

= Horace Silver =

Horace Ward Martin Tavares Silver (September 2 , 1928 ? June 18 , 2014) was an American jazz pianist , composer , and arranger , particularly in the hard bop style that he helped pioneer in the 1950s .

After playing tenor saxophone and piano at school in Connecticut , Silver got his break on piano when his trio was recruited by Stan Getz in 1950 . Silver soon moved to New York City , where he developed a reputation as a composer and for his bluesy playing . Frequent sideman recordings in the mid @-@ 1950s helped further , but it was his work with the Jazz Messengers , co @-@ led by Art Blakey , that brought both his writing and playing most attention . Their Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers album contained Silver 's first hit , " The Preacher " . After leaving Blakey in 1956 , Silver formed his own quintet , with what became the standard small group line @-@ up of tenor saxophone , trumpet , piano , bass , and drums . Their public performances and frequent recordings for Blue Note Records increased Silver 's popularity , even through changes of personnel . His most successful album was Song for My Father , made with two iterations of the quintet in 1963 and 1964 .

Several changes occurred in the early 1970s : Silver disbanded his group to spend more time with his wife and to concentrate on composing ; he included lyrics in his recordings ; and his interest in spiritualism developed . The last two of these were often combined , resulting in commercially unsuccessful releases such as The United States of Mind series . Silver left Blue Note after 28 years , founded his own record label , and scaled back his touring in the 1980s , relying in part on royalties from his compositions for income . In 1993 , he returned to major record labels , releasing five albums before gradually withdrawing from public view because of health problems .

As a player , Silver transitioned from bebop to hard bop by stressing melody rather than complex harmony , and combined clean and often humorous right @-@ hand lines with darker notes and chords in a near @-@ perpetual left @-@ hand rumble . His compositions similarly emphasized catchy melodies , but often also contained dissonant harmonies . Many of his varied repertoire of songs , including Doodlin ' , Peace , and Sister Sadie , became jazz standards that are still widely played . His considerable legacy encompasses his influence on other pianists and composers , and the development of young jazz talents who appeared in his bands over the course of four decades .

= = Early life = =

Silver was born on September 2 , 1928 , in Norwalk , Connecticut . His mother , Gertrude , was from Connecticut ; his father , John Tavares Silver , was born on the island of Maio , Cape Verde , and emigrated to the United States as a young man . She was a maid and sang in a church choir ; he worked for a tire company . Horace had a much older half @-@ brother , Eugene Fletcher , from his mother 's first marriage , and was the third child for his parents , after John , who lived to 6 months , and Maria , who was stillborn .

Silver began playing the piano in his childhood and had classical music lessons . His father taught him the folk music of Cape Verde . At the age of 11 Silver became interested in becoming a musician , after hearing the Jimmie Lunceford orchestra . His early piano influences included the styles of boogie @-@ woogie and the blues , the pianists Nat King Cole , Thelonious Monk , Bud Powell , Art Tatum , and Teddy Wilson , as well as some jazz horn players .

Silver graduated from St. Mary 's Grammar School in 1943 . From ninth grade he played Lester Young @-@ influenced tenor saxophone in the Norwalk High School band and orchestra . Silver played gigs locally on both piano and tenor saxophone while still at school . He was rejected for military service by a draft board examination that concluded that he had an excessively curved spine . Around 1946 he moved to Hartford , Connecticut to take up a regular job as pianist in a nightclub .

= = Later life and career = =

== = 1950 ? 55 == =

Silver 's break came in 1950 , when his trio backed saxophonist Stan Getz at a club in Hartford : Getz liked Silver 's band and recruited them to tour with him . The saxophonist also gave Silver his recording debut , in December 1950 , for the Stan Getz Quartet album . After about a year , Silver was replaced as pianist in Getz 's band and he moved to New York City . There , working as a freelance , he quickly built a reputation , based on his compositions and bluesy playing . He worked for short periods with tenor saxophonists Young and Coleman Hawkins , before meeting altoist Lou Donaldson , with whom he developed his bebop understanding . Donaldson made his first recording on Blue Note Records in 1952 , with Silver on piano , Gene Ramey on bass and Art Taylor on drums . Later that year , another Blue Note quartet session was booked for Donaldson , with Art Blakey replacing Taylor , but the saxophonist withdrew and producer ? owner Alfred Lion offered Silver the studio time for a trio recording . Most of the tracks recorded at it were Silver originals , and he went on to stay with Blue Note as a leader for the following 28 years .

