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Three Wishes: An Intimate Look At Jazz Greats



Synopsis

An unprecedented, behind-the-scenes look at jazz legends—In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Pannonica de Koenigswarter, known as Nica, was a constant and benevolent presence on the thriving New York jazz scene. Known as the Jazz Baroness (she was born into the wealthy Rothschild family and later married a French aristocrat) she befriended such giants as Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, Barry Harris, Art Blakey, Miles Davis, Bud Powell, and many more. She inspired over twenty jazz compositions, bailed musicians out of jail, and even acted as a booking agent. She also collected wishes. Over the course of a decade, Koenigswarter asked three hundred musicians what their three wishes in life were, jotting them all down in a notebook. At the same time she took hundreds of candid photographs, saving them all. In *Three Wishes*, Koenigswarter's forays into the psyches and lives of these legendary jazz artists are made available in America for the first time. With a foreword by celebrated jazz critic Gary Giddins, and an introduction from Nica's granddaughter, Nadine de Koenigswarter, providing rare insights into the mysterious baroness's life, this funny, eclectic, and moving compilation is a uniquely intimate look into the immortals of the classic era of jazz, and a must-have for any fan or aficionado.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Harry N. Abrams; 9.1.2008 edition (September 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0810972352

ISBN-13: 978-0810972353

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.8 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (33 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #595,756 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #163 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Music > Biographies > Jazz #747 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music >

Musical Genres > Jazz #1170 in Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Individual

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Customer Reviews

This is, of course, a collection of photographs from the jazz past. Though the images are not dated, it seems that most were taken in the 1950's-70's. There have been a number of books featuring pictures of jazz artists by professional photographers such as William Claxton and Herman Leonard.

What I like about these are they are not glamour shots but for the most part they seem to be just candid poses that have not been published previously. The three wishes part of the book seemed to get responses ranging from modest hopes for better mastery of their instruments and more creativity to financial success. Of course most know that Bird died at the Baroness de Koenigswarter's Stanhope apartment. She has had many songs named in her honor such as Nica's Dream and Nica's Tempo. Some of the pictures included are of Pepper Adams, Cannonball, Art Blakey, Roy Brooks, Donald Byrd, Paul Chambers, Sonny Clark, Klook, Trane, Junior Cook, A.T., Walter Davis, Jr., Diz, K.D., Joe Farrell, Johnny Griffin, Slide Hampton, Bill Hardman, Barry Harris, Hawk, Elmo Hope, Philly Joe Jones, Wynton Kelly, Mingus, Blue Mitchell, Hank Mobley, Lee Morgan, Miles, Monk, Oscar Pettiford, Bud Powell, Freddie Redd, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, Charlie Rouse, Horace Silver, Sonny Stitt, Clark Terry, Lucky Thompson, Bobby Timmons, Wilbur Ware. The preceeding is truly a list of greats and there are many I didn't mention. Go for it.

Slightly larger than a trade size book. Soft but substantial cover, 305 pages plus index. For those of you who enjoy jazz this is something that should be on your library shelf. As the title infers, a lot of the leading musicians of the day (beginning in 1961 through 1967 in New York) were asked what their three wishes were. The answers are very enlightening and always entertaining. An example is this from Les Spann: "That the people of the world understand each other. That I could look forward to consistent growth of perception till I die. That I could eat chicken as often as I want". Another is this from the bassist John Ore: "To be able to play well. To be all over the world, in good health. To have a time-machine". And this from Stan Getz: "Justice. Truth. Beauty". The wishes from these musicians give an insight into their lives and their aspirations and outlooks. The photographs, which are very atmospheric, are what really set this book apart from other books about this period. The author, who has quite a few compositions named in her honor, has a unique vantage point and uses it well. They aren't formally composed shots but rather pictures taken very informally. There is a short biography of the author by her granddaughter and an introduction by Gary Giddins. For the jazz lover this book is a cut above because of the rapport between the author and her subjects.

Nica is a well known name to anyone with a mild interest in jazz, especially modern jazz. Her name features in classic tunes: Nica's Dream, Nica's Tempo, Pannonica and countless others. This book offers some of the most incredible candid photography of those that helped define modern jazz (Thelonious Monk, Barry Harris, Tommy Flannagan, Sonny Clark, Charlie Rouse, Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis, Coleman Hawkins, John Coltrane, and many more.), and simultaneously lets us into

their minds through Nica's asking them for their "3 Wishes". These lists are incredible for their depth, insight and candor from each musician who contributed. A wonderful book told through the eyes of a great patron and friend of the greatest jazz has produced.

Historical photos of the time period regarding jazz writings of Monk, and the lady, Ms.

Koeningswater who wrote the book- "Nica's Dream,"...A visual of the musicians that wandered through her life. Yes, amateurish...but this is what makes this book so wonderful- an honest history of what was transpiring in jazz during those years.

In 2008, a fascinating document of jazz history was revealed to the public: Three Wishes: An Intimate Look at Jazz Greats, a collection of photographs of jazz musicians in New York taken by The Jazz Baroness, Pannonica de Koenigswarter (or Nica). In the 1960s, She 300 jazz musicians (the noteworthy, such as John Coltrane, and many others less known) what their three wishes were. The answers range from the profound to the pedestrian to the puckish to the prurient. Two sets of answers stand out to me: Saxophonist, Ornette Coleman: 1. Eternal life. 2. Love. 3. Happiness. Pianist, Mary Lou Williams: 1. To love God more. 2. To do His will. 3. That he should save souls through me. Think on these things. Nica also photographed the jazz folk she loved and supported, using her inexpensive camera, giving the photos a raw, granular, and "you-are-there" quality. This unique book is a testimony to yearning, lament, and hope: a unique window into the jazz world of a generation ago.

I can't recall how I found this book but am so glad I did. It's a great retrospective by the author who was right there in the middle of the Golden Age of Jazz and experienced this era personally together with many jazz greats of the period. Pannonica de Koenigswarter was the subject of a song composed by Horace Silver called "Nica's Dream." She was a dear friend of Thelonious Monk and Charlie Parker, among others, and a great patron of jazz. Her acquaintance with these great jazz icons gave her access to some of the most treasured jazz musicians in the world. The premise of the book is the author asks her subjects to tell her what they would do if they had "three wishes" which, in turn, allows us a peak into their minds and hearts for a fleeting moment in time. This is a very entertaining compilation and unlike anything I've ever read. I recommend it highly for jazz enthusiasts everywhere.

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