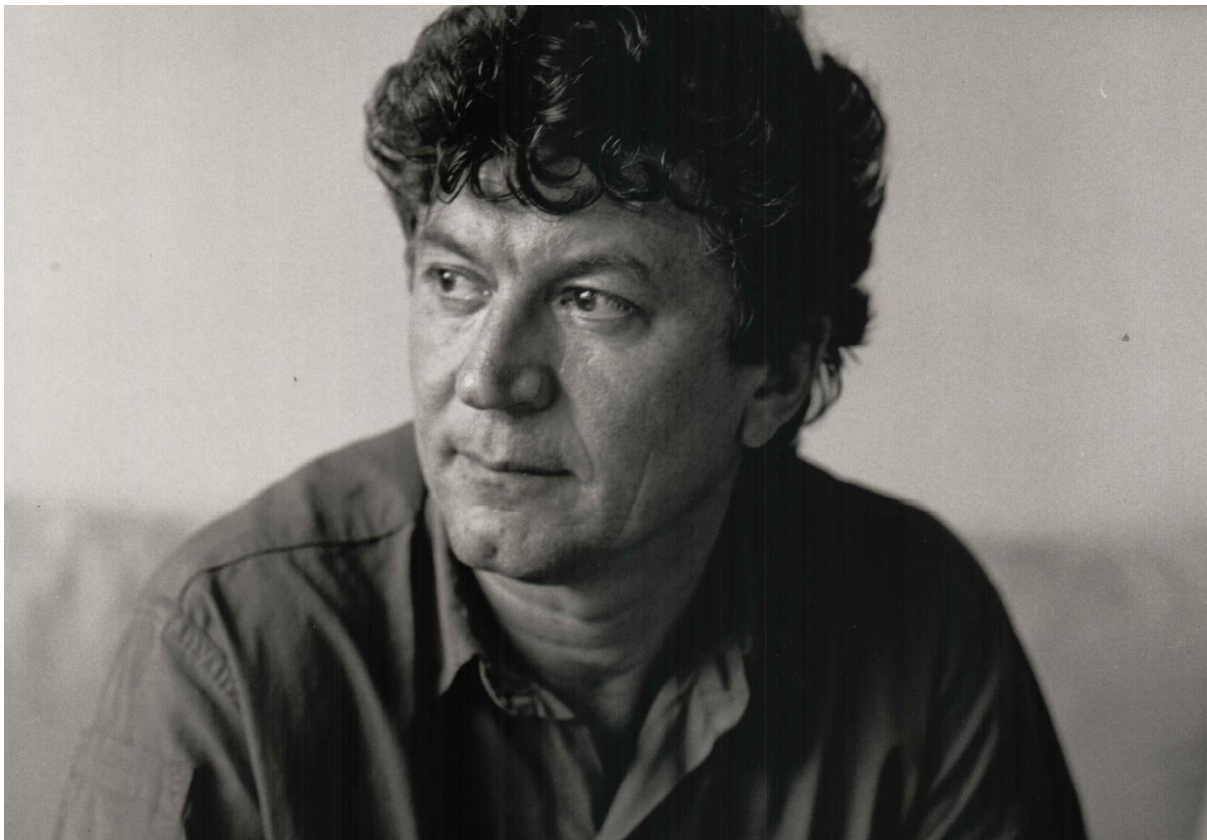


MIROSLAV BUKOVSKY

Interviewed by John Sharpe*

[This interview appeared in John Sharpe's book "I Wanted To Be A Jazz Musician" (2008), pp 192-210]

Miroslav Bukovsky came to Australia from Czechoslovakia in 1968 and was immediately involved in the Sydney jazz scene, centred on Kings Cross. He has played with leading Australian jazz bands, including the Daly-Wilson Big Band, Bob Bertles Moontrane, Mark Simmonds Freeboppers and The Bruce Cale Orchestra. He is a foundation member of the current Ten Part Invention, started by John Pochée in 1986, and leads his own, very contemporary group, Wanderlust. Both bands have toured overseas and, as a composer, he contributes significantly to their repertoires. Bukovsky has also had considerable experience working with rock and pop bands, including those of Marcia Hines, Renee Geyer, Jimmy Barnes, Australian Crawl, and the Eurogliders.



Miroslav Bukovsky: from Czechoslovakia in 1968...

Starting as a student in the jazz course at the New South Wales Conservatorium in 1974 he later joined the faculty. He received an Australia Council grant to study in America in 1981 where he sought tuition in jazz trumpet and composition. Bukovsky is currently lecturer in jazz trumpet, composition, arranging and improvisation at the

Australian National University's School of Music in Canberra. This interview took place in 2003.

THE BEGINNING

Miroslav: I was born at Boskovice in southern Moravia in Czechoslovakia in 1944, during the war. Both of my parents were musicians. My mother was a very good pianist and my father started as a violinist playing for silent movies with his brother Richard, who was a cellist. My father eventually got the jazz bug and bought a saxophone and started playing in cafes. Mainly café bands, a kind of dance jazz inspired music. He was never an improviser, but he was a bandleader and used to do the transcribing and arranging. I suppose that's where I got it from. We had a piano at home. My mum tried to teach me piano, but I was of course much more interested in soccer and other activities. I was terrible at discipline and practising. They started sending me to a piano teacher, one of those guys that bashes your knuckles every time you make a mistake. So that didn't last very long. So really my mother was basically the only person who gave me a bit of instruction on the piano I suppose the first kind of composition of mine really was sitting at the piano and figuring out by ear things that I heard on the radio, trying to find chords and trying to play melodies. I was seven or eight, something like that. I didn't know chords at that age but I found them.



