



Kappa Kappa Psi - Alpha Rho

Clark Terry



Born: 14 December 1920

Initiated into Alpha Rho: 9 April 1970, Green Country Jazz Festival

"He's the greatest!" beamed a 12-year-old youngster referring to jazz legend Clark Terry. The great trumpeter had just helped the young drummer discover how to "kick" a big band into the final chorus of *Take the A Train*.

Clark, though best known as a headliner at the world's premier jazz events as well as a TV personality featured on such national programs as Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*, is one of jazzdom's finest educators.

As Director of the Clark Terry Great Plains Jazz Camp, an advisor to the National Association of Jazz Educators, and a much sought-after clinician, Clark Terry is often referred to as "America's #1 Jazz Educator." He is also the noted author of *Let's Talk Trumpet: From Legit to Jazz*, *Interpretation of the Jazz Language*, and *Clark Terry's System of Circular Breathing for Woodwind and Brass Instruments*.

Clark, one of contemporary music's great innovators, is also justly celebrated for his great technical virtuosity, swinging lyricism, and impeccable good taste. Combining these with the gifts of a great dramatist, Clark Terry is a master storyteller whose spellbinding musical "tales" leave audiences thrilled and always wanting more!

Clark's sunny, upbeat personality is reflected directly in his playing and is a major factor in explaining the warm love and affection that fans, critics, and fellow musicians have for both the man and his music. Indeed, it is Clark's undaunted enthusiasm for life, as well as his commitment to musical excellence, that make him such a charismatic performer and teacher.

Clark's musical credits, though well known, deserve review. In the 1940's, after serving in the Navy, Clark's musical star rose rapidly with successful stints in the bands of Charlie Barnet, Charlie Ventura, Eddie Vinson, and then, in 1948, the great Count Basie. Along the way, Clark, in addition to his outstanding musical contribution to these bands, was exerting a positive influence on younger musicians such as Miles Davis and Quincy Jones, both of whom credit Clark as a formidable influence during the early stages of their careers.

In 1951, Clark was asked to join Duke Ellington's orchestra where he stayed for eight years as a featured soloist. "The time with Ellington was like college," Clark recalls warmly. With Ellington, Clark's star burned brightly on tour and on record.

Now an international star, Clark was courted by the National Broadcasting Company in New York to join its musical staff. Accepting the challenge of becoming the first black musician on the NBC payroll, Clark soon became a television star as one of the spotlighted players in the *Tonight Show* band. It was during this period that Clark scored a smash hit as a singer with his irrepressible *Mumbles*.

When the *Tonight Show* moved west to Los Angeles, Clark made the decision to remain in New York to pursue a busy schedule as a studio musician and as a jazz star in demand not only in the States but throughout the world.

In recent years, Clark has piloted one of today's sassiest large ensembles, Clark Terry's Big Band, as well as the always effervescent quintet, Clark Terry and his Jolly Giants.

Clark's considerable accomplishments as a jazz innovator and educator of the highest rank have earned him an impressive array of honors. The University of New Hampshire bestowed its Doctorate in Humane Letters on Clark, while the Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, the national music fraternity, made him the first jazz artist to be honored with its highest award for distinguished service to music. The U.S. State Department selected Clark (and his band) for tours to the Middle East and Africa as American ambassadors of good will. Clark was also inducted into Kansas City's Jazz Hall of Fame; the formal presentation was made by Johnny Carson on national television during a *Tonight Show* broadcast.

Along with the honors, recordings, and sell-out appearances at festivals and concerts, Clark has focused increased attention on his activities as a jazz educator. His dedication to the task of passing the torch of musical improvisation on to the next generation is second to none. Indeed, his great rapport with students is summed up not only in great music but in great smiles as the master and his students share in creating jazz--the sound of surprise!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clark Terry" in a cursive style, followed by a stylized flourish.