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CELEBRATION!



The “Jersey Best” All-Stars open the NJJS’s 45th Anniversary Concert at Drew University on Oct. 22. Shown performing are (l-r): Dave Stryker, Ed Laub, Martin Pizzarelli, Bucky Pizzarelli, Ryan Hernandez, Nick Scheuble, Don Braden, Nathan Eklund and Jason Jackson. Photo by Tom Salvas.

NJJS celebrates its 45th anniversary with a multi-media show at Drew University

There was a nearly full house for the Sunday afternoon NJJS concert at Drew University’s Dorothy Young Center for the Arts on October 22 — filled with jazz fans there to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the New Jersey Jazz Society’s founding and to salute famed guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli for his more than seven-decade career in music. Kicking off with a silky smooth “Stompin’ at the Savoy” with Bucky in the leader’s chair the three-hour show featured 20 Jersey-based musicians performing in various configurations, and multi-media presentations about the Society’s history. Thanks to more than 30 generous sponsors, the event will provide a substantial boost to the NJJS’s educational and scholarship programs.

More on the NJJS’s 45th Anniversary on page 26.

STRIKE UP THE BAND!

An All-Jersey, All-Star Celebration For The NJJS's 45th Anniversary

Photos by Tom Salvas

Right up to the day of the show it wasn't certain that the guest of honor would appear, let alone perform; he'd canceled two recent gigs due to a medical issue. But when the stage lights came up in the theater of the Drew University Dorothy Young Center for the Arts for the NJJS's 45th anniversary show there was the man of the hour, Bucky Pizzarelli, resplendent in his trademark blazer and rep tie, flashing that ever ready smile, guitar in hand.

The Paterson native and longtime Saddle River resident is also a longtime member of the NJJS. He's played countless Society events going back to the 1970s, and the October 22 celebration of the organization's 45th anniversary was also a tribute to the celebrated musician's seven-decade long career in music.

Bucky and an eight-piece ensemble opened the concert with Edgar Sampson's "Stompin' at the Savoy," reflecting the Society's and the guitarist's swing music roots.

After introductions by NJJS president Mike Katz, mistress of ceremonies Rhonda Hamilton presented a Pizzarelli biography recounting some of the countless highlights of the guitarist's storied career — among them his work with bandleader Benny Goodman and French violinist Stephané Grappelli and performances in Ronald Reagan's White House and Richard Nixon's living room.



Tomoko Ohno

Bucky played "It's Been a Long, Long Time"/"Don't Take Your Love From Me," "Tangerine" and "Send in the Clowns" (a duet with Ed Laub).

His day's work done, the musician was presented with a plaque from the NJJS, a Resolution from the state legislature and a standing ovation from the crowd.



Guest of Honor
Bucky Pizzarelli

The first of two videos shown on a large screen above the stage included tributes to the guitarist from Society co-founder Jack Stine and musicians Houston Person and Warren Vaché.

The concert continued with a quintet of guitarist Ed Laub, bassist Martin Pizzarelli, drummer Nick Scheuble, flugelhornist Nathan Eklund with teenage pianist Leonieke Scheuble in the leader's spot for "Deed I Do."

Music director/saxophonist Don Braden returned to the stage with guitarist Dave Stryker and pianist Tomoko Ohno to back singer Marlene VerPlanck on "Body and Soul," the



Alexis Morrast



Leonieke Scheuble



Dave Stryker and Tim Givens



Bernard "Pretty" Purdie

singer noting that Bucky brought her back into music (after a long career as a jingles singer) with gigs at Michael's Pub and Gulliver's in West Paterson in the 1980s.

Nathan Eklund was back with his flugelhorn for an ensemble turn on the Pizzarelli favorite "Honeysuckle Rose" as the overhead screen displayed photos of the guitarist with a slew of jazz notables, including Oscar Peterson, Benny Goodman, Buddy Rich and Dizzy Gillespie, along with several of his fanciful oil paintings.

The musical *Lazy Susan* kept spinning as musicians came and went. Marlene back for "The Way You Look Tonight" with trombone fills from Jason Jackson; Don Braden trading in his tenor sax for a soprano to accompany Danny Bacher's vocals on "The Very Thought of You" and "That's Life;" a brush and bluesy take on "Angel Eyes" from young Leonieka's trio; and finally all four horns up front for a jam on "How High the Moon" before intermission.

The William Paterson University Little Big Band, led by pianist William Gorman, opened the second half with Frank Foster's "Shiny Stockings," setting the stage for an invasion by the jazz vocal dynamo known as Antoinette Montague. Ms. Montague, dazzling in matching purple gown and hair and abetted by drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie, served up a greasy "Let the Good Times Roll."

