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Don Braden solos while Andy Farber conducts his orchestra at the Pee Wee Russell Memorial Stomp at Morristown's Hyatt Regency on April 7. Photo by Mitchell Seidel.

STOMPIN' UP A STORM *at the* **PEE WEE JUBILEE!**

It was all feet on deck as swing dancers crowded the dance floor at the 50th Pee Wee Russell Memorial Stomp in Morristown on April 7. Along with five sets of music singer Roseanna Vitro and radio station WBGO were honored with awards at the event which was dedicated in memory of New Jersey Jazz Society co-founder Jack Stine. The Stomp has been held annually since the first event was organized by Stine on February 15, 1970, the first anniversary of the one of a kind clarinetist's death. *Coverage begins on page 26.*

"I set out to play music that heals people." — Sharel Cassity/page14

50TH ANNUAL PEE WEE RUSSELL MEMORIAL STOMP A Rollicking Afternoon of Hot Jazz and Swinging Dancers

Story by Sanford Josephson | Photos by Mitchell Seidel

Of course, the 50th Annual Pee Wee Russell Memorial Stomp paid homage to the celebrated jazz clarinetist who died in 1969. But several other jazz legends hovered over the rollicking festivities at Morristown's Hyatt Regency on Sunday, April 7.

That was never more apparent than in the "Battle of the Saxes," which appropriately saluted the three titans of the tenor saxophone: Ben Webster, Lester Young, and Coleman Hawkins. The saxophone quintet, referred to by leader/tenor saxophonist Andy Farber as "The Morristown Saxophone Choir," led off with Webster's "Better Go," immortalized on the 1962 Columbia album, *Ben and "Sweets"* featuring Webster with trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison. That was followed by Young's "Lester Leaps In" and Johnny Green's "Body and Soul," a classic Hawkins recording. Farber concluded the segment with "a nice happy version of 'Broadway,'" the 1940 jazz standard written by Wilbur H. Bird, Teddy McRae, and Henri Woode and closely associated with Count Basie.

Farber said the latter selection was "Don Braden's suggestion." Braden, on tenor sax, joined fellow tenor saxophonist Mike Lee and alto saxophonists Adrian Cunningham and Julius Tolentino to complete the "choir" which literally blew the roof off. It was reminiscent of the piano spectaculars at the Jazz Society's Waterloo Village events of nearly 40 years ago. Perhaps this could be a new tradition, selecting a different instrument every year for a friendly battle, in reality, more like a mutual admiration society. The saxophonists were supported by



Cat Russell performs at the 50th Pee Wee Russell Memorial Stomp in Morristown.

the house rhythm section: Mark Shane on piano, Jennifer Vincent on bass, and Alvester Garnett on drums.

Tolentino and Lee were at the Stomp mainly as educators, kicking off the afternoon with Tolentino directing the New Jersey Youth Symphony Jazz Orchestra and Lee leading the Jazz House Kids. Jazz writer Will Friedwald, who served as MC, pointed out that, "Jazz education really started in the 1970s," adding that Stan Kenton deserves recognition for helping to spearhead its development.

The NJYS Jazz Orchestra led off with Frank Foster's "Who, Me?," originally

arranged for the Count Basie Orchestra. That was followed by two tunes featuring Hopewell Valley Central High School vocalist, Genevieve Shafiel: Cole Porter's "It's All Right With Me," closely associated with Ella Fitzgerald; and "Orange Colored Sky" (Milton DeLugg/Willie Stein), made famous by Nat King Cole.

The Jazz House Kids sextet started with trombonist Tom McIntosh's "The Cup Bearers" followed by Duke Pearson's "Is That So?," the Robert Mellin/ Guy Wood standard, "My One and Only Love," and a rousing rendition of Bobby Watson's "In Case You Missed It." "My One and Only Love" was first popularized by Frank Sinatra in 1953, but many in the audience probably recalled the classic 1963 recording by John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman. "In Case You Missed It" is most closely connected to Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers for whom Watson played saxophone and served as musical director.

The Battle of the Saxes came after the student



Roseanna Vitro demonstrates the vocal talents that led to her being named the NJJS's Distinguished Musician for 2019, giving a short performance before accepting her award.



