



Harlem Jazz Adventures: A European Baron's Memoir, 1934-1969 (Studies in Jazz)

By Timme Rosenkrantz

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Timme Rosenkrantz (1911–1969) was a Danish journalist, author, concert and record producer, radio show host, and entrepreneur with a consuming passion for jazz and little head for business. Known in Denmark and New York as the “Jazz Baron” because of his noble lineage, he was the first European journalist to cover the jazz scene in Harlem. *Harlem Jazz Adventures: A European Baron’s Memoir, 1934–1969* recounts Rosenkrantz’s happy years in New York City, where he would produce jazz concerts, record top musicians and bands in his midtown apartment, organize a “dream band” for *Timme Rosenkrantz and His Barrelhouse Barons*, a 1938 RCA Victor recording, (DL) live in Harlem and run a record shop with his life companion, journalist and singer Inez Cavanaugh. A good friend of jazz impresario John Hammond, Rosenkrantz would become the James Boswell of the Harlem jazz scene. Duke Ellington, Art Tatum, Coleman Hawkins, Billie Holiday—there wasn’t a New York jazz musician unknown to “Honeysuckle Rosenkrantz,” as christened by Fats Waller. Drawing on the published Danish-language original *Dus med Jazzen*, and an unpublished English free translation (DL) by Rosenkrantz and Cavanaugh, translator-adapter Fradley Hamilton Garner gives polish and context to Rosenkrantz’s stories of meetings with Cecile and Louis Armstrong, Benny Carter, Willie “The Lion” Smith, Eddie Condon, Erroll Garner—whom Rosenkrantz discovered and was first to record—and many others. This book is a must-have for jazz lovers. Social historians interested in the intersection of race and the music business will find in Rosenkrantz’s memoir an invaluable primary source on Harlem’s social scene and its musical legacy.

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Editorial Review

Review

Harlem Jazz Adventures, adapted and edited by international jazz journalist Fradley Hamilton Garner, is a fascinating and exuberant account of Rosenkrantz' encounters with the giants of jazz. Anecdotal chapters tell of his encounters with the likes of Louis Armstrong, Benny Carter, Duke Ellington, and virtually every player in each and every band that passed through town. (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*)

Better than any 90-minute documentary on the history of Harlem in the 1940s Timme's memoir is a rare treasure of countless anecdotes, stories, facts and insights (as well as some fables) on the way the jazz masters lived, loved and how many myths, lores and legends started circulation. For any scholar of jazz this book is a must-have. (*Jive-Talk.com*)

Anyone who dug Esi Edugyan's 2011 Giller Prize-winning *Half Blood Blues* was left wanting more from the Golden Age of Jazz. But here's a twist. Instead of black musicians going to Europe, how about a true story of a Danish aristocrat so smitten with the music that he relocates to New York? Written by a baron, witty short-story writer, record producer and concert promoter — a hapless entrepreneur dubbed "Honeysuckle Rosenkrantz" by Fats Waller — this newly translated memoir swings us into the orbits of Louis Armstrong, Benny Carter, Art Tatum, Duke Ellington, Bud Powell and scores of other greats. (*Movie Entertainment*)

Timme's memoirs give an accurate picture of what was endearing in the man: his enthusiasm for the music, his love of eccentrics (he was one himself), his amused comic view of the world. This is not a book of grievances and grudges; reading it is like spending time with a jovial elder who fixes you a drink and launches into yet another hilarious tale of men and women long gone — all first-hand, told with a fan's ardor. ... Timme gives us an insider's view of Harlem night life and early morning revels, of the numbers racket, of running a record store uptown — the characters and details. The book is the very opposite of analytic 'jazz literature' in its warm embrace of the scene, the musicians, and the reader. It is irresistible reading for jazz fans who wish, like Timme, to have been behind the scenes. He was *there*, and his stories sparkle with life. I know that jazz fans have been waiting a long time to read these pages, and I would have expected nothing less from the man Fats Waller dubbed 'Honeysuckle Rosenkrantz.' (*Jazz Lives*)

