

Black Music Research Journal

Center for Black Music Research

Columbia College Chicago

Volume 19, #2 (Autumn 1999)

Monk Meets SNCC

By Ingrid Monson

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MONK MEETS SNCC

INGRID MONSON

Thelonious Monk—the enigma, the man who could compose with the radio blaring, wore unusual hats, danced around onstage, had periods of acute disconnectedness, and showed particular gifts in mathematics as a high school student—has long been a potent symbol of the jazz musician as artist. Monk’s reluctance to verbalize—to interviewers, musicians seeking instruction, and even friends and family members—provides further evidence that music was his true language. Monk spoke the unspeakable through music and took the listener to “another level” through his utterly original compositions and improvisation.¹

By adopting and cultivating this quintessentially romantic concept of art, bebop musicians in the 1940s demanded that their music be taken seriously. The trappings of art brought dignity and prestige to African-American musicians struggling to overturn the legacy of minstrelsy and its demands for smiling buffoonery. In the context of a racially segregated society, the demand by black musicians of the 1940s to be acknowledged as artists was a rebellious political act.²

Yet the notion of absolute music to which the romantic aesthetic subscribed held that true art was above politics. Consequently, musicians of the 1940s and 1950s found themselves in the ironic position of actively

1. Among the writers presenting this image of Monk are Brown (1958), Kotlowitz (1961), and Farrell (1964).

2. The development of the romantic aesthetic of absolute music is best described by Carl Dahlhaus (1989). The classic work interpreting bebop art as politics is Amiri Baraka’s *Blues People* (Jones 1963). See also DeVaux (1997) and Lott (1988).

INGRID MONSON is associate professor of music at Washington University in St. Louis, Mo. She is the author of *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (University of Chicago Press, 1996) and the editor of the forthcoming book *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective* (Garland).

cultivating the image of the apolitical artist *in order* to assert the underlying political challenge posed by the obvious excellence of African-American music. This stance was particularly attractive to white intellectuals, bohemians, and progressives who could find common cause with African-American musicians in art. As the Civil Rights movement became a dominating presence in the public consciousness, however, particularly after the year-long Montgomery bus boycott (1955–56), the African-American community increasingly expected black musicians, entertainers, and celebrities to do their part in the struggle. In the midst of the Montgomery boycott, for example, Nat “King” Cole was beaten by whites while performing in Birmingham with a racially mixed band. Instead of earning the support of the African-American press, he was roundly denounced for having agreed to an engagement in a segregated theater. If the ordinary people of Montgomery could walk in protest day after day, they argued, the least someone like Nat “King” Cole could do was to refuse to play for segregated audiences. The idea of art divorced from politics, in other words, was placed under scrutiny by the burgeoning Civil Rights movement (“A King Is Uncrowned” 1956; “Cole Leaves Us” 1956).³

Viewed against the backdrop of bebop’s militancy and the battle waged for racial equality in the 1950s and 1960s, Monk’s image has been decidedly apolitical. Unlike his contemporaries Max Roach and Charles Mingus, he did not speak out on politics through his words or music. In a well-known interview with Valerie Wilmer (1965, 22), Monk emphasized that he was not particularly interested in politics.

I hardly know anything about it. . . . I never was interested in those Muslims. If you want to know, you should ask Art Blakey. I didn’t have to change my name—it’s always been weird enough! I haven’t done one of those “freedom” suites, and I don’t intend to. I mean, I don’t see the point. I’m not thinking that race thing now; it’s not on my mind. Everybody’s trying to get me to think it, though, but it doesn’t bother me. It only bugs the people who’re trying to get me to think it.

In 1958, Monk emphatically denied a social subtext for his music: “My music is not a social comment on discrimination or poverty or the like. I would have written the same way even if I had not been a Negro” (quoted in Brown 1958, 45).⁴

3. Cole subsequently became a life member of the NAACP and played for many benefit concerts.

4. In an interview with François Positif (1963, 39), Monk explicitly denied having made this statement: “I don’t think I ever said such an insane thing; I know the words I use and I

SNCC's "Salute to Southern Students"

On February 1, 1963, Thelonious Monk nevertheless performed at a gala fund-raising concert at Carnegie Hall for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The event was called "A Salute to Southern Students," honoring "their Courageous, Dedicated and Persistent Struggle for Human Dignity and Freedom on the Third Anniversary of the Sit-Ins." It featured Monk together with other prominent artists such as Herbie Mann, Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, Charles Mingus, and Tony Bennett, as well as SNCC's own Freedom Singers. Others lending their names in support of the event included musicians Cannonball Adderley and Gerry Mulligan, writers Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin, critic Nat Hentoff, and the owners of the Village Gate—Art and Bert D'Lugoff ("A Salute to Southern Students" 1963).