Silver was also busy recording as a sideman . In 1953 , he was pianist on sessions led by Sonny Stitt , Howard McGhee , and Al Cohn , and , the following year , he played on albums by Art Farmer , Miles Davis , Milt Jackson and others . Silver won the Down Beat critics ' new star award for piano players in 1954 , and appeared at the first Newport Jazz Festival , substituting for John Lewis in the Modern Jazz Quartet . Silver 's early 1950s recordings demonstrate that Powell was a major pianistic influence , but this had waned by the middle of the decade .

In New York , Silver and Blakey co @-@ founded the Jazz Messengers , a cooperatively @-@ run group that initially recorded under various leaders and names . Their first two studio recordings , with Hank Mobley on tenor saxophone , Kenny Dorham on trumpet , and Doug Watkins on bass , were made in late 1954 and early 1955 and were released as two 10 @-@ inch albums under Silver 's name , then soon thereafter as the 12 @-@ inch Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers . This album contained Silver 's first hit , " The Preacher " . Unusually in Silver 's career , recordings of concert performances were also released at this time , involving quintets at Birdland (1954) and the Café Bohemia (1955) . This set of studio and concert recordings was pivotal in the development and defining of hard bop , which combined elements of blues , gospel , and R & B , with bebop @-@ based harmony and rhythm . The new , funky hard bop was commercially popular , and helped to establish Blue Note as a successful business .

== = 1956 ? 69 == =

Silver 's final recordings with the Jazz Messengers were in May 1956 . Later that year , he left Blakey after one and a half years , in part because of the heroin use prevalent in the band , which Silver did not want to be involved in . Soon after leaving , Silver formed his own long @-@ term quintet , after receiving offers of work from club owners who had heard his albums . The first line @-@ up was Mobley (tenor saxophone) , Farmer (trumpet) , Watkins (bass) , and Louis Hayes (drums) . The quintet , with various line @-@ ups , continued to record , helping Silver to build his reputation . He wrote almost all of the material they played , and , in concert , he " won over the crowds through his affable personality and all @-@ action approach . He crouched over the piano as the sweat poured out , with his forelock brushing the keys and his feet pounding . "

After more than a dozen sideman recording sessions in 1955 and a similar number in 1956 ? 57 , Silver 's appearance on Sonny Rollins , Vol . 2 in April 1957 was his last for another leader , as he opted to concentrate on his own band . For several years from the late 1950s , this contained Junior Cook (tenor saxophone) , Blue Mitchell (trumpet) , Gene Taylor (bass) , and either Hayes or Roy Brooks (drums) . Their first album was Finger Poppin ' , in 1959 . Silver 's tour of Japan early in 1962 led to the album The Tokyo Blues , recorded later that year . By the early 1960s , Silver 's quintet had influenced numerous bandleaders and was among the most popular performers at jazz clubs . They also released singles , including " Blowin ' the Blues Away " , " Juicy Lucy " , and " Sister Sadie " , for jukebox and radio play . This quintet 's sixth and final album was Silver 's Serenade , in 1963 .

Around this time , Silver composed music for a television commercial for the drink Tab . Early in 1964 , Silver visited Brazil for three weeks , an experience he credited with increasing his interest in his heritage . In the same year , he created a new quintet , featuring Joe Henderson on tenor saxophone and Carmell Jones on trumpet . This band recorded most of Silver 's best @-@ known album , Song for My Father , which reached No. 95 on the Billboard 200 in 1965 , and was added to the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999 . Recordings and personnel changes ? sometimes expanding the band to a sextet ? continued in the mid @-@ 1960s . In 1966 , The Cape Verdean Blues charted at No. 130 . The liner notes to the album Serenade to a Soul Sister (1968) included lyrics (written but not sung) , indicating a new interest for Silver . His quintet , by then including saxophonist Bennie Maupin , trumpeter Randy Brecker , and drummer Billy Cobham , toured parts of Europe in October and November 1968 , sponsored by the U.S. government . They also recorded one of Silver 's last quintet albums for Blue Note , You Gotta Take a Little Love . The Penguin Guide to Jazz 's retrospective summary of Silver 's main Blue Note recordings was that they were of a consistently high standard : " each album yields one or two themes that haunt the mind , each usually has a particularly pretty ballad , and they all lay back on a deep pile of solid riffs and workmanlike solos . "

== = 1970 ? 80 == =

At the end of 1970 , Silver broke up his regular band , to concentrate on composing and to spend more time with his wife . He had met Barbara Jean Dove in 1968 and married her two years later . They had a son , Gregory . Silver also became increasingly interested in spiritualism from the early 1970s .

Silver included lyrics in more of his compositions at this point , although these were sometimes regarded as doggerel or proselytizing . The first album to contain vocals , That Healin ' Feelin ' (1970) , was commercially unsuccessful and Silver had to insist on the support of Blue Note executives to continue releasing music of the same , new style . They agreed to a further two albums that contained vocals and Silver on an RMI electric keyboard ; the three were later compiled as The United States of Mind , but were soon dropped from the catalog .