Miroslav's father's café band in Svitavy, Czechoslovakia with whom he played his first gig...

But I was never really into music until I heard my father's band for the first time when I was a kid. He had a regular gig in a kind of a café. It was a good band. They had at least two gigs a week, which is more than some so called professional musicians in Sydney I loved the sound of the trumpet. I was very impressed by that sound. By the time I heard them they never practised and the trumpeter used to leave his trumpet between gigs in the band room of this café. So I started. I used to go there and try and get a sound out of it and eventually my father bought me a

trumpet. That would have been about age 11 maybe. Before that I discovered a bugle in one of those Communist organisations for kids. Kind of organised along the lines of the Boy Scouts type of model, but where a lot of Communist indoctrination went on. They used to go camping in the summer time, and they had bugles there. I discovered the power of a bugle. I can wake up the whole camp by the power of the bugle. Not yet! It's not six o'clock yet! I went from the bugle to the trumpet proper. I started to take classical theory lessons with a local music school and trumpet lessons from a brass band teacher who had a terrible vibrato. I guess he was a good trumpet player although one thing my father always warned me was, "Don't learn the vibrato from him."

I wanted to study music when I was going through high school but there was a bit of a history of politics. My father was actually a dissident. He was locked up by the Communists in the fifties, as a lot of people were, just for signing a petition to the United Nations protesting the Soviet takeover in Czechoslovakia as they divided Europe. It split Europe pretty much in half, into the Soviet influenced and the Western influenced. Czechoslovakia was unfortunate to be part of the Eastern Bloc. But in order to make the takeover legitimate, they needed to organise a local Communist takeover, a putsch kind of a thing. A coup d'etat really, engineered by the Soviets. Well a lot of people were unhappy about it, and my father was one of them. He signed a petition to protest it, and then ended up in goal.

Any children of dissidents were then seen as more or less black sheep in that regime and they made it very difficult for me and all of these kids to go to university or conservatoriums. So I had to pay penance for three years and actually learn a trade. I became a toolmaker when I came out of school, before they would allow me to study music. When I did start studying classical at the conservatorium it was a six-year course. I started playing in a town called Ostrava, a big industrial city in Northern Moravia near the Polish border. They had a radio band as a lot of big cities in Europe still do. Radio and television bands. I was fortunate enough to start working, first on a part-time basis, then more full-time employment with this band. I think I was 20 or 21.



Miroslav started listening to jazz after he heard Sidney Bechet (above) at the age of 12...PHOTO COURTESY TWITTER

John: How did you come to catch the jazz bug?

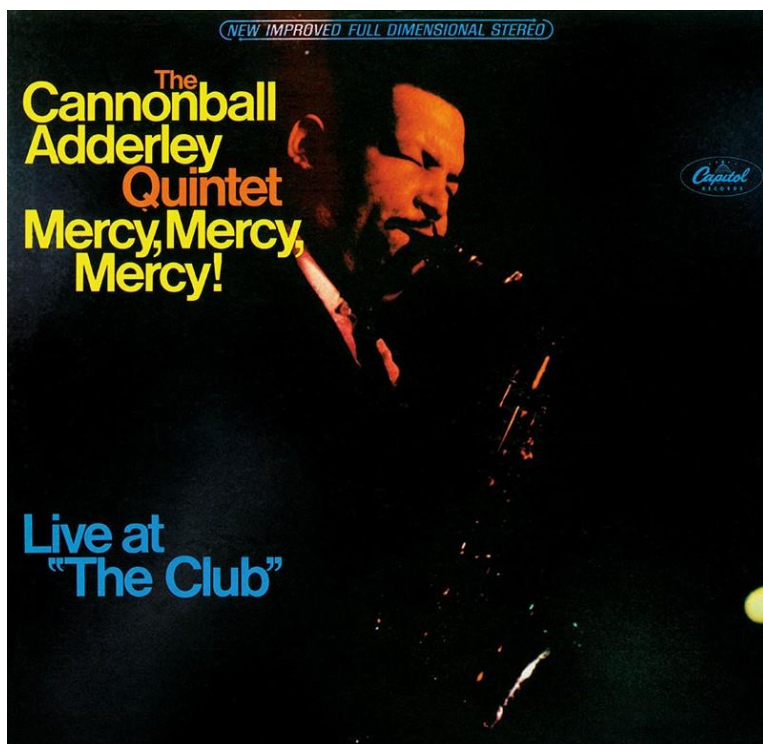
Miroslav: I think the first time I really started listening to jazz was after I heard Sidney Bechet. I was twelve. That really did something to me. There was a French puppetry troupe that came to town and they were performing puppetry to the background music of Sidney Bechet. Not a band. They played a record of Sidney Bechet's music behind the puppets. And I thought this was incredible, because I had never heard raw New Orleans jazz like that before. I still love Sidney Bechet's music. Obviously before that I had heard jazz on radio or records. I had a lot of Czech jazz and big band swing on record. And of course you would know that Graeme Bell was extremely popular in Czechoslovakia for a while, before the Communist takeover. He was a big star there. I've spoken to him about it several times. In fact the first time I went back to Czechoslovakia in 1990, after coming to Australia, I spoke to a few people at a Prague concert, a government-run agency organising concerts and they wanted to know if I knew Graeme, and was he still alive. So I helped to organise another tour for him after that in the nineties. Even back then a lot of the old people remembered him and still loved him. He started something that didn't exist there, and that's the whole traditional revival, as he did in Britain. A beautiful guy. As sharp as a tack, you know. And when I came to Sydney I remember one of the first sit-ins I ever had was actually with Graeme Bell in a pub in the Rocks. Somebody introduced me. It was a Czech guy, a trumpet player and he obviously had a connection.



