

Remembering Bill Dixon, Bennington Faculty Member, 1968-1995

Jun 17, 2010



It is with great sadness that the Bennington community notes the passing of jazz composer, trumpeter, and longtime faculty member Bill Dixon, who died June 16, 2010, at his home in North Bennington. He was 84.

Dixon, considered one of jazz's most accomplished and pivotal figures, began teaching at Bennington in 1968. A member of the faculty until 1995, he first came to the College to teach collaboratively with avant-garde dancer and choreographer Judith Dunn. In 1973, he founded and became chair of Bennington's Black Music Division, mentoring such musicians as alto saxophonist Marco Eneidi and drummer Jackson Krall.

Throughout his life, Dixon was noted for his commitment to both jazz and music, in general. In 1964, he produced the famous "October Revolution in Jazz," which brought together more than 40 groups—including such notables as John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman—for a four-day series of concerts. Out of this event, Dixon founded the collective known as the Jazz Composers Guild in 1965. He was also active in promoting jazz in non-musical arenas. Working as a civil servant at the United Nations headquarters from 1956 to 1961, he created the United Nations Jazz Society, a listening and discussion group for the organization's diplomatic corps and staff. His collaborations with musicians are well known, particularly those with pianist Cecil Taylor and saxophonist Archie Shepp, which resulted in some of his most noted work. Dixon's latest CD, *Tapestries for Small Orchestra*, was released in 2009, and a collection of his work from 1970 to 1976 is still available on the Cadence label.

Dixon is survived by his longtime partner, Sharon Vogel, and two children.