

Stephane Grappelli - Jazz Masters (1996)

Written by bluesever

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1. *All of me* 2. *Star eyes* 3. *Anything goes* 4. *Don't blame me* 5. *Moonlight in vermont* 6. *Caravan* 7. *It might as well be spring* 8. *Have you met miss jones?* 9. *Love song* 10. *Sing hallelujah*

Stephane Grappelli was born on January 26, 1908 in Paris, France. After learning to play keyboard instruments, Grappelli took up the violin, later studying it formally. In the mid-20s he played in dance bands in Paris, gradually turning more to jazz. In the early 30s he met Django Reinhardt and with him formed the Quintette du Hot Club de France.

Until this point in his career Grappelli had been playing piano and violin, but now concentrated on the latter instrument. Performances and especially records by the QHCF alerted the jazz world to the arrival of both an intriguing new sound and, in Reinhardt, the first authentic non-American genius of jazz. In these years Grappelli was still learning, and his early popularity was largely as a result of that of his collaborator.

Shortly before the outbreak of World War II Grappelli settled in London, where he played with George Shearing. In the post-war years he worked briefly with Reinhardt again but spent the late 40s and 50s playing to diminishing audiences across Europe. In the 60s he enjoyed a revival of popularity, making records with other violinists such as Stuff Smith and Joe Venuti.

In the early 70s he appeared on UK television performing duets with classical violinist Yehudi Menuhin, and the records they made together sold well. However, Grappelli's real breakthrough to the big time had come when, at the urging of Diz Disley, he made appearances at the 1973 UK Cambridge Folk Festival (accompanied by Disley and Denny Wright). Grappelli was a

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sensation. For the rest of the decade, throughout the 80s and into the early 90s he was on a non-stop tour of the world, playing the most prestigious venues in the UK, Europe, the USA and the Far East.

In January 1994, he celebrated his 86th birthday in concert with Stanley Black at London's Barbican Hall. He made records with several backing groups, played duets with Gary Burton, Earl Hines, Martial Solal, Jean-Luc Pomy and many other leading jazzmen. He also ventured into other areas of music and, in addition to the duets with Menuhin, he has recorded with the western swing fiddler, Vassar Clements.

At ease with a repertoire based upon his early career successes, Grappelli's flowing style steadily matured over the years and the occasional uncertainties of his early work with Reinhardt are long forgotten. Perhaps at odd moments in his later years he seemed to be coasting, yet some of his recorded performances are very good while several of those from the mid- and late 70s are amongst the most distinguished in the history of jazz violin.

Of particular merit are Parisian Thoroughfare, recorded with the rhythm section of Roland Hanna, George Mraz and Mel Lewis, and a set recorded at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London in 1973 when he was backed by Disley and Len Skeat. Grappelli's late flowering much to prompt appreciation of the old tradition of jazz violin playing. His death on December 1, 1997 left a gap in music that is unlikely to ever be filled, and certainly never to be bettered.

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