Silver reformed a touring band in 1973 . This contained brothers Michael and Randy Brecker . Around this time , according to saxophonist Dave Liebman , Silver 's reputation among aspiring young jazz musicians was that he was " a little ? not commercial , but not quite the real deal [in jazz] . " Silver and his family decided to move to California around 1974 , after a burglary at their New York City apartment while they were in Europe . The couple divorced in the mid @-@ 1970s .

In 1975 , he recorded Silver ' n Brass , the first of five Silver ' n albums , which had other instruments added to the quintet . The personnel in his band continued to change , and continued to contain young musicians who made telling contributions . One of these was trumpeter Tom Harrell , who stayed from 1973 to 1977 . Silver 's pattern in the late 1970s was to tour for six months a year . His final Blue Note album was Silver ' n Strings , recorded in 1978 and 1979 . His stay was the longest in the label 's history . By Silver 's account , he left Blue Note after its parent company was sold and the new owners were not interested in promoting jazz . In 1980 , he formed the record label Silveto , " dedicated to the spiritual , holistic , self @-@ help elements in music " , he commented . Silver also formed Emerald at the same time , a label for straight @-@ ahead jazz , but it was short @-@ lived .

== = 1981 ? 98 == =

The first Silveto release was Guides to Growing Up in 1981 , which contained recitations from actor and comedian Bill Cosby . Silver stated in the same year that he had reduced his touring to four months a year , so that he could spend more time with his son . This also meant that he had to audition for new band members on an annual basis . He continued to write lyrics for his new albums , although these were not always included on the recordings themselves . The song titles reflected his spiritual , self @-@ help thinking ; for example , Spiritualizing the Senses from 1983 included " Seeing with Perception " and " Moving Forward with Confidence " . The next albums were There 's

No Need to Struggle (1983) and The Continuity of Spirit (1985) . His band for performances in the UK and elsewhere in 1987 included trumpeter Dave Douglas and saxophonist Vincent Herring . Douglas reported that Silver seldom gave direct verbal guidelines about the music , preferring to lead through playing . A revival of interest in more traditional forms of jazz in the 1980s largely passed Silver by , and his albums on Silveto were not critical successes . Its last release was Music to Ease Your Disease , in 1988 . By the early 1990s Silver did not often play at jazz festivals , but his need to tour was limited , as he received steady royalties from his songbook .

Rockin ' with Rachmaninoff , a musical work featuring dancers and narration , written by Silver and choreographed and directed by Donald McKayle , was staged in Los Angeles in 1991 . A recording of the work was released on Bop City Records in 2003 . After a decade of trying to make his independent label work , Silver abandoned it in 1993 , and signed to Columbia Records . This also signalled a return to mostly instrumental releases . The first of these , It 's Got to Be Funky , was a rare big band album . Silver came close to dying soon after its release : he was hospitalized with a previously undiagnosed blood clot problem , but went on to record Pencil Packin ' Papa , containing a six @-@ piece brass section , in 1994 . That year , he also played as a guest on Dee Dee Bridgewater 's album Love and Peace : A Tribute to Horace Silver .

Silver received a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters award in 1995 , and in the following year was added to Down Beat 's Jazz Hall of Fame . He moved from Columbia to Impulse ! Records , where he made the septet The Hardbop Grandpop (1996) and the quintet A Prescription for the Blues (1997) . The former was nominated for two Grammy Awards : as an album for best instrumental performance , individual or group ; and for Silver 's solo on " Diggin ' on Dexter " . He was again unwell in 1997 , so was unable to tour to promote his records . His final studio recording was made in the following year ? Jazz Has a Sense of Humor , for Verve Records . One continuation from his early career was that Silver recorded his own compositions for his later albums and they were typically new , rather than re @-@ workings of previous releases .

= = = 1999 ? 2014 = = =

Silver performed in public for the first time in four years in 2004 , appearing with an octet at the Blue Note Jazz Club in New York . He was not often seen in public after this . In 2005 , the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences awarded him its President 's Merit Award . In 2006 , Let 's Get to the Nitty Gritty : The Autobiography of Horace Silver , was published by the University of California Press . A 2008 release , Live at Newport ' 58 , from a Silver concert fifty years earlier , reached the top ten of Billboard 's jazz chart .

In 2007 , it was revealed that Silver had Alzheimer 's disease . He died of natural causes in New Rochelle , New York on June 18 , 2014 . He was survived by his son .

