal documents as well as awards and certificates related to Ashby's life and career. Included are a copy of his birth certificate, honorable discharge papers from the US Navy, a funeral program, and various awards and certificates of achievement such as school diplomas and a plaque celebrating his induction as an Elder Statesmen of Kansas City Jazz.

Series II: Correspondence

This series is contained in box 1, folder 4, and consists of personal and business correspondence. Included are letters and greeting cards dating from April 23, 1946 to July 23, 2002. Material is organized by date.

Series III: Business

This series is contained in box 1, folders 5-6, and consists of professional documents belonging to Ashby. Included are agreements, contracts, and invoices dating from January 11, 1972 to May 28, 2002; and a small group of BMI Clearance Confirmations dating from 1978 to 1998. Material is organized by date, with a separate folder for the BMI Clearance Confirmations.

Series IV: Music Manuscripts

This series is contained in box 1, folders 7-10, and consists of music manuscripts kept by Ashby. Included are a handful of lyrics/song title sheets, four music tablets, and dozens of music scores, parts and fragments to songs by Ashby, Duke Ellington and others. This series is organized by material type; the music scores, parts and fragments are further arranged alphabetically by title (as it is written on the manuscript), with a separate folder for untitled manuscripts.

Series V: Promotional

This series is contained in box 2, folders 1-2, and consists of promotional and publicity material. Included are programs and flyers to events that Ashby participated in or attended as well as news clippings (originals and photocopies). The programs and flyers are organized chronologically, while the clippings are in no particular order.

Series VI: Miscellaneous

This series is contained in box 2, folders 3-4, and consists of several books of stamps that were collected by Ashby; and a copy of *Duke Ellington's Orchestra: A Life History Approach*, a 2001 thesis paper by Michael Lukes, Oxford University.

Series VII: Photographs

This series is contained in boxes 3-6, and consists of roughly 200 photographs from Ashby's personal and professional life.

Series VIII: Sound Recordings

This series consists of sound recordings on a variety of audio formats. Material is housed in the Marr Sound Archives, the audio division of Special Collections.

CONTAINER LIST

SERIES I: BIOGRAPHICAL

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	Personal Documents Birth certificate Honorable discharge papers (US Navy) Funeral program
	2	Awards/Certificates School diplomas and awards Degree of Master Mason (Harmony Lodge #88) Who's Who in Entertainment (Marquis Who's Who Publication Board) City Council Citation (Outstanding Citizen, NYC) Chicago Federation of Musicians (50 Years of Membership) Duke Ellington Society (Honorary Member)
	3	Awards/Certificates Elder Statesmen of KC Jazz (plaque)

SERIES II: CORRESPONDENCE

Box	Folder	Description
1	4	Correspondence

SERIES III: BUSINESS

Box	Folder	Description
1	5	Agreements, Contracts, & Invoices: General
	6	Agreements, Contracts, & Invoices: BMI Clearance Confirmations

SERIES IV: MUSIC MANUSCRIPTS

Box	Folder	Description
1	7	Manuscript Scores, Parts & Fragments: Titled
	8	Manuscript Scores, Parts & Fragments: Untitled
	9	Harold Ashby's Music Tablets/Notebooks
	10	Lyrics and Song Titles

SERIES V: PROMOTIONAL

Box	Folder	Description
2	1	Programs and Flyers
	2	News Clippings (originals and photocopies)

SERIES VI: MISCELLANEOUS

Box	Folder	Description
2	3	Stamp Collection
	4	<i>Duke Ellington's Orchestra: A Life History Approach</i> by Michael Lukes (Archaeology and Anthropology Thesis, Oxford University, 2001)

SERIES VII: PHOTOGRAPHS

The photograph collection can be accessed through an in-house database. Contact sheets are available for viewing to walk-in patrons. Contact Special Collections with specific questions or for more information.

SERIES VIII: SOUND RECORDINGS

Sound recordings are housed in the Marr Sound Archives, the audio division of Special Collections. Contact the Marr Sound Archives with specific questions or for more information.