

Putte Wickman

As opposed to the rest of his woodwind colleagues among today's jazz musicians, Putte Wickman's main instrument is the clarinet – a more uncommon choice since the tenor sax dominates among jazz instruments today. Even his tone differs, this time from many other clarinet players. His is a pure, clear and distinct sound that sometimes is confused with coldness. On the contrary, over time Putte Wickman has developed a sensual, highly musical warmth presented with technical brilliance. He is known for a balanced presentation where swing and rhythm is mixed with close-knit melodic cascades. His playing is even noted for elegance, lightness and a phenomenal quickness – notes presented in a never-ending stream approaching virtuosity.

Internationally Putte Wickman is one of the best known Swedish jazz musicians. He was inspired early in his career by famous instrumental colleagues like American Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman. Soon he found the new jazz forms that appeared during the late 40's and early 50's. The cool jazz styles of that period influenced him along with the rest of his generation. Above all it was younger American musicians like Buddy de Franco, Tony Scott and Joe LaPorta who moved him to pick his way to a personal style that became his own, a style that has been the object of continuous development since then.

Putte Wickman was recognized internationally as early as 1949 when he was part of the Swedish All Stars group that was so successful at the Paris Jazz Festival that same year. That group was later renamed the Paris Orchestra. The combo he led personally during the 50's was equally well known, a group that included pianist Reinhold Svensson and others. They played advanced modern jazz music based on both their own original songs and on American popular ones whose special qualities attracted young people. The audience was also happy to dance the foxtrot to the orchestra's beat.

He was also one of the first to present jazz music in Swedish churches. In this way he not only confirmed his position as a popular jazz musician, but also used his exemplary and easy stage presence to motivate many to look further at jazz music.

During the most recent decades he has toured widely both in Sweden and elsewhere, playing in many different ensembles. In 1999 he recorded a CD in collaboration with American Buddy DeFranco who inspired him to rise to new musical heights. Two years later he repeated this manoeuvre with Eddie Daniels. Both times he was accompanied by The Claes Crona Trio and together they presented excellent swing music for the young listeners of the current decades.

Anyone wishing to get better acquainted with Putte Wickman's long career would do well to start with the "Cream of the Crop – Swedish Jazz History. Vol.6: Swedish Jazz 1947-51" on the Caprice Records label. There you'll find Putte Wickman in several combinations.

Leif Wigh