SNCC's "Salute to Southern Students" at Carnegie Hall was one of dozens of fund-raising concerts that took place during the Civil Rights movement. Although socially minded concerts had been a feature of the jazz landscape since the 1930s—when Duke Ellington, Benny Carter, and many others played for a variety of causes including the Scottsboro Boys and the NAACP (Hammond 1981, 85)—a threshold was crossed on February 1, 1960, when the student lunch-counter sit-ins began in Greensboro, North Carolina. Between 1960 and 1965, benefit concerts became a regular component of the jazz scene in New York, and all of the major civil rights organizations—including SNCC, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Congress of Racial Equity (CORE)—organized benefit concerts as part of their fund-raising activities (see Ward 1998, 289–336; Monson n.d.).

Monk was one of many jazz musicians who played at such concerts during the Civil Rights movement. In addition to those previously cited, the list includes Miles Davis, Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, Jackie McLean, Clark Terry, and Dave Brubeck. Benefit concerts occurred primarily in response to the major events in the Civil Rights movement—the Greensboro sit-ins, the Freedom Rides of 1961, the Birmingham movement and March on Washington in 1963, the Mississippi voter registration projects of 1964—and in the wake of rioting in major cities from 1965 to 1967. Although benefit concerts generated considerable amounts of money for civil rights

never used those." (Je ne pense pas avoir jamias prononcé une telle insanité: je connais les mots que j'empoie et je n'empoie jamais celui-là.) I thank Gabriel Solis for alerting me to this interview just before this article went to press. Monk, it seems, has been portrayed as more apolitical than he was.

organizations, the economic dimension alone cannot explain fully their purpose and popularity. Many of these events offered a dramatic forum in which northern audiences could hear directly from southern activists about day-to-day life on the front lines of the movement. They also gave movement organizations the opportunity to reap the symbolic rewards of celebrity association with the struggle and created social spaces in which musicians and audiences could feel as though they were doing their part to aid the southern struggle.

It is important to realize that many musicians were paid for participating in benefit concerts, although at a rate usually far below their customary fees. Organizers had to observe union rules requiring that a minimum number of musicians be paid scale before the union would grant permission for a benefit event. Local 802, the New York chapter of the American Federation of Musicians, was remarkably consistent on this point. As long as the required minimum number of musicians for a particular venue was paid scale, the union did not care whether additional numbers of musicians played for free. If the minimum was not met, approval was denied. In many cases, the musicians who were paid turned over their pay to the sponsoring organization—as did the musicians who played for a SNCC fund-raising dinner in 1965 (“April 25th Dinner 1965”).⁵

The “Salute to Southern Students,” held on the third anniversary of the Greensboro sit-ins, was SNCC’s first major fund-raising concert in the North. In the summer of 1962, when SNCC faced enormous expenses (especially bail costs and legal fees) after an unsuccessful campaign to desegregate public accommodations in Albany, Georgia,⁶ the organization opened offices in Chicago, Detroit, New York, Washington, Philadelphia, and Cleveland as part of a strategy to develop an independent network of financial support. James Forman and other members of SNCC’s leadership encouraged northern supporters to create “Friends of SNCC” groups to organize fund-raising parties, rallies, and concerts at which SNCC workers in the South would speak to audiences and inspire them to donate much-needed money to the organizations. Between June 1962 and December 1963, combined Friends of SNCC activities raised some \$359,000, enabling SNCC to establish new voter registration projects in a dozen Mississippi communities as well as in Georgia, Alabama (Selma), and Virginia (Danville) (Carson 1981, 70–71).

5. In 1960, union scale for a five-piece band for one night at a class A nightclub in New York was \$121.64 for three hours (“Adjusted Scales” 1960).

6. Aldon D. Morris (1984, 239–250) ascribes the failure to organizational rivalries between SNCC and the SCLC as well as tactical maneuvers on the part of the white power structure (see also Carson 1981, 56–65).

