

# JerseyJazz

Journal of the New Jersey Jazz Society

Dedicated to the performance,

promotion and preservation of jazz.

Volume 45 • Issue 3  
March 2017

Adrian Cunningham



Paul and Joe Midiri



Will and Peter Anderson



Dan Levinson



Photos by Lynn Redmile

## Clarinet Marmalade!

*"Just the kind of jam you go for..."*

Six top bandleaders are set to salute the immortal clarinetist **Pee Wee Russell** at the NJJS's **48<sup>th</sup> Annual Memorial Stomp** on March 26.

See pages 19 and 24 for details.

# All Things Swing

## The 48th Annual Pee Wee Russell Memorial Stomp

By Mitchell Seidel

By all indications, people should not be listening to swing music these days. To start with, the basic format is nearly as old as jazz itself, dating back to the first third of the twentieth century. Then there's the problem of style. Swing was designed to propel dancers across a floor, with rhythm and melody. That's hardly a formula found in most venues today. Modern audiences grew up on the sound of electric guitars and horns are only used as embellishments to arrangements of pop tunes. The odd trumpet or saxophone may sneak its way in, but drums, guitars and electronic keyboards are the driving forces today.

The question remains, then: why is swing still around? What is it about this musical kudzu that keeps it coming back despite countless applications of critical weed-killer? The history of jazz is littered with astute or absurd essays about why one form of it or another has "died," giving way to another incarnation of improvised music "discovered" by the next generation of jazz taste-makers. Yet this damn swing stuff keeps coming against the tide. Hasn't anyone told the musicians who play the stuff or the audiences, from teenagers to great-grandparents, who listen to it, that older styles of jazz are dead?

Fortunately, for the last 100 years, nobody's bothered to listen to the critics and naysayers. How else can you explain that the period of modern history dubbed "The Jazz Age" only lasted about a dozen years after the first recognized jazz recording? As for the "Big Band Era," it lasted only slightly longer than 15 years before vanishing into postwar suburbia.

That doesn't mean swing music didn't have a lasting effect on the jazz cannon. Well after its departure as America's popular music, swing lives on with big bands of various stature and small group performances by younger players who enjoy the practice of melody and harmony. And think about the music that emerged from that period: "Sing, Sing, Sing," "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," "One O'Clock Jump," "Take the A Train." You'd be hard-pressed not to hear such music at modern day big band concerts. While the likes of Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington and Count Basie are gone, so-called "ghost bands" performing their repertoires continue to attract audiences who weren't born when the music's popularity was its zenith.

Also worth noting is the continued demand for "new" recordings from the swing era. Thanks to the detective work of various music archivists and institutions, we always seem to have access to previously undiscovered performances from previous eras. In addition, the younger performers are always releasing their own works. Say what you will of the phonograph record versus digital recordings, modern technology puts older styles of jazz as close as a compact disc, laptop computer or cellular telephone.

### March 26, 2017 Pee Wee Russell Memorial Stomp

Band Personnel/Schedule

Noon – 1 PM

#### The Midiri Brothers Quintet

Joe Midiri, *saxes/clarinet*  
Paul Midiri, *percussion*  
Danny Tobias, *cornet*  
Pat Mercuri, *guitar*  
Joe Hegyi, *bass*

1:15 – 2:15 PM

#### Peter & Will Anderson Quintet

Pete Anderson *saxes/clarinet*  
Will Anderson *saxes/clarinet*  
Adam Moezinia, *guitar*  
Neil Miner, *bass*  
Phil Stewart, *drums*

2:15 – 2:30 PM

#### Intermission

Presentation of 2016 Musician of the Year  
and Jazz Advocate awards, 50/50 raffle

2:30 – 3:30 PM

#### Dan Levinson's Russell of Spring Band

Dan Levinson, *clarinet/sax*  
Randy Reinhart, *cornet*  
Harvey Tibbs, *trombone*  
Mark Shane, *piano*  
Molly Ryan, *guitar/vocals*  
Brian Nalepka, *bass*  
Kevin Dorn, *drums*

4 – 5 PM

#### Professor Cunningham and His Old School

Adrian Cunningham, *clarinet/vocals*  
Jon Challoner, *trumpet*  
Randy Reinhart, *trombone*  
Oscar Perez, *piano*  
John Merrill, *guitar*  
Paul Wells, *drums*

As has been repeated many times over the years, good music is good music, and nowhere is that more evident in the modern day purveyors of swing. Their respect for the compositions that came out of Broadway and the bandstands during the swing era enriches their repertoires with new renditions of jazz classics. The very nature of a solo means that it is new music unto itself. And the presentation of a tune by an ensemble, the arrangement, always breathes new life into the music. 