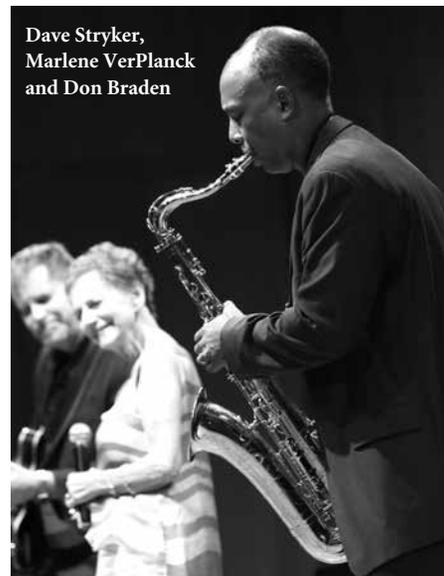


Antoinette Montague

More commentary on the NJJS's history from Joe Lang and the day's video "guests," and then 15-year-old Alexis Morrast performed "Over the Rainbow" before joining Montague, for a soulful duet on Gershwin's "Summertime."

After an appearance by WBGO's Dorthaan Kirk and closing remarks by MC Hamilton it was all hands on deck for a rousing jam on "Jumpin' at the Woodside" to close the show. 

— Tony Mottola



Dave Stryker, Marlene VerPlanck and Don Braden

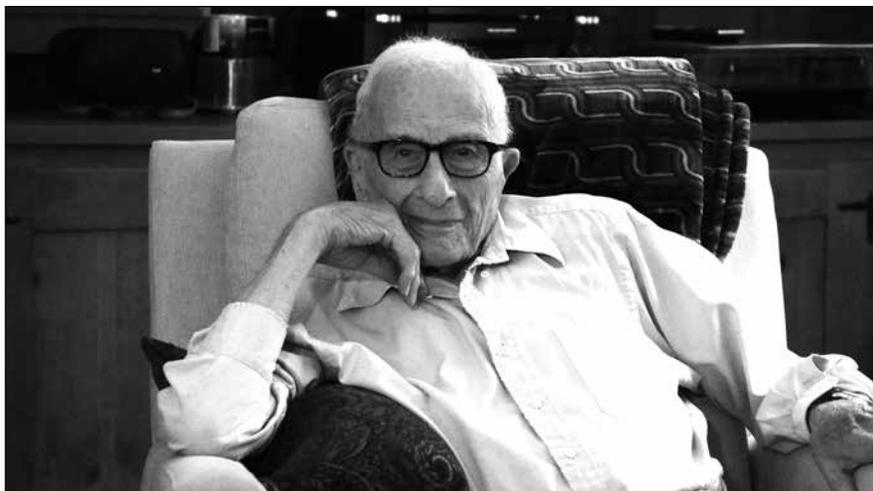


Danny Bacher

More on the NJJS's 45th Anniversary on pages 28-29

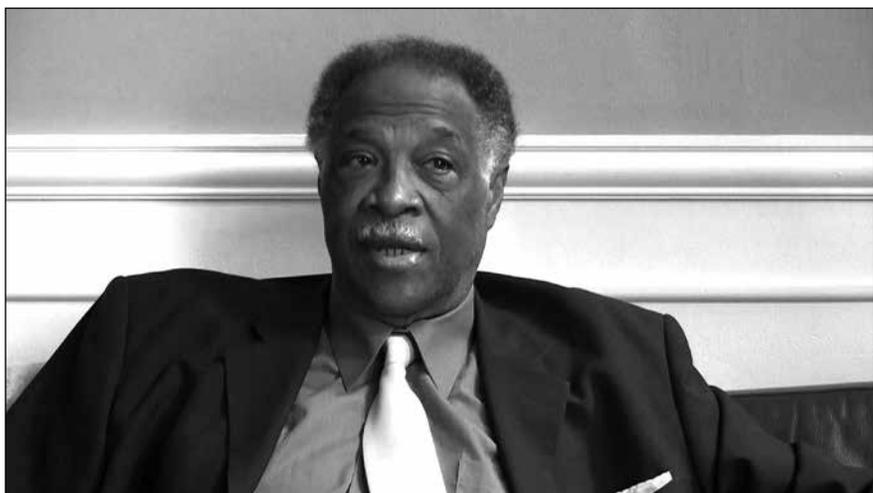
Music, memories and videotape...

Several important figures in the New Jersey Jazz Society's history who were unable to attend the 45th anniversary concert at Drew University appeared at the event via video segments recorded by NJJS member Tom Salvas. The videos were projected on a large screen above the stage. Here are some brief excerpts of their comments.



The day of the first Pee Wee Stomp there was a blizzard...but we waited it out and went ahead with the program. And of course, you couldn't get in, a tremendous crowd. And from that came the NJJS. We always had a dependable audience. The jazz at the start of the Society is not the jazz they have today. The style is changed. Things change. Funny you start out innocently enough but you never know where it will lead.

— Jack Stine, Co-founder/NJJS



It's always been a fun time at their [NJJS's] events. I want to thank them for taking me on board and helping me along in my career. I want to wish them congratulations and another 45 years full of fun and happiness and great jazz. Bucky was always a great role model for me. He would always look good. Shirt and tie, pocket handkerchief...and that ever present smile. I love you Bucky.

— Houston Person



It was at the Hillside Lounge that most of the people who started the New Jersey Jazz Society, Bill Cleland and his wife, Jack Stine and his wife, all of those people every Saturday night you would see them at the Hillside Lounge. I guess after a year or so they decided to form the Jersey Jazz Society. Forty-five years ago, my heavens. Grass roots organizations are important to keep things alive for kids. And that's it — keep it up!

