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THURS., NOV. 5, 1992 - 8PM

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Bucky CALABRESE
Jackie WILLIAMS
Peter BERNSTEIN
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ZWINGENBERGER

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This event is made possible with funds from the
New York State Council on the Arts and National Endowment for the Arts
Produced in cooperation with Pace University Performing Arts,
Dr. Nicholas Catalano, University Director
THE NEW YORK AMSTERDAM NEWS

Dorothy Donegan: whirlwind virtuoso among jazz pianists

By CLARENCE ATKINS
Special to the AmNews

According to Webster, "phenomenal" means extraordinary or marvelous. More specifically translated, it is Dorothy Donegan. She is in every respect and by any standard one of the gems of our treasured musical legacy, who has enjoyed years of acclaim from both her musical peers and contemporaries.

A native of Chicago, she began her piano studies as a child. With her mother's support, she attended the Chicago Conservatory of Music for four years. As a teenager, she began playing in dance bands around Chicago. There are allegations that Art Tatum (the pre-eminent master of jazz piano) heard about young Dorothy and tracked her down. It is also fact that they enjoyed a close friendship which was fueled by their mutual respect for the musical ideas of each other — "genius plus genius equals majesty." Donegan has always avowed Tatum as her major influence - a claim which is conspicuous by its presence whenever you hear her play.

Donegan arrived impressively on the local scene in the 1960s. This was also a period in which two other female pianists were enjoying flourishing careers appearing at such clubs as Cafe Society and The Embers: Mary Lou Williams and Hazel Scott. The emergence of Donegan made this a strongly competitive triad. Donegan was readily distinguished by her penchant for including passages from the classics in her jazz arrangements.

Critics have suggested that her forceful employment of the foot pedal and her singing distracted from her virtuosity. Nonetheless, this veteran of many years as one of the virtuosos of piano continues to excite audiences.

Recently at Fat Tuesday's it was business as usual, as she literally mesmerized the capacity crowd with an incredible display of swing piano. Her present trio, rounded out by John Burrell's bass and the drums of the incomparable Ray Mosca, is clearly the most proficient of her many groups.

The repertoire on this occasion, as always, included an Ellington medley and standards from Cole Porter such as "I Get a Kick Out of You" and "Love for Sale," embellished with classical passages from masters like Ravel, Rachmaninoff and Schubert. Her display of fire and energy throughout the performance delighted the enthusiastic gathering as they responded with lavish applause.

Devotees of the art form should note that Donegan returns to the local scene this Thursday, appearing at Pace College in downtown Manhattan. This will be a segment of Jack Kleinsinger's "Highlights in Jazz," billed as "Women in Jazz," featuring the Dorothy Donegan Trio and singer Chris Conner in a tribute to the late and legendary Sylvia Sims.

The Pace College downtown theatre is located at 3 Spruce Street, just off Park Row, opposite City Hall. The number to call for information is (212) 346-1715.
The incomparable Donegan

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As a teenager, she began playing in dance bands around Chicago. There are stories that Art Tatum (the preeminent master of Jazz piano) heard about young Dorothy and tracked her down. It is also fact that Donegan and Tatum enjoyed a close friendship which was fueled by their mutual respect for the musical ideas of each other: "genius plus genius equals majesty."

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DONEGAN