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Timme Rosenkrantz & Fradley Garner: Harlem Jazz Adventures (Scarecrow Press) Book

If you belong to the 60-plus generation, there's a good chance that you know who Timme Rosenkrantz was. If you are younger, and know who Timme was, there's a good chance that you are more than ordinarily interested in jazz.

In 1964, *Dus med Jazzen* (Getting Familiar with Jazz) came out, one of the best Danish jazz books ever. This was Timme Rosenkrantz's jazz memoir of the years he spent in New York City. In 1934, he crossed the Atlantic and was soon engulfed in the city's jazz life – particularly jazz life in the district of Harlem. The book is jam-packed with tales from an exciting time for jazz. As a minor curiosity, a very young Dan Turell visited Timme at his residence in Hellerup in 1964, in connection with the book's publication, to interview Timme for *Gentofte* magazine. The article can be found in the book *Charlie Parker i Istedgade*, a collection of Turell's jazz articles. The article ends by saying that Timme was going to translate the book into English, for publication in the USA. It took almost 50 years for that to happen.

American journalist and Danish resident Fradley Garner has finished the job, a task requested by Timme himself in the late 1960s, shortly before he died. The difference between Timme's original Danish book and the new English edition is that Garner has investigated some of those many stories. He has searched back, and gotten people around Timme to prove or disprove the many stories. For example, there's the story of *Timme Rosenkrantz & His Barrelhouse Barons*. This was a 78-rpm shellac record that Timme made in 1938 with, among others, tenor saxophonist Don Byas and Basie drummer Jo Jones. Timme did not play, but was the initiator, and Timme had taken the music with him from home. It was the Danish pianist and composer Leo Mathisen who wrote the numbers. In the book there are no bounds to that record's significance, and Timme mentions that both *Down Beat* and *Metronome* chose them as records of the year, which probably never happened; jazz historian and journalist Dan Morgenstern plowed through the magazines from those years and did not find any mention of Timme at all. This does not mean that Timme Rosenkrantz always left footprints in jazz that were quickly whisked away. (His record was released on the RCA Victor black label in 1938. –fG)

Timme met a long row of the greatest names in jazz. He danced cheek-to-cheek with Billie Holiday; he was the first to record pianist Erroll Garner. Together with the singer Inez Cavanaugh — they became sweethearts — he opened the Mel-O-Dee record store in Harlem. It stayed open only a year before he had to close it. On opening day, Louis Armstrong himself came and bought up the entire inventory.

So the book is filled with amazing stories from a notable Danish jazz personality who forms friendships with many of the greatest jazz musicians from the younger years of jazz. There are many stories about the nightly excursions to the small and humble jazz holes of New York, where bad whiskey was forced down with a kind of pleasure. There are the big ballrooms where Timme for a time was a gigolo (professional dance partner). In short, the

book is a fantastic document of a bygone era, when a white Dane ventured to Harlem and became part of the district's jazz and nightlife.

With Fradley Garner's fine translation and the follow-up cross-references, so much new material has been added to the little masterpiece that it's unavoidable for the jazz freak. New readers can decide whether they want to track down the Danish book in an antikvariat (rare bookstore) or read this one. There is also a thorough and exhaustive discography.