Timmie Rosenkrantz is instantly likeable in this engaging memoir. ... Fradley Garner ... has captured the very personal prose 'sound' of author Timme Rosenkrantz. (*New Jersey Jazz Society*)

Garner has done a terrific job of translating the writing of Rosenkrantz to the English. The text is highly readable, and makes Rosenkrantz's passion for jazz come alive on every page. Garner's footnotes are concise, and put the stories related by Rosenkrantz into perspective. Placing them at the end of each chapter, rather than the usual placement of notes at the back of the book makes them easily accessible, and useful, rather than being a chore to locate and read. ... *Harlem Jazz Adventures* is an enjoyable and fascinating volume that presents one man's unique involvement in a world that he loved. Rosenkrantz offers a lot of inside looks at many musicians who are legendary in the history of jazz, and his passion for the music and the players comes through in his words. Thanks to Fradley Garner, we can all enjoy this entertaining reminiscence. (*Jersey Jazz*)

Rosenkrantz is an entertaining storyteller who dismisses any impact he may have made as producer or writer, describing himself as more of a fan. Immersing himself as a resident of Harlem upon arriving in the US, he

built relationships with numerous jazz artists. His sense of whimsy is ever present, with a gift for providing detail about his friendships and the many performances he attended, including after-hours scenes that would have been impossible for a typical jazz fan. ...His unique portrait of a foreigner able to immerse himself in the Harlem jazz scene during its heyday gives jazz fans a rare look at life among his favorite musicians. (*The New York City Jazz Record*)

Mr. Rosenkrantz's lovely stories are also a brilliant example of the power of one of William Zinsser's key points in his *On Writing Well* when he enjoins us to '... let the person speak to the reader in his own words.' The very manageable chapters and the cozy manner in which the stories contained in them are told create a much welcomed first-person narrative at a time when many of the books being published on the subject of Jazz are overly analytic and coldly academic in nature. Credit for the engaging 'tone and tenor' of Mr. Rosenkrantz's memoirs must be given to Mr. Fradley Garner for his brilliant English translation/adaptation which is replete with a number of explanatory footnotes that help make the book even more lucid. . . .If this book is a testimonial to anything, it is to the fact that Mr. Rosenkrantz definitely knew how to have fun with Jazz. . . .No words could form a better description of the 'Jazz Life' lived by Baron Timme Rosenkrantz as depicted in *Harlem Jazz Adventures: A European Baron's Memoir, 1934-1969*. (*Jazz Profiles*)

The book is also about the characters you never hear about: the speakeasy owners and bouncers, the Runyonesque gangsters who 'take care' of each other in inhospitable ways, the audience-minded, profit-driven publishers (sound familiar?), the cheap taking-advantage-of-musicians-at every-turn club owners (sound familiar?), the hangers-on, the shop owners, even the landlords. By the end of Rosenkrantz's diary-like narrative—in bite-sized edible chapters—you come away not only with a strong sense of the jazz musicians of the era in that place, you also come away with a strong sense of the character of Harlem at this time. (*JJA News*)

Taken alongside his witty and warm remembrances, one gets a feeling for a very special man, who had a deep love for jazz. While TimmeRosenkrantz never got rich promoting jazz, the love and respect he had for the musicians was reciprocated many times over. (*Jazz History Online*)

The jazz-mad Timme wrote a memoir in Danish of his time in New York, and its English-language version is now available in this edited and ample form....It represents not a portion of jazz history's more general sweep but its teeming minutiae in one important place, recorded by an astute observer of a scene he embraced devotedly. (*Jazz Journal*)

Timme Rosenkrantz's *Harlem Jazz Adventures* give us a unique look at the musical world of New York in the 1930s and 1940s, a time of transition between swing and bebop, when musicians with aesthetic self-confidence and drive continued developing jazz. Between the many anecdotes that make the reading so fascinating, one discovers again and again the seriousness with which these musicians pushed their art forward. (*Jazzinstitut Darmstadt*)