The Graeme Bell band pictured in Czechoslovakia in 1947: Bell was extremely popular in Czechoslovakia for a while, before the Communist takeover...

John: Can you remember your first gig?

Miroslav: Yeah, I would have been about 16 or 17 and my very first gig was with my father's band one night. It was a five piece. There were two front line, a pianist who also played accordion, and bass and drums. Father's trumpet player couldn't make the gig. I think he was sick or something, so my father said, "Okay, you should be good enough now to play, and sit in with my band." But I was a dreadful reader. I couldn't sight read. I couldn't phrase the music properly, I couldn't swing. It was a disaster. It was frightening with my father there. He was yelling at me all the way through the gig. God it was really a disheartening experience. I graduated from the conservatorium in Czechoslovakia with a certain degree of difficulty because I really wasn't going to be a classical musician. I was pretending to be one. The idea of sitting in an orchestra and counting bars as the brass do most of the time, for a trumpet player, is not my idea of fun. As much as I love listening to classical music and respect those guys, most of whom are fantastic musicians, I don't think I could do it. Life's too short to count bars. So I definitely gravitated more towards jazz. I wanted to be a jazz musician. Apart from a big band I was also playing with a quintet. We had a quintet inspired by Cannonball Adderley. Especially that record *Mercy, Mercy, Mercy*. I transcribed all the stuff that the quintet played and that was a lot of fun.



John: That brings me to the question of jazz behind the Iron Curtain. I've always been led to believe that it was frowned upon. It wasn't considered the thing to do? And jazz records were extremely difficult to come by. Can you confirm that?

Miroslav: Yeah, sure. Records were very difficult to come by. American, certainly. So we used to tape programs from Voice of America which was illegal. But my father had a little tape recorder and I used to tape almost every night. After midnight I

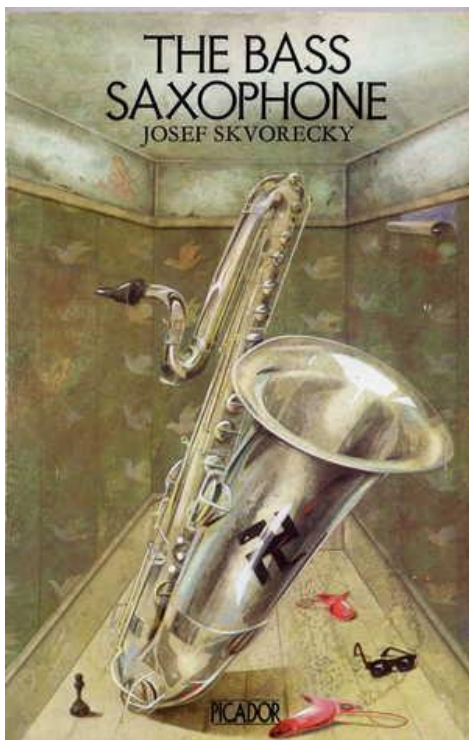
would sit down and record Voice of America. Willis Conover was the disc jockey, and he used to play the latest stuff, the latest Miles and whatever. We used to have all these fantastic tapes for free.



Voice of America's Willis Conover with Oscar Peterson: Conover used to play the latest stuff, the latest Miles and whatever...

But because it was illegal you could go to gaol if somebody caught you. There was political broadcasting before midnight and then it was jammed. Then after that they stopped jamming, started saving electricity, and you could listen to jazz without jamming most of the time. It was pretty much first outlawed by the Nazis.

Have you read *The Bass Saxophone* by Josef Skvorecky? He writes about what it was like trying to play jazz under the Nazis.



The Nazis had rules about how much syncopation there could be in music. Wherever possible, saxophones should be replaced by noble violins. Mutes were outlawed because they changed the sound of a noble Teutonic brass instrument into a Jewish Freemasonry yowl. A Negroid yowl. They got it all mixed up. Later the Communists changed their attitude to jazz. Paul Robeson the black American singer was actually a member of the Communist Party He was extremely popular with the Communists and did a lot of touring around the Eastern Bloc singing. He actually told the communists, "No, you're idiots. You shouldn't outlaw jazz because it is a folk music of the oppressed blacks in the United States." So then it eased off a little bit. Before then the dreaded jazz they saw as an expression of some kind of capitalist decadence. But for us it was a form of protest. A music protest really. We knew the Communists hated it so we loved it even more.



Paul Robeson (right) pictured here with Lena Horne: Robeson told the communists, "No, you're idiots. You shouldn't outlaw jazz because it is a folk music of the oppressed blacks in the United States"...

John: What were the circumstances under which you came to Australia?

Miroslav: I actually had a gig in Yugoslavia in one of the Adriatic Sea resorts with the quintet I was telling you about. I think we were about two weeks into the gig when the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia. So I never went back. I just went to

Yugoslavia and then went to live in Vienna for a while. My mother was already dead and my father was back in Czechoslovakia. I spoke to him several times on the phone and he said with the way the situation looked there, don't come back. I mean it was a brief period of hope in early 1968 that under Alexander Dubcek the Czechs might be able to get away from the Eastern Bloc somehow.



