

VAN PHILLIPS 1926

van Phillips: Alexander Van Cleve Phillips, alt. Bruno Cantaluppi, pno.

Copenhagen, May 1st, 1926

2508 ax I wonder where my Baby is to night (sic)

Polyphon X.S 49565

NOTE: The label states "DANISH SAXOPHON SOLO" (yet the word DANISH may not refer to the nationality of the artist). Anyway, Phillips was an American, visiting Copenhagen while working in London with the Savoy Havana Band. This item is included since Professor Bruno Cantaluppi (Italian immigrant and firmly based in Denmark) was also playing for an unknown period with Kai Julian's Orchestra and had other yet uncharted engagements in Denmark. Matrix 2508 includes a strain of "Liebestraum", while the reverse side, matrix 2507 ("Poëm" by the same duo), is of no interest.



Phillips (1905-92) was brought to London in 1925 to join the Savoy Havana Band. Around 1927 he became a recording studio manager at Columbia Records, working with the bands of Jack Payne, Billy Cotton, Ambrose, and Henry Hall. His recordings were highly praised for their innovative arrangements and musicianship. Also a Musicians' Union executive. His career soon involved West End shows (beginning 1931), and British films also used his skills. Later work for Richard Tauber, Jack Buchanan a.o. BBC broadcasts and a 39-week series for Radio Luxembourg further enhanced his public profile, and in the 1950s he composed the distinctive music for the landmark BBC Light Programme radio series "Journey into Space". In later life, his hobby of travel photography took over completely, and his "Traveller's Book of Photography" 1966 sold over 150,000 copies. He was active in this field until retiring 1987.

In London or sometimes Hayes, van Phillips recorded with Savoy Havana Band (1923-26), Gilt-Edged Four (1925-26), possibly Ramon Newton (1925-26), Melville Gideon (1928), Lesley Sarony (1928), Anona Winn (1928), Charleston Serenaders (1928), possibly Gracie Fields (1929), Len Fillis's Entertainers (1929), Four Bright Sparks (1929-34), possibly Harry Shalson (1929), and Fred Astaire (1930).

Reports have it that Phillips was a sensation in Copenhagen from the moment he put his reed to his lips and that he extended his stay to fully enjoy the stir he caused. Maybe his technical skills (although Phillips improvises, the style is highly corny and novelty like) were reflected in that appraisal, but his tone and taste leave rather much to be desired - in the above mentioned recording of "Poëm", the outcome is as near a circus saxophone parody as anything else.

On the other hand (the time considered), Cantaluppi displays rather surprising skills during his piano accompaniment which includes syncopated phrasings, a stop chorus, a little ad-libbing, and some rhythmic touch.



Sheet music composed/autographed by Cantaluppi in 1942. So far, very little is known about Cantaluppi.