New York Friends of SNCC reported raising \$34,000 in 1963, and over the next two years, New York was consistently the largest single contributor to SNCC's national effort, averaging \$16,000 per month in 1965. Although the exact figures on money raised at the February 1, 1963, Carnegie Hall concert are unavailable, an SNCC-sponsored concert held on November 23 (the day after the Kennedy assassination), which included Clark Terry, Dave Brubeck, and Lambert, Hendricks, and Bavan, generated \$5,200; a single cocktail party in December generated \$12,000. Because the Carnegie Hall event was the first major SNCC fund-raiser in the North, and the single most gala event of the New York chapter's 1963 activities, it is likely that a considerable portion of the remaining \$16,800 was earned by the February 1 event ("All Star Concert" 1963; "Steering Committee" 1963).

Planning for the "Salute to Southern Students" began during the fall of 1962, when Bill Mahoney, a former Howard University student who had become an organizer for SNCC, sent letters to many entertainers and celebrities soliciting either their participation as performers or the use of their names as sponsors of the forthcoming event. Among those from the jazz world who were contacted were Nina Simone, Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln, Dave Brubeck, and Babatunde Olatunji (Leventhal 1962; McDew 1962; "Sponsors of Carnegie Hall" 1963). The list of performers was still not finalized in early January when Ella Baker, one of the SNCC's founding figures, sent a letter to Miles Davis requesting that he perform at the Carnegie Hall event. Baker's plea mentioned only Charles Mingus and Tony Bennett as performers who had already agreed to the February 1 performance (Baker 1963). Monk and Herbie Mann, it seems, agreed to perform sometime in late January 1963. Although Miles Davis turned down this invitation, he performed a benefit a year later for voter registration efforts in Mississippi and Louisiana sponsored by SNCC, CORE, and the NAACP (Davis 1989, 265-266). This concert is best known by the two albums released from the event, *My Funny Valentine* and *Four and More* (Columbia CK 40609).

At the "Salute to Students," Monk could have heard SNCC speakers explain the organization's current activities in Mississippi's Sunflower and LeFlore Counties, two of the most conservative counties in the state. Sunflower County was the home of segregationist Senator James Eastland, and LeFlore was the county in which Emmett Till had been lynched in 1955. In late 1962, Mississippi authorities, in retaliation for SNCC's voter registration campaign, cut off the distribution of federal surplus foodstuffs to the counties' most indigent residents. SNCC speakers consequently appealed to the Carnegie Hall audience for emergency food relief. Monk's awareness of recent events in Mississippi may have

prompted his decision to re-record his 1961 piece "Bright Mississippi" at a session held two weeks after the Carnegie Hall concert (see Ingo 8-LP [1961] and Alto 725-LP [1963]; Branch 1988, 713; Monk 1961; Monk 1963).

At Carnegie Hall, Monk also came face to face with the SNCC Freedom Singers, who, like all SNCC workers in 1963, were each earning ten dollars a week for services to the organization. The noted scholar and singer Bernice Johnson Reagon (1997), then a member of SNCC's Freedom Singers, recalls having dinner with Monk after the Carnegie Hall concert:

I remember Thelonious Monk after the Carnegie Hall concert. We went out to this restaurant. Thelonious Monk is this big brooding sort of [man]. And there's a darkness around him if you're close to him. . . . I was sitting in front of him, and I was sort of scared of him. And he said, "That stuff, it's not gonna work. That stuff you all are talking about, it's not gonna [work]. I mean, it's important and I'm here." And it was the nonviolence, the "redeeming your enemy through love" kind of part. He was like basically saying, "You all are gonna get yourselves killed walkin' out here in these streets in front of these crazy white people, your local crazy white people, who've got guns." He just shook his head at that. It felt like, "I will support, in any way, my people coming together and organizing, but you all are committing some kind of suicide, walking out here in front of these crazy white people."

In view of Monk's apolitical reputation, Reagon's recollections are especially interesting. It seems that, contrary to his public image, Monk *did* have definite opinions about the Civil Rights struggle, including questions about the viability of nonviolence as a strategy. He was also apparently quite affected by the events of the Civil Rights movement in 1963; of the five politically related concerts in which Monk participated (as far as I have been able to determine), three occurred in 1963 (see appendix).