Under Alexander Dubcek (above) there was a brief period of hope in early 1968...

Anyway, when that hope was crushed I could see no reason for returning back to the dark ages again. So it was a matter of deciding whether to stay in Europe where the situation was very, very shaky. I was thinking about immigrating to America but everybody was very carefully processed at the American Embassy because, I guess, they were afraid of spies, and it took months. So we were trying to determine what to do next and decided, on a whim, to go to Australia. We more or less decided, well let's go. It sounds like a great adventure to go to Australia. I knew very little about it. I knew there were towns like Sydney and Melbourne and kangaroos and Aborigines. I knew about that. I didn't know how they treated the Aborigines. So we got on a Qantas plane and came to Australia.

John: What was the jazz scene like when you arrived? You went to Sydney?

Miroslav: Sydney, yeah. At first we were stuck in Villawood for a couple of weeks. I visited Kings Cross which seemed like Europe to me. There was nightlife there and clubs and music. So we found a flat at the Cross. Many years later my flat became the jazz club Round Midnight. And I stumbled on the El Rocco although in 1968 it was near the end of its time. In fact it closed about a month after I discovered it. But I remember meeting John Sangster, Judy Bailey, Bernie McGann and John Pochée and all those people there. Sydneysiders mainly. Some from other places like Keith Stirling and Alan Turnbull from Melbourne. I had no English really, I could hardly speak a word, but a lot of the music made me realise that there was some fantastic talent and great musicians here. I started to sit in. And at The Rocks Push too I started sitting in with Phil Treloar and Alan Lee and going to jams in different houses. There was a lot of jamming going on. I also put together a band with some

Czech musicians that came here around the same time. The piano player was an architect named Fedor Medek. He was like an R&B piano player. A very good one. He played and sang like Ray Charles. We had a drummer, Tony Visnevsky, who was a professional musician from one of those radio bands in Bratislava, a capital city in Slovakia. The bass player was basically a rock bass player but eventually he became a really good classical bass player. He's one of the bass players in the Melbourne Symphony now, Ivan Sultanoff. So we put a band together and got a gig at the Cross in one of the nightclubs run by Abe Saffron. It was called The Electric Circus, right in the village of the Cross. This was in 1969 and we had a gig there for I think about six months, basically playing a bit of jazz, a bit of R&B and a bit of pop.



Courtesy of Miroslav Bukovsky
Photographer George Anning.

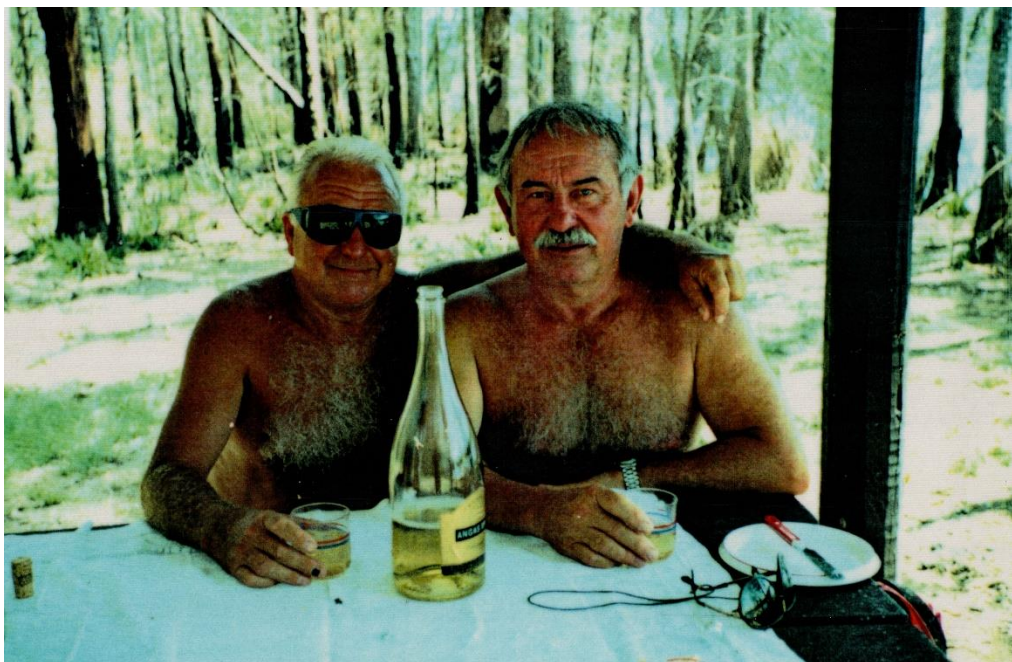
Miroslav Bukovsky pictured in 1985....PHOTO CREDIT GEORGE ANNING

The Vietnam thing was happening and that's the reason the Cross was so busy. All the R&R people coming. All I can say is that the Cross has never been busier than that time. There were clubs everywhere and strip joints and of course, drugs. Not so much heroin at that point. It was mainly just hashish and pot. Yeah, drugs started to come into Sydney basically because of the R&R guys. They started bringing it in. There was a market for it, so whoever brought it in prospered. I used to see those underworld guys around but I never really spoke to them. You didn't speak to those guys, you know I mean the only incident we had was at one of the clubs where we were playing and got the sack. One of the band members said to the manager, "I'll go to the owner's place and get my money." And the manager said, "You're not going anywhere," but actually gave him a hundred bucks from his own pocket to help him out. We started to realise that we were employed by somebody quite heavy. A couple of months after that there was actually a shoot-out in there. There was a bit of a turf war going on between the gangsters and there was a shoot-out in the club. The manager apparently shot another gangster and then disappeared for years. I

understand he left the country. There were a lot of those places. Chequers was one. The Associated Motor Club where I worked later was also another one. If a place was going to be torched it was usual for a couple of guys to come up and say, "You'd better take your gear home tonight." But they were actually nice enough to tell you to take your gear home. Yeah. They were very colourful times.

