

*Saturday, August 27, 2005*



In spite of their age the Blind Boys of Alabama are at a creative peak now. The group formed at the Alabama Institute for the Negro Blind in 1939. Three of the founding members Clarence Fountain, Jimmy Carter and George Scott are still alive and joined by more recent arrivals. They are highly productive in the recent years. I just purchased their latest cd *Live at the Apollo hall* which is the follow-up of *There will be a light*. This cd has a nice cover with a Chagall- like ink drawing made by one of the band members. Both are collaborations with a younger soul singer Ben Harper. His high sweet voice contrasts well with the harmonies from the deep and raw throats of these gospel dynasours.

The cd is born out of an initial studio jam session, all sitting in half a circle while Harper is playing slide guitar on his lap. Ben is steering at the helm while the Boys provide a powerful vocal motor. The live cd is recorded in the famous Apollo Hall in Harlem, NYC.



I saw the Blind Boys twice; in Paradiso and at the North Sea Jazz Festival. And I am happy that I could make some sketches amidst a wild clapping and dancing audience. I also saw a concert of the Blind Boys of Mississippi their colleagues of another blind institute.