Harlem Jazz Adventures: A European Baron's Memoir, 1934–1969 recounts Rosenkrantz's happy years in New York City, where he would produce jazz concerts, record top musicians and bands in his midtown apartment, organize a "dream band" for Timme Rosenkrantz and His Barrelhouse Barons, a 1938 RCA Victor recording, (DL) live in Harlem and run a record shop with his life companion, journalist and singer Inez Cavanaugh....This book is a must-have for jazz lovers. Social historians interested in the intersection of race and the music business will find in Rosenkrantz's memoir an invaluable primary source on Harlem's social scene and its musical legacy. (*John Shelton Ivany Top 21*)

Better, more intensive and above all authentic; let those memoirs with their mixture of countless anecdotes,

stories, facts, insights, but also a lot of "jazz" of Harlem's past and its musicians live again! (*Papier*)

Harlem Jazz Adventures is about a life lived after hours, hanging out in basement clubs, raging through long drunken nights, going from one after-hours club to another, getting roaring drunk with a slew of irresponsible musicians. On his second and longest stay in the Big Apple, Rosenkrantz left taxi dancing behind and supported himself as a jazz journalist, record producer, leader of his own jazz band and record store owner. His story is a fascinating one and his book (edited from an unpublished English translation of the original Danish book by Fradley Hamilton Garner) is an important work of social and jazz history. Rosenkrantz brings alive an important moment in American history, a time when jazz was going from big band swing to small group bop and beyond. Rosenkrantz's is a book that jazz lovers, musicians and social historians will have to read and readers of this journal are going to love it. (*Rambles.NET*)

Timme Rosenkrantz is one of those people we jazz fans have heard of all our lives, but never knew much about. Now, thanks to Fradley Garner's wonderful edition of these memoirs, Timme comes back to life, and I do mean life. He says he was there when the word 'jitterbug' was coined: his stories, his good humor, and all the great personalities he knew, just never stop. This must be what the Golden Age of Jazz was like. (Donald Clarke, editor, *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music*)

"I'm just a little layman with an ear for music and a heart that beats for jazz" is how Timme Rosenkrantz modestly describes himself. But his ear and his heart unerringly propelled him into the orbits of Louis Armstrong, Benny Carter, Art Tatum, Fats Waller, W.C. Handy, Duke Ellington, Erroll Garner, Bud Powell, and dozens of other jazz notables. *Harlem Jazz Adventures* is an insightful and delightfully witty account of jazz people and places, written by one who experienced them firsthand. (Michael Cogswell, Director of the Louis Armstrong House and Archives)

Harlem Jazz Adventures drew me into a world I've only imagined. The passion and joy of these memoirs is irresistible. Suddenly, all the musicians and clubs I've heard about became three-dimensional, and I couldn't stop reading. Each chapter is a play within a play. From Fats Waller to Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong to Benny Carter, the Savoy Ballroom to 52nd Street. Timme Rosenkrantz was an outsider who fast became an insider. He takes me into the dance halls and clubs, and what a thrill! Thanks to Mr. Garner for bringing this most important book into the English-speaking world. (Catherine Russell, Contemporary Jazz & Blues vocalist and recording artist)

Adapted and edited by Fradley Hamilton Garner, [*Harlem Jazz Adventures*] provided me with a couple of evenings of unadulterated joy. (W. Royal Stokes)

About the Author

Timme Rosenkrantz (1911-1969) was a Danish journalist, author, concert and record producer, broadcaster and entrepreneur. He was the first European journalist to cover the jazz scene in New York's Harlem, from 1934 to 1969. Learn even more about Timme Rosenkrantz at the following website, www.jazzbaron.com.

Translator and editor **Fradley Hamilton Garner** is International Editor and columnist for *Jersey Jazz*, a monthly journal of the New Jersey Jazz Society. He's also a columnist for the online AllAboutJazz.com.

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