John: A lot of jazz musicians also played in the other type of Sydney clubs?

Miroslav: The Motor Club job was where I started playing with a lot of the prominent Sydney modern jazz musicians, like John Pochée. I think it was two years later that I started playing around other clubs, and started doing sessions. There was a lot of club work in Sydney at the time, a huge amount. Practically every club would employ a band and a lot of the RSL and Leagues clubs even had big bands. And there was plenty of session work around also and I got some of the crumbs here and there. It was very competitive and very closely guarded by the guys who were doing it. Jack Iverson and Boof Thomsen and those upper echelon of trumpet players. I would occasionally get a session from some of the younger up and coming jingle writers or film writers.



Trumpeter Jack Iverson (left) is pictured here with another leading session trumpeter, Ron Falson... PHOTO © RON FALSON ARCHIVE

John: Can we talk about the first Australian tertiary jazz course established at the New South Wales Conservatorium, and your involvement?

Miroslav: I think it was 1973, when Howie Smith, the American saxophone player was actually invited by Don Burrows to come to Sydney and start the jazz course there. I started first as a student in 1974 Howie did pretty much everything on his own for the first semester. He was teaching all of the classes himself, the composition classes, the improvisation classes, everything. He had the big band and several ensembles. He nearly burnt out by the end of the first semester. And at the same time



American Howie Smith (above) who started the jazz course in 1973, and the band Jazz Co-Op (below) which he formed with Roger Frampton, Phil Treloar and Jack Thorncraft... PHOTOS COURTESY JAZZ DOWN UNDER



he formed a band with Roger Frampton, Phil Treloar and Jack Thorncraft, and employed them to start teaching there as well, to help him. I did a semester of study with Howie and then he asked me if I could teach as well. I don't think at that stage they actually had a trumpet teacher. They were just interested in somebody teaching theory and a bit of improvisation and running some of the ensembles. And a bit of arranging, because I was already doing some arranging for the ABC radio showband

and a few club singers. I still kept studying composition and improvisation with Roger, and Howie and also later with Bill Motzing. Bill Motzing was a very fine American musician, a trombone player, who came here originally as a sound person with the American group Blood Sweat and Tears in 1972. A kind of a jazz/rock band. Bill Motzing, I think, went to school with some of the Blood Sweat and Tears guys and because he had fantastic ears they employed him basically to sit alongside the sound guy and tell him what to do. Basically because most sound people are pretty deaf so if you can employ a musician to tell him what to do, you get a good sound. I was teaching there more or less until I went to New York in 1981, usually doing about ten hours a week in the Jazz Department. I always took some course. Sometimes it could have been private study like I did with Bill Motzing. But I always tried to keep some study going with a trumpet player or a teacher of composition or improvisation.

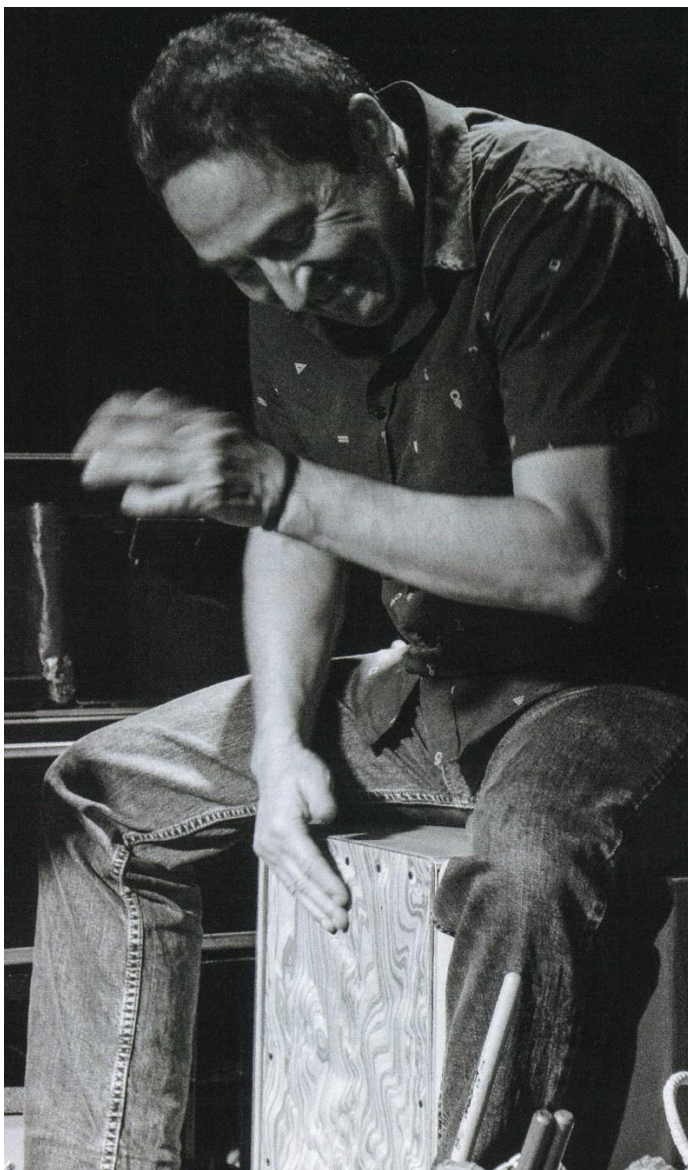


Bill Motzing: he had fantastic ears so Blood Sweat & Tears employed him basically to sit alongside the sound guy and tell him what to do...