In addition to his usual work as the accompanist to Catherine Russell, Mark Shane performed with the “battling” saxophonists, the Arbors Records All-Stars and the Andy Farber Orchestra.

groups performed and was followed by the Arbors Records All-Stars, headlined by Cunningham on clarinet, sax and vocals and Warren Vaché on cornet. Guitarist James Chirillo joined Shane, Vincent, and Garnett in the rhythm section. Frank Foster and Count Basie emerged again as the All-Stars led off with Foster’s “Shiny Stockings,” arranged for the Basie band. Cunningham channeled Nat King Cole on the Sigmund Romberg/Oscar Hammerstein II standard, “When I Grow Too Old to Dream.” Vocalist Roseanna Vitro, recipient of this year’s Distinguished Musician Award, made a guest appearance, singing “There Will Never Be Another You” (Harry Warren/Mack Gordon). Count Basie surfaced yet again with “Jumpin’ at the Woodside,” before the tempo slowed down for Hoagy Carmichael’s “Stardust.” Both Cunningham and Vaché are Arbors artists. Cunningham’s latest Arbors release is *Duologue*, a duet album with clarinetist-saxophonist Ken Peplowski. Vaché had just released a new Arbors album entitled *Songs Our Fathers Taught Us*.

The first Pee Wee Russell Memorial Stomp was held 50 years ago, the brainchild of the late Jack Stine, who

continued on page 28



Lindy Hoppers become Limbo Boppers as they dance to one of Andy Farber’s numbers.



Warren Vaché’s trumpet playing gets a appreciative nod from Adrian Cunningham during the Arbors All-Stars performance.



WBGO radio host and NJJS advisor Bob Porter, left, has a few words with Stomp MC Will Friedwald between sets.

PEE WEE RUSSELL STOMP

continued from page 27

co-founded the New Jersey Jazz Society two years later. The only living member of the original NJJS Board of Directors, Al Kuehn, reminisced about Stine, recalling his 1976 collaboration with the Newport Jazz Festival, which drew 5,000 people to Waterloo Village; and his Bob Wilber-led 1988 re-creation of Benny Goodman's classic 1938 Carnegie Hall concert.

Vitro's award was presented by Braden, NJJS's Education Advisor, who praised her for her dedication to jazz education. Vitro began teaching vocal jazz in 1998 and created a four-year Masters Degree program for jazz vocalists at New Jersey City University. She also supervised a Jazz for Teens program at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.

Recalling her childhood in Texarkana, AK, Vitro said, "I always knew I would be a singer, but I was so excited when (tenor saxophonist) Arnett Cobb turned me onto jazz after I arrived in Houston on the bus."

I was pleased to present the 2019 Jazz Advocate Award to radio station WBGO 88.3FM to Amy Niles, the station's general manager. In accepting the award, Amy singled out station personality Bob Porter, who was in the audience. "He convinced me to put the 'WBGO Swing Party' on Sunday mornings from 8 to 10, and judging from the amazing dancing I've seen today, that was the right choice." Looking out at the audience, she added, "The real jazz advocates are you. On behalf of all of us, thank you." Niles was joined at the Stomp by Karl Frederic, chair of the WBGO Board of Trustees.

To say the best was saved for last would be a cliché, if it weren't true. The moment that Catherine Russell was announced as a special guest at this year's Stomp, the anticipation and excitement began to build. Farber brought out a star-studded big band to warm up the audience with "Air Check" and a limbo-like tune called "The Holiday Makers".

Then, Russell, fresh off two straight weeks at #1 on the *Jazz Week* charts for her Dot Time album, *Alone Together*, took over, mesmerizing the crowd with a string of favorites including "I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me" (Jimmy McHugh/Clarence Gaskill); "Everybody Loves My Baby" (Jack Palmer/Spencer Williams); "No More" (Toots Camarata/Bob Russell), and Louis Jordan's "Ain't You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby?". Then, the spirit of Duke Ellington filled the room to close the show as Russell finished up with "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart," "I Got it Bad and That Ain't Good," and "Love You Madly."

Major sponsors of the Stomp were: Arbors Records, Hullarious Productions, R.S. Berkeley, WBGO, and WestFuller Advisors.



Over the past several years, swing dancers and their often colorful costumes have added as much to the event as the musicians.



Dancers pause from their hoofing to check out some of the Pee Wee Russell and Stomp-related memorabilia.



Reedman Adrian Cunningham, center, goes over the set list for the Arbors All-Stars with guitarist James Chirillo and drummer Alvester Garnett.