Birmingham

To understand Monk's unusual political involvement, it is helpful to recall the history of the Civil Rights movement. The events in Birmingham in 1963 have been seen by many historians as a major turning point in the struggle. After the unsuccessful desegregation campaign in Albany, Georgia, in 1962, Martin Luther King Jr. and the SCLC were determined to mount a successful campaign in Birmingham, Alabama, long a bastion of racial conservatism. Known as "Project C" (for "confrontation"), its organizers sought to divide Birmingham's white power structure by combining carefully planned demonstrations with an effective economic boycott. The movement was to build in intensity over three phases. During the first phase, the economic boycott would begin, cou-

pled with small demonstrations and sit-ins; during the second phase, there would be mass marches on city hall; and during the third phase, high school and college students would be arrested in massive numbers. The primary architects of the plan were Martin Luther King Jr., Wyatt Walker, James Bevel, and Andrew Young, and they had specific goals: (1) desegregation of lunch counters in downtown Birmingham, (2) establishment of hiring procedures to ensure that blacks had the opportunity to compete fairly for nonmenial jobs, (3) the reopening of parks and playgrounds that the city had closed to avoid complying with a federal integration order, (4) elimination of charges against any arrested demonstrators, and (5) the appointment of a biracial commission to plan an orderly timetable for the desegregation of public schools (see Morris 1984, 250–274; Branch 1988, 725–802).⁷

The campaign began slowly in early April and soon was faced with the prospect of defying state injunctions that barred demonstrations. The Birmingham movement is most remembered for Martin Luther King Jr.'s letter from the Birmingham jail, which justified the moral necessity of the project despite criticism from many corners, and the horrific spectacle of the Birmingham police rolling children down the street with high pressure fire hoses and allowing police dogs to attack them. The resulting photographs and film footage, transmitted around the world, generated international outrage. On Friday, May 10, after an intensive week of news coverage and stalled negotiations, an agreement was reached to desegregate public accommodations in Birmingham. Sitting rooms would be integrated by Monday, May 13; a biracial committee would be convened in fifteen days; integrated washrooms and fountains would be provided after thirty days; and lunch counters would be desegregated in sixty days (Branch 1988, 738–740, 752–754, 756–802).

A month later, NAACP leader Medgar Evers was assassinated after launching a Birmingham-style campaign in Jackson, Mississippi. Indeed, in the ten weeks following the Birmingham settlement, there were some 758 demonstrations and 14,733 arrests in 186 U.S. cities. The momentum generated in Birmingham undoubtedly contributed to the success of the March on Washington on August 28, an event planned to put pressure on Congress to enact federal civil rights legislation. It was Birmingham, after all, and the Kennedy administration's fear that there would be many more such campaigns, that caused President Kennedy to announce on June 12 that he would be introducing federal civil rights legislation, as movement leaders had long been advocating.

The March on Washington itself featured folk and gospel performers:

7. Morris's reading of these events stresses the strategic planning of the movement; Branch implies that the strategy was more emergent and provides a day-to-day account.

the SNCC Freedom Singers, Joan Baez, Odetta, Bob Dylan, and Mahalia Jackson (Branch 1988, 872, 874, 876–877). Many jazz musicians, however, played at one of the two major benefit concerts held in New York a few days prior to the march: one at the Apollo Theater on August 23 (“Emancipation March” 1963), which included Monk, Coleman Hawkins, Art Blakey, Billy Eckstine, Ahmad Jamal, Quincy Jones, and Charlie Shavers, and another at the New York Polo Grounds on August 25, which included Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Duke Ellington, Billy Taylor, Nat “King” Cole, Sammy Davis Jr., and Frank Sinatra (“Giant 12 Hour” 1963). Clark Terry and Milt Hinton were unable to attend the march, but they paid for a bus that enabled others to attend (Terry 1997). Although Malcolm X dismissed the march as the “Farce on Washington,” he was there.

Even if Monk never read newspapers or books (as he once told a reporter for *Metronome* [Monk and Solomon 1961]), he loved television, which flooded America’s living rooms in 1963 with images of the Civil Rights movement. Monk watched the March on Washington on television with his manager, Harry Colomby. He reportedly said to Colomby, “I think I contributed as much [to the cause] with my music. I don’t have to be there marching” (quoted in Gourse 1997, 221). Two-and-a-half weeks later, four young women were killed when Birmingham’s Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was bombed, generating another round of worldwide outrage against U.S. racial policies. Monk responded by performing at a benefit for the families of the Birmingham victims on November 17 at Goodson’s Town Cabaret in the Bronx (“Bronx CORE” 1963). John Coltrane reacted to the bombing by recording “Alabama,” his extraordinary requiem for the Birmingham victims, on November 18. It is interesting that Monk decided to play for the Bronx CORE chapter, since many of his compatriots had performed in October at two highly publicized “Sit-Ins for Freedom” held at the well-known Five Spot in the East Village. More than forty musicians played at the Five Spot events (also organized by CORE), including Ron Carter, Eric Dolphy, Billy Taylor, Don Friedman, Ben Riley, Roy Haynes, Frank Strozier, Gary Peacock, Paul Bley, J. C. Monterose, and Zoot Sims (“CORE Benefit” 1963).