For this year's 48th Annual Pee Wee Russell Memorial Stomp we've booked some of the best of those purveyors of modern swing as can be heard on any bandstand. Here are brief capsules of the leaders who will perform four hours of swinging jazz on March 26 at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany. See inset for complete listings of band personnel. (Ticket info on page 19.)

#### ■ THE MIDIRI BROTHERS

Paul and Joe Midiri have made music the focus of their lives since the identical twins graduated Glassboro State College in the mid 1980s. After spending nearly a decade working in Philadelphia, New York and Atlantic City they began to branch out. They performed first at The Great Connecticut Jazz Festival and in 2002 made their west coast debut. Since that time they've been featured at many West Coast jazz festivals, including Mammoth Lakes Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, The Pismo Jubilee By The Sea Jazz Fest, Redwood Coast Music Fest and Sun Valley Swing-n-Dixie Jazz Jubilee, as well as the Central Illinois Jazz Fest in Decatur, Ill. The Midiri Brothers have also played for many jazz clubs from Chicago to Florida.

The *L.A. Jazz Magazine* enthused "Catch them whenever you can!" and added, "their sextet is one of the most exciting small group swing units around today."

#### ■ PETER AND WILL ANDERSON

The afternoon's second set of twins (surely a first) hail from Washington, DC, but moved to New York City to attend Juilliard. Peter and Will have performed with the Jimmy Heath Big Band, Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Village Vanguard Orchestra, Wycliffe Gordon, Cecile McLorin Salvant, Paquito D'Rivera, Kenny Barron, Bob Wilber, and Albert "Tootie" Heath. They've headlined at The Blue Note, Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, New Orleans Jazz Festival, Sarasota Florida Jazz Festival, South Carolina's Jazz Corner, Seattle's Triple Door, Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center, DC's Blues Alley, the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame and the Arizona Music Festival.

Their ensemble has performed in over 35 U.S. States, toured Japan, and been featured four times in NYC's famed "Highlights in Jazz" series, alongside Lou Donaldson, Ken Peplowski and Warren Vaché. As guest clinicians, Peter and Will have visited Temple University, Xavier University, University of South Florida, University of Central Oklahoma, Florida State University, Ohio State University, Michigan State University, University of Scranton and others.

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## ALL THINGS SWING

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### ■ DAN LEVINSON

The *Mississippi Rag* calls Dan Levinson the “in-demand reedman.” A specialist in traditional jazz and swing, Dan is indeed one of the most prolific musicians on the scene today. During a 20-year career, he’s appeared alongside such prominent artists as Dick Hyman, Mel Tormé, Wynton Marsalis, Ed Polcer, Howard Alden, Joe Ascione, Dan Barrett, Jon-Erik Kellso, Randy Reinhart, Mark Shane, Kevin Dorn, Dick Sudhalter, Frank Vignola, Randy Sandke and John Cocuzzi.

Though based in New York City, Dan’s busy schedule often takes across the U.S. and around the world. He’s played on more than 150 CDs, including nine as a leader. He can also be heard on the soundtracks to the films *The Cat’s Meow*, *Ghost World*, *The Loss of a Teardrop Diamond*, and Martin Scorsese’s *The Aviator*, as well as on virtually all of the newly recorded music used on the soundtrack of the Grammy Award-winning HBO television series *Boardwalk Empire*, which ran from 2010 to 2014.

### ■ ADRIAN CUNNINGHAM

Adrian Cunningham is a multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, and world traveller. Originally from Sydney Australia and now based in New York City, he is proving to be one of his country’s top exports. With fluent command of the saxophones, clarinet, and flute, he is one of the finest multi-instrumentalists in Jazz. When he’s not busy performing in New York with some of its finest players, he is touring the world playing jazz festivals and swing events.

Since relocating to New York City in 2008 he has performed at some of the Big Apple’s finest clubs — Blue Note, Smalls, Birdland, 55 Bar, Apollo Theatre, Fat Cat, Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola and even a private event at the hallowed Village Vanguard; with such luminaries as Wynton Marsalis, Wycliffe Gordon, George Coleman Jr and Bucky Pizzarelli, Chris Potter and Renee Marie.

In 2014, Adrian became the leader of the saxophone section of the Grammy-winning Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks, the famed swing band responsible for the soundtracks for HBO’s *Boardwalk Empire* and several movies, including *The Aviator*.