— Warren Vaché

Video captures by Tom Salvas

IN THE BEGINNING

Remembering The Chester Inn

Randy Reinhart was not available to perform at the NJJS's 45th anniversary concert but sent along the following reminiscence which was read to the audience by Joe Lang.

Hello everyone. I thank you all for the opportunity to speak on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the New Jersey Jazz Society. I am sorry that I am unable to attend but consider it an honor to have my thoughts read to you all.

I want to speak about the Society's beginnings, the stepping stones that got this tremendous group of people to take the initiative to form the Society. There are so many people to recognize, but if I had to pick one name to give credit as the main catalyst responsible for igniting the resurgence of jazz in New Jersey (and the formation of the Jazz Society), it would be that of Chuck Slate.

When I was a senior in high school a few days a week I used to wait for my friend outside of school around 8 AM and, with his golf clubs in hand, he'd get off the school bus, throw them in the back of my car and we would drive to Flanders Golf Course! He graduated with honors, and I with a trumpet.

On the way to the course, we would turn the corner by a place called the Chester Inn. There was a sign on the side of the building advertising "Traditional Jazz Fridays and Saturdays." We both looked at the sign with interest. "Wow, they have Jazz there" I didn't really know what "Traditional" jazz meant. I knew of Dixieland, Al Hirt, Pete Fountain, etc. We talked about going there some weekend.

After I finished high school, I saw an ad for a party to play Dixieland for all those interested ("Bring Your Axe"). And so I did. That's where I met Pete Ballance and Dan Robinson who was hosting the party. (Peter was later on the NJJS board and Dan was cartoonist for the *Jersey Jazz* magazine.

I was loving playing jazz and "sitting in" wherever I could. I went to the Lord Nelson Pub in Parsippany on



Chuck Slate makes a point to Randy Reinhart at the NJJS's 40th anniversary in 2012. Photo by Lynn Redmile.

Sundays, and Peter, who played in the band there, said, "Let me take you up to the Chester Inn to hear Chuck Slate." I realized that it was the same place my friend and I had driven by all those times playing hooky a few months before. So we walked in and I was totally stunned at how fantastic the band was! My jaw dropped. I never heard anything like this, especially LIVE!

This Traditional jazz was not the Trad that people refer to today, but it was a fantastic style of music emulating the Eddie Condon bunch that played New York's clubs during the 1940s and '50s. A Dixieland style, but fine-tuned and polished by the great players of the Swing Era.

This band was tight, swung like crazy and had little parts worked out (and memorized) in their arrangements. Each one played flawlessly and with great warm sounds. I look back and it's hard to believe they were all AMATEURS. I say the word amateur only meaning each had other jobs during the day, not because of their ability. They played as well as any professional band you would hear.

They used different pianists week to week, but the regulars were: Marv Ross (clarinet), a banker at Bank Americard; Larry Weiss (cornet) worked

selling advertising for a newspaper in East Hanover; Marty Bergen (trombone) worked for the State; and Warren Vaché, Sr. (bass). I met sons Allan and Warren that night when we all sat in for a couple of numbers, a thrill for me! I have since had lifelong friendships with both.



The Chuck Slate Dixieland Quartet, (l-r) Dave Hanright, John Carlini, Chuck Slate and Jim Andrews, pose in front of the King George Inn in Warren, New Jersey c. 1990. Photo by Terry Carlini.

And then there's the leader, responsible for putting and holding all of this together, Chuck Slate, a wonderful, crisp, swinging drummer who presented himself and the band beautifully. He was kind enough to let me, some kid he had never met before, sit in with his precision jazz band. Memories like this last a lifetime. Incidentally, Chuck owned an antique restoration shop in Gladstone. Extremely talented in many facets.

Every weekend thereafter I would go up there to listen to this great band and get the chance to learn as much about this music as possible, as well as making new friendships. During that time the same group of people would show up — the "regulars" who came to listen, and were so nice and encouraging to us when we were just beginning.

Many of this group sat at the table, a BIG table made up of pushing small tables together, as they usually did every week. One night I saw them planning and talking about forming what would become the New Jersey Jazz Society. The "regulars" of The Chester Inn, loyal people who supported the fabulous Chuck Slate Band, and fans forever of Traditional jazz set this all in motion.

Warren and Madeline Vaché, Bill and Dorothy Cleland, Jack and Bert McSeventy, Hubie and Dorothy Scott, Jack and Audrey Stine, Dee Bess (who sponsored Chuck's first album) and Tom Williams. All friends of jazz and I am proud to call them my friends. I'm sure there were others, and if I left any out it is due to senior omission!

From there came the wonderful concerts at the Watchung View Inn, the nights at the Cornestone and at O'Connor's, the fabulous event at Waterloo Village every summer, and countless other wonderful chances to hear great jazz, that all started just 45 short years ago, in a wonderful place called the Chester Inn. Thank you Chuck, and thank you all. Best of luck in the next 45!

— Randy Reinhart