

# Jersey Jazz

Journal of the New Jersey Jazz Society

Dedicated to the performance,

promotion and preservation of jazz.

Volume 37 • Issue 3  
March 2009

## On the Goodman Century

### Centennial Year Opens with Tribute in Bridgewater

Story and photos by Bruce Gast

“Ten thousand people clearly remember being at the original concert,” said Jack Stine, with a chuckle. He was selling the NJJS Board on the idea of recreating Benny Goodman’s historic Carnegie Hall concert on its 50th Anniversary. The joke was that Carnegie only has 2800 seats. The Society went ahead with the project and filled every one of those seats, much to its financial betterment.

Fast forward to January 17, 2009 as Jazz in Bridgewater celebrates that momentous anniversary with its own sellout concert, somewhat closer to home.

Dan Levinson was the headline clarinetist, backed by the star-studded James Langton Big Band that was filled with faces familiar to NJJS members. This is believed to be America’s first celebration of Benny Goodman’s birth centennial.

The “world’s first” title belongs to Dan himself, since he had already been doing Goodman tributes in Europe earlier in January.

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**2009**  
**Pee Wee Russell Memorial Stomp**  
SUNDAY, MARCH 1  
Birchwood Manor, Whippany  
**LAST CALL!**  
see ad page 5, and page 8



Dan Levinson, headline clarinetist, will bring his Swing Wing to Pee Wee as well.



## GOODMAN CENTENNIAL BRIDGEWATER

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The capacity crowd was generous with its applause, particularly after Mike Ponella (regularly seen with the Nighthawks) duplicated Ziggy Ellman's soaring trumpet solo from "And the Angels Sing." Fellow trumpeters Randy Reinhart and Charlie Caranicas also drew an audience reaction with their moments in the spotlight. Few probably noticed that Randy chose his cornet for most of his solos, playing a trumpet the rest of the time.

The night contained many of the memorable Goodman hits, including the popular "Stealin' Apples" and concluding with a rousing "Sing, Sing, Sing," a

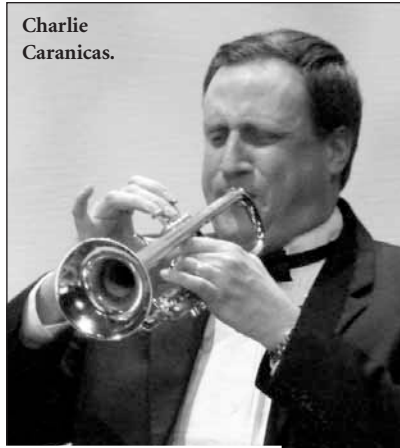
Dan Levinson and  
Kevin Dorn.



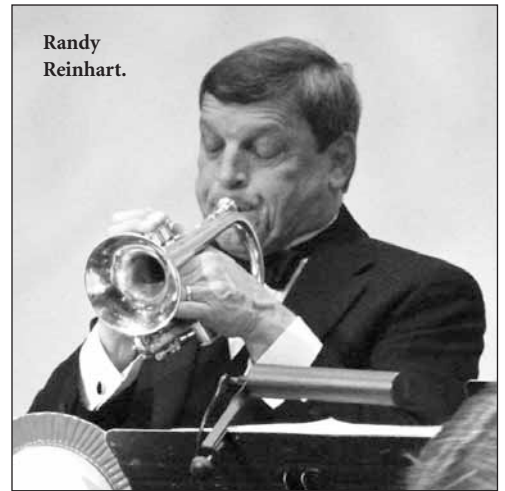
Matt Munisteri  
brought an  
acoustic guitar  
for the occasion.



Leader James Langton was the crooner on one tune, in addition to playing tenor sax throughout.



Charlie Caranicas.



Randy Reinhart.

**Performance photos by Bruce Gast.**

drummer's tour de force that displayed Kevin Dorn's percussive skills. This year, after all, is Gene Krupa's centennial too. In between were more favorites plus some lesser known but certainly worthy tunes, resulting in a nicely balanced program. Molly Ryan contributed several sparkling vocals, and leader James Langton took a turn at the mike to prove that he could be a crooner too.



Featured vocalist Molly Ryan.

The Somerset County Vocational-Technical Schools Education Foundation was the prime sponsor and beneficiary of this event, with the New Jersey Jazz Society supporting their efforts as co-sponsor. Jazz in Bridgewater has used that acoustic room for nearly a decade, previously running monthly concerts there but recently cutting back to just the annual Goodman salute. Fortunately, Benny left a huge legacy of music, so there could be many

more such evenings without audiences feeling they had heard it all before.

The Benny Goodman centennial celebration continues at the Bickford Theatre in Morristown on August 17 (and August 19 at the Toms River Library) as Allan Vaché, doing the clarinet honors, treats us to a sampling of Benny's hot small group swing. Those dates approximate the anniversary of the Goodman band's Palomar Ballroom engagement, which historians credit with launching the Swing Era.



Mike Ponella.



Benny Goodman. Early career publicity. Courtesy CTSIMAGES.COM