*The Stomp is at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany, NJ on March 26, Noon-5 PM. Tickets at [www.njjs.org](http://www.njjs.org).*

## Diane Moser’s CPB: 20 Years of New Music

The cognoscenti will tell you that skipping even a single performance by the talented and adventurous 17-piece Diane Moser’s Composers Big Band (DMCBB) means missing a once-in-a-lifetime musical experience.

You can join the continuing celebration with an evening of eclectic, heart-felt music featuring the band’s resident composers as they celebrate 20 years of developing and presenting new big band music at Trumpets on March 22. Don’t let them cognoscenti scare you, Ms. Moser promises it will all be fun.

Formed by composer/pianist Moser and a dedicated group of musicians and composers with the intention of exploring the possibilities of big band music and moving it forward, the Composers Big Band has fulfilled that mission since its debut gig in January 1997. The DMCBB is equally at home playing classics and pushing boundaries. Any given set might contain tunes that would be a good fit for big band greats throughout jazz history, alongside straight-ahead jazz, Latin, funk, blues, Indian raga, and — why not — experimental efforts. They have visited hip-hop territory, performed a jazz opera, and paid tribute to legendary composers such as Charles Mingus, Jaki Byard and Oliver Nelson.

Special guests like singers, poets, spoken word artists, actors, filmmakers and sound painters have lent their talents to the fearless ensemble, which has also hosted talks by educators and others delivering tributes and oral histories. The DMCBB has even ventured into the cosmos with “Science Meets Music” and “The Music of the Spheres” featuring Moser originals and George Russell’s “Jazz in the Space Age,” making them the only band besides Russell’s to ever play the ambitious suite.

In the past two decades, the DMCBB has hosted more than 100 guest composers, from internationally acclaimed artists such as Jane Ira Bloom, Mark Dresser, Howard Johnson, Oliver Lake and Michele Rosewoman to student writers hearing their compositions performed by a large ensemble for the first time.

The band also regularly focuses on presenting original works by more than a dozen resident composers, who will be in the spotlight at the March 22 celebration. The 2017 resident composers roster includes Dennis Argul, Barbara Cifelli, Jim Cifelli, Marty Fogel, Matt Haviland, Rob Henke, Rob Middleton, Diane Moser, Chris Rogers, Erick Storckman, Russ Vines, Ed Xiques and Craig Yaremko.

It’s impossible to separate the band’s music and mission from the vision and contagious energy of leader Diane Moser. Moser has released six CDs as a leader or co-leader, including one with the DMCBB (a second album with the big band is in the works).

Keeping a big band together for 20 years is no small feat, especially when it’s made up of players who lead their own bands and/or are in-demand sidemen. There’s a warm, family vibe to the DMCBB, presuming your family is enormous, talented, and eager to work and play together at every opportunity. And after two decades some of the original band members are still on the bandstand at every gig.

In addition to pianist Moser, the current DMCBB lineup includes: saxes: Ed Xiques, Rob Middleton, Marty Fogel, Barbara Cifelli, Craig Yaremko, Tom Colao; trombones: Erick Storckman, Ben Williams, Matt Haviland, Dennis Argul; Trumpets: Mike Spengler, Jim Cifelli, Chris Rogers, Rob Henke; rhythm: Larry Maltz (guitar), Andy Eulau (bass), Scott Neumann (drums).

Besides being known for its adventurous music, a strong community feeling is a trademark of the DMCBB under Moser’s leadership. In addition to years of playing regular monthly gigs, the band has produced special events such as a September 11th concert benefiting the Red Cross; benefit concerts for members of the jazz community facing health issues; and peace concerts, including annual celebrations of Daniel Pearl World Music Day.

Moser has invited DMCBB members to bring in their compositions, and sometimes even their own bands to scheduled gigs, and provided opportunities for high school student bands to play opening sets at Trumpets. The bandleader mentors and encourages newbies, as well as inspires veteran players, composers, and writers who have dropped out of the music world to give it another try, and provided an outlet for their creativity.

Regardless of the occasion, the repertoire, the style, or the complexity of the music, listeners can count on each DMCBB concert being dedicated, adventurous and flat-out fun. You will be entertained and inspired!

### Trumpets Jazz Club | Montclair

Weds., March 22 | 2 sets at 8 and 10 PM  
\$20 cover | Reservations: 973-744-2600  
More info at: [www.dianemosermusic.com](http://www.dianemosermusic.com)