= = Playing style = =

Silver 's early recordings displayed " a crisp , chipper but slightly wayward style , idiosyncratic enough to take him out of the increasingly stratified realms of bebop " . In contrast to the more elaborate bebop piano , he stressed straightforward melodies rather than complex harmonies , and included short riffs and motifs that came and went over the course of a solo . While his right hand provided cleanly played lines , his left added bouncy , darker notes and chords in a near @-@ perpetual rumble . Silver " always played percussively , rarely suggesting excessive force on the keys but mustering a crisp [...] sound . " His fingering was idiosyncratic , but this added to the individuality of his pianism , particularly to the authenticity of the blues facets of his playing . The Penguin Guide to Jazz gave the overall assessment that " Blues and gospel @-@ tinged devices and percussive attacks give his methods a more colourful style , and a generous good humour gives all his records an upbeat feel . " Part of the humor was Silver 's predilection for quoting other pieces of music in his own playing .

Writer and academic Thomas Owens stated that characteristics of Silver 's solos were : " the short , simple phrases that all derive from the three @-@ beat figure ? ? | ? , or a variant of it ; the pianist 's

' blue fifth ' (those rapid slurs up to [... a flattened fifth]) ; and the low tone cluster used strictly as a rhythmic punctuation " . He also employed blues and minor pentatonic scales . Music journalist Marc Myers observed that " Silver 's advantage was pianistic grace and a keen awareness that by resolving dark , minor @-@ passages in airy , ascending and descending major @-@ key chord configurations , the result could produce an exciting and uplifting feeling . " In his accompanying of a soloing saxophonist or trumpeter , Silver was also distinctive : " Rather than reacting to the soloist 's melody and waiting for melodic holes to fill , he typically plays background patterns similar to the background riffs that saxes or brasses play behind soloists in big bands . "

= = Compositions = =

Early in his career , Silver composed contrafacts and blues @-@ based melodies (including " Doodlin ' " and " Opus de Funk ") . The latter was " a typical Silver creation : advanced in its harmonic structure and general approach but with a catchy tune and finger @-@ snapping beat . " His innovative incorporation of gospel and blues sounds into jazz compositions took place while they were also being added to rock ' n ' roll and R & B pieces .

Silver soon expanded the range and style of his writing , which grew to include " funky groove tunes , gentle mood pieces , vamp songs , outings in 3 / 4 and 6 / 8 time , Latin workouts of various stripes , up @-@ tempo jam numbers , and examples of almost any and every other kind of approach congruent with the hard bop aesthetic . " An unusual case is " Peace " , a ballad that prioritizes a calm mood over melodic or harmonic effects . Owens observed that " Many of his compositions contain no folk blues or gospel music elements , but instead have highly chromatic melodies supported by richly dissonant harmonies " . The compositions and arrangements were also designed to make Silver 's typical line @-@ up sound larger than a quintet .

Silver himself commented that inspiration came from multiple sources : " I 'm inspired by nature and by some of the people I meet and some of the events that take place in my life . I 'm inspired by my mentors . I 'm inspired by various religious doctrines . [...] Many of my songs are impressed on my mind just before I wake up . Others I get from just doodlin ' around on the piano " . He also wrote that , " when I wake up with a melody in my head , I jump right out of bed before I forget it and run to the piano and my tape recorder . I play the melody with my right hand and then harmonize it with my left . I put it down on my tape recorder , and then I work on getting a bridge or eightbar release for the tune . "

= = Influence and legacy = =

Silver was among the most influential jazz musicians of his lifetime . Grove Music Online describes his legacy as at least fourfold : as a pioneer of hard bop ; as a user of what became the archetypal quintet instrumentation of tenor saxophone , trumpet , piano , bass , and drums ; as a developer of young musicians who went on to become important players and bandleaders ; and for his skill as a composer and arranger .

Silver was also an influence as a pianist : his first Blue Note recording as leader " redefined the jazz piano , which up until then was largely modeled on the dexterity and relentless attack of Bud Powell " , in Myers ' words . As early as 1956 , Silver 's piano playing was described by Down Beat as " a key influence on a large segment of modern jazz pianists . " This went on to include Ramsey Lewis , Les McCann , Bobby Timmons , and Cecil Taylor , who was impressed by Silver 's aggressive style .

Silver 's legacy as a composer may be greater than as a pianist , because his works , many of which are jazz standards , continue to be performed and recorded worldwide . As a composer , he led a return to an emphasis on melody , observed critic John S. Wilson : for a long time , jazz musicians had written contrafacts of great technical complexity , but " Silver wrote originals that were not only actually original but memorably melodic , presaging a gradual return to melodic creativity among writing jazzmen . "

= = Discography = =