John: Who did you study with in America?

Miroslav: I got an Australia Council grant in 1981 to study in America. I studied with several people in New York. David Liebman and a few trumpet players, Randy Brecker being one of them. I also went to Indiana University where I studied with a famous trumpet teacher, William Adam. He's a classical trumpet player but just a great teacher. I still pretty much use his principles of teaching trumpet in my teaching. David Baker was also there running the jazz department and several big bands, so I also took some lessons with him, mainly on composition. After Indiana I went back to New York and did a few gigs with salsa bands. Not really jazz, but I took to it. I've loved that music. In fact ever since I saw a movie as a kid called *Black Orpheus*. It was a Brazilian movie, basically a story about Orpheus and Eurydice set in Rio during the carnival time. It was on SBS a few years ago. Fantastic music. The music never stops in that movie. It's mainly Luiz Bonfá music. There was the whole

bossa nova movement in the sixties. I fell in love with Brazilian music then. But of course I didn't know much about it then. Here in Australia it's all lumped into a sub-heading of Latin music. Once you start playing with those people, there are demarcation disputes between the Cuban styles and the Brazilian styles. If you're a Cuban you just don't play samba. Some of them are very traditionalist, but of course it's loosening up a little bit more now. But really a few years ago those two styles would never meet. They were closely guarded. Cuban music is where salsa really comes from. It's kind of a fusion of Cuban styles. Because of my experience of salsa music in New York, when I returned to Sydney I started playing salsa mainly with Cubans and Colombians. I've always had a love of Latin music and to some extent I try to use those influences in Wanderlust as well. Especially with Fabian Hevia who is actually a Chilean and very good at playing all those rhythms.



Fabian Hevia: he is actually a Chilean and very good at playing all those Latin rhythms... PHOTO CREDIT TOMAS POKORNY

John: Where do you think Australia stands compared with other developed countries in its recognition of jazz as an art form?

Miroslav: There is a lot of cultural politics with jazz. I'm always puzzled by the fact that jazz has such an incredibly low profile in the cultural spectrum in Australia.



Wanderlust in Mentz, France in 1997, L-R Miroslav, Jeremy Sawkins, James Greening... PHOTO COURTESY MIROSLAV BUKOVSKY

The fact that the national broadcaster, the ABC FM classical radio, only broadcasts four hours of jazz a week. How is that possible? There must be some aversion to jazz. 20 years ago you had a jazz program every night. It's sad. I think it's absolutely wonderful music. In every other country in the world, certainly in the western world, jazz has a much higher profile than it has in Australia. We have a huge amount of talent. There are talented people in Australia who have practically no profile at all. Certainly not internationally They should at least be known in Australia but are not, and partly because of lack of exposure. Roger Frampton is probably the only true musical genius I've ever met. A remarkable musician. Who knows about Roger Frampton? A few initiated people and mainly musicians. It is almost like it is deliberate. Not necessarily a conspiracy, but I feel there's a kind of resistance against jazz. It's seen somehow as a lesser music, or an unimportant music. The perception of jazz music has certainly changed in Europe to a great degree. The amount of respect a jazz musician gets in Europe is amazing. Why? I really don't have an answer for it. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that all modern music is not really highly regarded in Australia anyway, you know. For instance, I've spoken to classical musicians like Peter Sculthorpe, the composer, about it, and he said they have the

same problem with contemporary classical music. There's no audience for it. It has a very low profile. So perhaps it has something to do with modernity, with dissidence,



Roger Frampton on soprano sax: probably the only true musical genius Miroslav has ever met. A remarkable musician. Who knows about Roger Frampton? A few initiated people and mainly musicians... PHOTO CREDIT JOE GLAYSHER

or the fact that people can't tap their feet to modern jazz, or they can't sing the melodies. I don't know. Perhaps that's the main reason for it. When I was in Europe in 1995 I was invited to go to Darmstadt to join this real out German big band. They played free stuff. Some of it sounded like Sun Ra, some of it was really, really out. We rehearsed with this band for a couple of days. The music was very difficult and I can imagine very challenging for the listeners. Then the concert came. We drove to the grounds of this beautiful old castle just outside Darmstadt where the festival was to do this gig. And it was sponsored by BMW. It was a summer evening and suddenly all these Germans started arriving in their Mercedes and BMWs wearing tuxedos with their ladies dressed up for the opera. I thought, no, it's going to be disastrous. These people will hate us, the music we're going to play. But they loved it. They loved all this out stuff. These middle-class Germans, you know. It was a real eye-opener for

me. That this kind of audience would be that open to that kind of music. It made me realise something, this could never happen in Australia. It was my first playing trip to Europe after many, many years. It made me realise that the European people are far more open to all kinds of jazz, even more than the American audiences.