Peer Pressure

Despite Monk’s reputation for uniqueness, otherworldliness, and (at times) disconnectedness, his appearances at the various political concerts during 1963 reveal him as part of a larger group of musicians who donated their talents to fund-raising concerts in the heat of the Civil Rights movement. These concerts allowed the movement to capitalize on the

symbolic importance of jazz as a music of freedom, even rebellion. Politically related concerts also allowed musicians to bear witness to their social concerns without having to step outside the communicative medium in which they were most comfortable. Monk did not have to speak at these events; civil rights activists did the talking.

The role of peer pressure in influencing participation in these benefit concerts must also be considered. It was hard, after all, for northerners not to feel small when faced with the level of personal sacrifice, privation, and courage of the southern organizers and demonstrators. Vivid accounts of beatings, jailings, shootings, and death threats, which were reported at fund-raising events, not only provided harrowing accounts of southern organizing efforts on the front lines but played upon moral outrage and guilt. In a movement that constantly asked "Which side are you on?" even to its most committed activists, peer pressure was extremely important in challenging and inspiring people to carry on.

The moral responsibility that the movement placed on its supporters cast a long shadow. Organizers often conducted local civil rights marches with the express intention of challenging reluctant and (justifiably) terrified members of the black community who initially "sat on their porches" as activists marched by (Reagon 1997). Shaming people into action was thus a frequent component of the movement's *modus operandi*. Charles Neblett (1997), one of the SNCC Freedom Singers, describes the way in which Malcolm X was shamed into coming to Selma, Alabama, in January 1965:

[Malcolm X] walked up to us and invited us to his mosque. We went there and he sat there, and he looked at us. He said, "You're very brave, but you're very foolish." I think they really had a love-hate relationship with us. They really admired the people using nonviolence on the line. So we told them, say "Look, you guys up here doin' all the talkin', why don't you go down there and do something?" And you know Malcolm came . . . yeah, he went to Selma. We challenged him, say, "Okay, you talkin' all bad up north. Now why don't you come on down to Mississippi where we're at, we'll find out who's bad!"

Bernice Johnson Reagon (1997) amplified Neblett's point by explaining how Nina Simone was pressured into going south:

We really understood that there was a lot of rhetoric. And rhetoric is very important. But we also thought that there was something else happening, where there were hundreds and thousands of people saying, "I will walk this space in my town and you will either *move* or kill me, this day." And that's a different kind of witness. It takes a different kind of step. I think that's one of the challenges we made. I can remember Cordell [Reagon, founder of the SNCC Freedom Singers]—it was so embarrassing. Nina

Simone was trying to say her contribution was through her music. And Cordell said, "But if you come down to the struggle you will be involved *beyond* singing. Singing is all right, but you need to put your body on the line." And she came.

It is not hard to see how intimidating the moral challenges of front-line organizers could be. Benefit concerts, in many ways, offered musicians an easy way out.⁸

In the wake of his visible participation in benefit concerts in 1963, Monk was probably inundated with requests for politically related events in the next few years. Perhaps by 1965, when Monk told Valerie Wilmer that he was not "thinking that race thing right now," he had been overwhelmed by political organizations and their requests for benefits, as well as by more activist musicians and their demands to speak out. By 1965, a considerable portion of the northern audience had also grown weary of political appeals and benefit concerts.

It would be too simple, however, to claim that Monk participated in political fund-raising concerts only as a response to peer pressure. Monk, after all, appeared in one of the first jazz fund-raisers held in New York after the Greensboro sit-ins. At a Sit-In for CORE held at the Village Gate on August 7, 1960, Monk joined fellow instrumentalists Clark Terry, Jimmy Giuffre, and Bill Henderson in a performance (McDonald 1960). Six years earlier, on May 25, 1954, Monk had participated in a "Salute to Paul Robeson" concert that was part of an international campaign to pressure the State Department to reinstate Robeson's passport, which had been rescinded in 1950 after the singer had publicly protested President Truman's military policies in Korea. Robeson had pointedly suggested that "the place for the Negro people to fight for their freedom is here at home" (quoted in Duberman 1988, 388, 425). Monk's career had been floundering since his New York City cabaret card was revoked in 1951, so perhaps the pianist identified with Robeson's plight.⁹ Moreover, it was a chance for Monk to assume a visible, public, performing role during a period when jobs were scarce.

