

ALBERT AYLER, 36, JAZZ SAXOPHONIST

Cleveland Rites Are Set for Artist Who Drowned Here

Special to The New York Times

CLEVELAND, Dec. 3 — A funeral service will be held tomorrow afternoon in the chapel of the Highland Park Cemetery here for Albert Ayler, who emerged in the 1960's as one of the most prominent musicians in the avant-garde jazz movement. He was 36 years old.

Mr. Ayler's body was found in New York City's East River on the morning of Nov. 25. He had been living in Brooklyn.

He was born here, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Ayler who survive. His father, a musician, started him on the saxophone at the age of 8. He went on to the Bennie Miller Music School here and then into the Army, where his talent was immediately tapped for service bands.

Mr. Ayler's last two years of Army duty were in France, where he was able to spend much of his off-duty time in Paris jazz clubs.

Entering civilian life in 1961 he soon made his mark among the cognoscenti of avant-garde jazz. Don Heckman, a critic, described his work as "music filled with simple spiritual-like tunes, march themes and melodies that are singable and directly communicate both feeling and spirit." "But contrasting with these relatively placid sections," he said, "are long stretches of almost overwhelmingly powerful energy and sound."

'Free Spiritual Music'

Nat Hentoff, another jazz writer, quoted Ayler on Ayler:

"It's really free spiritual music, not just free music. We're trying to rejuvenate that old New Orleans feeling that music can be played collectively and with free form."

Major influences on him were Lester Young, Charlie Parker and Sidney Bechet, of whom Mr. Ayler said:

"For me, he represented the true spirit, the full force of life that many older musicians had and which many musicians today don't have."

Another critic, Martin Williams, found in his music "a kind of bizarre beauty."

Mr. Ayler was enthusiastically received on tours in France, West Berlin and Scandinavia. He returned to France by invitation last July.

When John W. Coltrane, the 40-year-old jazz saxophonist, died in 1967, Mr. Ayler composed "Truth Is Marching" for the musical element in a funeral service that drew hundreds of jazz musicians to St. Peter's Lutheran Church in New York.

Mr. Ayler's success, in the estimation of his fellow musicians, was never matched by commercial triumphs.

"He was truly a genius," his father mused today. "Some make it and some don't. He didn't want to push out in front. That's all he wanted—to play. He had all the title but not a dime."

In addition to his parents, Mr. Ayler is survived by his widow, the former Eileen Benton, from whom he was separated; a daughter, Desirée, and a brother, Donald, also a jazz musician.

The New York Times

Published: December 4, 1970

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