Wanderlust in an outdoor setting in Metz, France in 1997... PHOTO COURTESY MIROSLAV BUKOVSKY

John: You have been involved with the group Ten Part Invention for the last twenty years. It has been a major contributor to the Australian jazz scene. How did it come about?

Miroslav: We formed Ten Part Invention in 1986 for the Adelaide Arts Festival. Anthony Steel, the director of the festival, wanted some local jazz content. I think he approached John Pochée and Roger Frampton about putting something together. John knew I had some composition and arranging talent. Roger Frampton was writing for it and I think Sandy Evans had written a few pieces. He asked me to write some pieces for the band also, just to have something to start with which they could play in Adelaide. So we went to Adelaide unrehearsed and were still rehearsing the stuff there. However, it was a huge success. The people heard a larger group, almost a big band, playing all original Australian music. And we never looked back really from that time. The players in Ten Part Invention are the cream of the Australian scene, certainly in Sydney And I feel the same way about the musicians that I play with in Wanderlust.



Tall Tales. Ten Part Invention at the Glebe Café in 1994. L-R Roger Frampton (standing), John Pochée (seated), Steve Elphick, Ken James, Sandy Evans, Miroslav Bukovsky, James Greening (standing), Warwick Alder, Bob Bertles, Bernie McGann...

I live in Canberra but we get together as often as we have a gig. But it's not that often that we have a gig and it is usually for the Sydney Improvised Music Association. Maybe every couple of years we do the Wangaratta Jazz Festival and other festivals, like Manly and in the State capitals, including Tasmania. The band has toured all the way through Asia a couple of times and the USA. Wanderlust did four European tours.



Wanderlust in 1996. Standing L-R Carl Orr, Adam Armstrong, Alister Spence, James Greening. Seated, Fabian Hevia and Miroslav... PHOTO COURTESY MIROSLAV BUKOVSKY

John: How important is the place of composition in your life?

Miroslav: I'm always writing something. When I was a kid I used to sit behind a piano trying to make up melodies and chords. I think all musicians have ideas running through their heads. And sometimes in the middle of the night, like all of us do, I get woken up by an idea that keeps going around and around in my head and, half dreaming, I try to capture what is going on. And of course in the morning sometimes it's there, but most times you lose the feel of it. And unless I get up and write it down I can't go back to sleep. I should have a tape recorder set up by my bedside, because that's the most direct thing, instead of looking for paper and pencil to write things down. The only reason I haven't got a place set up next to my bed is that I don't want to wake up my wife. I've got a bit of a notebook but I never know where it is. There were a couple of competitions in the eighties that the Jazz Action Society was running in Sydney. I entered a couple of times and won both. *Plain Talk* was the first tune, and *Bronte Cafe* was the second. I'm always trying to work on

some ideas. I do have some commissions to work on, and I always try to write things for Ten Part Invention or Wanderlust. I suppose I've written maybe one third of the Ten Part Invention repertoire. And I'll always keep writing something for them. At the moment I'm working on a couple of things. I was commissioned by Ten Part Invention to write pieces based on the poetry of Kenneth Slessor, on the *Five Bells* poem. It's a pretty depressing piece of poetry but I find John Olsen's painting relating to it much more inspiring than the poem. I've been working on that for about a year now. They are all just in a drawer.



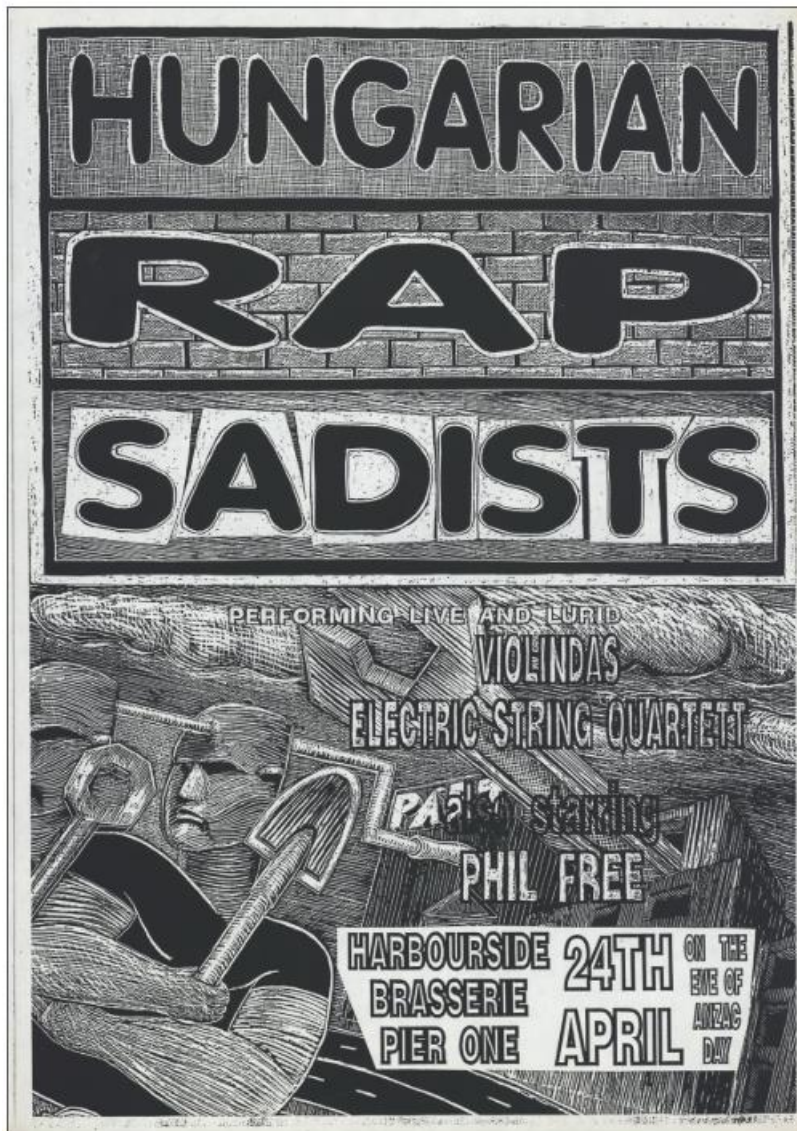
Kenneth Slessor, writer of the Five Bells poem: a pretty depressing piece of poetry...