In 1963, Monk was nearing the apogee of his career. Having recently signed a recording contract with Columbia and soon to be featured on the

8. Jazz musicians were not prominent among the celebrities who traveled south to aid the movement. One exception is Al Hibbler, who was arrested many times during the Birmingham campaign (Ward 1998, 297–298).

9. Monk was arrested for heroin possession while sitting in a car with Bud Powell. Although Monk was not the user, he refused to blame Powell for the presence of the drug and consequently was convicted of narcotics possession. His conviction, in turn, made him ineligible for a cabaret card (Gourse 1997, 86–87). On the history of the cabaret card, see Chevigny (1991).

cover of *Time* magazine (Farrell 1964), Monk's decision to perform in a series of politically related events in 1963 was likely motivated by many factors—political convictions and peer pressure among them.

Conclusions

Although benefit concerts accounted for only a small part of Monk's activities as a professional musician—which more typically emphasized headlining engagements at major clubs, making records, composing, and touring domestically and internationally—when placed in a larger context, they illustrate Monk interacting as best he could with the Civil Rights movement blazing around him. By calling attention to this aspect of Monk's career, I do not mean to suggest that, contrary to accepted opinion, he was a deeply political man; rather, I wish to show that the force of the Civil Rights movement was so powerful and pervasive that even someone like Monk, who appeared to be exclusively devoted to music, could not help but be affected by it. Although the romantic vision of Monk as a self-contained genius has been crucial to his cultural legitimization and to the legitimization of jazz in general, a more historical view must look at the ways in which his life, and the lives of other jazz musicians, materially intersected with forces beyond the immediate world of music. The peak years of the Civil Rights movement (1954–65) coincided with an extraordinary musical florescence in jazz. It is as though musicians were challenged to prove their artistic worth and the excellence of African-American music by the bravery and moral example of the Civil Rights movement.

The current state of jazz is often lamented by those who lived through these golden years, when Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Art Blakey, and John Coltrane were headliners at major clubs and the jazz audience eagerly awaited their every recording release. I do not for a moment believe that there are not musicians today with the same level of musical talent as these giants, but it is clear that historical circumstances have changed. Jazz history has traditionally favored the documentation of individual creative lives rather than the larger social forces shaping the creative community, in deference to the legacy of absolute music. It is as though the collectivization of experience would somehow diminish the luster and individuality of the music's cultural heroes. I would argue the opposite. As the golden years recede into the past, illuminating the complex social forces operating on musicians—even such an iconoclast as Thelonious Monk—can only help us better understand the magnitude of their achievements.

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 APPENDIX

Monk's Participation in Fund-Raising Concerts, New York City, 1954–1963

May 24, 1954, Renaissance Casino

Salute to Paul Robeson, sponsored by the international campaign for the restoration of Robeson's passport

Participants: Leon Bib, Alice Childress, Lorraine Hansberry, Julian Mayfield, Thelonious Monk, Karen Morely, Pete Seeger (Duberman 1988, 425)

August 7, 1960, Village Gate

Sit-In for CORE, sponsored by CORE

Participants: Jimmy Giuffre, Bill Henderson, Thelonious Monk, Clark Terry (McDonald 1960)

February 1, 1963, Carnegie Hall

A Salute to Southern Student, sponsored by SNCC

Participants: Tony Bennett, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, Herbie Mann Sextet, Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk, the SNCC Freedom Singers ("A Salute to Southern Students" 1963)

August 23, 1963, Apollo Theatre

Emancipation March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, sponsored by NALC and A. Philip Randolph

Participants: Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers; Tony Bennett; Cozy Cole; Billy Eckstine; the Golden Chords; Johnny Hartman; Coleman Hawkins; Ahmad Jamal; Quincy Jones; Lambert, Hendricks and Bavan; Herbie Mann; Carmen McRae; Thelonious Monk; Charlie Shavers; Dave "Alleycat" Thorne; Teri Thornton ("Emancipation March" 1963)

November 17, 1963, Goodson's Town Cabaret

Bronx CORE Cocktail Sip, sponsored by CORE-Birmingham Victims

Participants: Lloyd Davis, Chamber Jazz Quartet, Joseph Gula, the Hamilton Sisters, Karl Martin, Thelonious Monk, Marie Simmons, William 88 Keys & Orchestra ("Bronx CORE" 1963)