When I started Wanderlust it was basically to be a vehicle for composers in the band. There was a deliberate philosophy of trying not to imitate American music. To try to write original music for it. Still informed and inspired by jazz, certainly influenced by jazz. Still essentially improvised music but kind of exploring all the other possibilities of music making – free jazz, African, Brazilian, Latin, Middle Eastern. There were certainly European influences and European folk music. All kinds of things. We kind of mix it all up, you know

John: Jazz is full of colourful personalities. Who in particular have you met in your career that you consider deserves that description?

Miroslav: Jackie Orszaczky was a major character on the Sydney scene. Jacky was always instrumental in organising these players into his groups. He is an extremely creative player, and a composer. Jacky is not necessarily considered a jazz player, leaning more towards R&B. Some of the groups and some of the stuff we did were

pretty mad. Like for instance, one group was called The Hungarian Rap Sadists. It was like a proto rap group in the eighties. He had a couple of Hungarian artists rapping in Hungarian, recipes for goulash and being backed by a very funky beat. They weren't singing, they were rapping. This group was extremely popular with Sydney's large Hungarian population. They used to come to those gigs in droves and used to be pissing themselves laughing. So that was a wonderful madness, you know.



A Hungarian Rap Sadists poster: a wonderful madness...

Then there were several offshoots from that group, but I think the most famous of those collaborations was a group called Jump Back Jack which was essentially a dance funk band. Carl Orr also played in that band. Industrial Accident was another group with a similar line up, which kind of explored, and it included those two Hungarians. They were both artists, so they would paint while we played, and recite and hit odd bits of metal. That was part of that industrial sound that we were after. Unfortunately I think one thing that's happening now is that young jazz players take themselves a little bit too seriously They don't seem to be having fun on the stage.

They think it's cool, but a lot of the time it's actually very boring, you know They don't necessarily connect with the audience. I find the best way to connect with the audience is to just be yourself. If you're really yourself and not pretending to be anything else, like cool New Yorker or whatever, the audience connects with you. You don't even have to try to entertain, just be yourself and play the best you can. That's enough.



Jackie Orszaczky: a major character on the Sydney scene, always instrumental in organising these players into his groups...

John: Do you have any other stories of unusual gigs?

Miroslav: I played the lead trumpet for Ginger Rogers when she was in Sydney in 1980 The Ginger Rogers. That's right. I did a season with her at the Metro Theatre in Kings Cross. I don't know how old she was. Probably close to seventy, because she was dancing in the movies in the 1940s. She was still dancing and she was still fantastic. And she still had great legs. Ginger had several male dancers with her and she was doing all these routines. It was like a packaged show and all we did was provide music. But we certainly had to get the tempos right. She was always really nice to the band and would chat to us. At the end we had a party and a big talk to Ginger. She was fantastic, a remarkable person. So that was my brush with fame.



Miroslav Bukovsky Ensemble, School of Music ANU 2008. L-R Wayne Kelly (piano), Mark Sutton (drums), John Mackey (saxophones), Miroslav, Chris Pound (bass)... PHOTO COURTESY BELINDA KELLY ANU SCHOOL OF MUSIC

John: As regards the future of jazz in Australia what do you hope for?

Miroslav: I just hope that somehow there will be a better environment for the future generation of jazz players. That there will be more appreciation of them, and there'll be more opportunity for them to actually really play the music they love. The music that is actually their own expression, as opposed to jazz as entertainment. It seems to me that there really isn't a serious enough scene in Australia yet to appreciate, really appreciate, the music for what it is. There are all kinds of jazz festivals that promote the entertaining bands more than the really good players, the really creative players. It seems there are only two festivals in Australia that actually do that. One is the Wangaratta Jazz Festival and the other is the Melbourne Jazz Festival which really encourage the serious kind of jazz. With the rest of them I suppose it's a matter of commerce really. In order to run these festivals you need to



Who knows Bernie McGann (above) in Australia, apart from the initiated jazz audiences? And he's been around a long time... PHOTO CREDIT TOMAS POKORNY

include the James Morrisons and Don Burrows to bring the crowds in. But it just seems to me that as good as those players are, it's not really the cutting edge of what's happening in jazz in Australia. There are many really fantastic players that are virtually unknown. Who knows Bernie McGann in Australia, apart from the initiated jazz audiences? And he's been around a long time.



Bukovsky: I just hope that somehow there will be a better environment for the future generation of jazz players... PHOTO CREDIT TOMAS POKORNY