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ON THE COVER   From left, Gabrielle Cavassa, Tawanda Seussbrich-Joaquim, and Samara Joy. PHOTO BY ANTHONY ALVAREZ.
It’s officially summer and I hope you’re vaccinated and enjoying family, friends and jazz!

May of the favorite jazz festivals will be taking place this summer as well as continued streaming for many organizations and venues. Please continue to support these endeavors wherever and whenever possible.

This issue of Jersey Jazz is chock full of suggestions and opportunities to enjoy summer jazz to the fullest.

Thank you for your dedication and stewardship of the arts, as we continue to work together to support musicians, venues, and organizations, as the “lights go on again” with indoor and outdoor in-person events.

Jersey Jazz magazine is a wonderful benefit of NJJS membership and after several months of transition with our new website, it has been password protected with full access available once again to NJJS members only.

At the beginning of each month, you’ll receive an eBlast containing the new password and the link to the current month’s issue. You’ll be prompted to input the password after you click on the “View Digital Issue” tab. Once you’ve accessed the magazine, you’ll be able to download it to your computer or other personal device for ease of access throughout the month. If you prefer not to download the issue, keep the monthly password handy so you can continue to access the issue online. If you have any questions, please contact me at pres@njjs.org.

Please note: NJJS’s primary way of communicating with our members is via email. Make certain you have New Jersey Jazz Society’s email addresses—eblast@njjs.org and membership@njjs.org—in your Contacts File and that you mark correspondence from NJJS as “not spam.”

The pandemic has proved very challenging for NJJS. Your generosity as patrons and donors through membership, the annual appeal campaign and event donations, has allowed us to maintain

ALL THAT’S JAZZ
BY CYDNEY HALPIN

“People often underestimate the difference that modest $5 - $25 donations can make to an organization.”

The jazz/performing arts community lost a tireless and dedicated advocate with the recent death of Linda Smith. The board and I send our deepest condolences to her husband Don, and to the myriad of musicians, colleagues, family and friends who shared Linda’s love and knowledge of jazz. Please see page 39 for more information on Linda’s life and legacy.

The pandemic has proved very challenging for NJJS. Your generosity as patrons and donors through membership, the annual appeal campaign and event donations, has allowed us to maintain
our monthly programming and to continue to make the necessary upgrades to our website, in spite of unexpected expenses.

People often underestimate the difference that modest $5 -$25 donations can make to an organization. Every penny counts, and we’re grateful to those of you who have continued to support us through this difficult time.

If you’re able to make a direct donation to NJJS today, please donate via our website njjs.org homepage by clicking on the red “Make A Donation” button. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

If a direct donation isn’t possible, you can still help support NJJS shopping via the internet.

NJJS is part of the AmazonSmile Gives program where 0.5% of the price of you eligible purchases goes directly to NJJS.

It’s the same Amazon you know but a separate website. Same products, same service—but to generate financial donations to NJJS, you must always shop at smile.amazon.com.

Log on to smile.amazon.com and select New Jersey Jazz Society as your beneficiary, then shop as you normally do. Please tell your friends and family members about this amazing opportunity for NJJS and thank you in advance for your support.

Mosiac™ Box Sets for Sale
NJJS has received two incredibly generous donations of used Mosiac™ Limited Edition Box Sets, one from Robin Sinkway, the niece of the late, devoted NJJS member Jack Sinkway, and the other from Jean Field. We thank both families for their kindness and stewardship.

Prized by collectors for their superior audio quality, most of these CD sets are in mint to very good condition and would make a great addition to your music collection, with proceeds helping NJJS continue to promote and present jazz. For more information on the titles for sale and prices, please visit our website njjs.org/donate/merchandise or contact via email Merchandise@njjs.org. Don’t miss out on this incredible opportunity!!

When in-person events ceased in 2020, the board and I worked diligently to find ways to continue to offer programming and to employ out of work musicians. To that end, I’m very proud of our efforts, and the shows we were able to stream for your enjoyment.

The board and I would like to thank Christine Vaindirlis (UbuntuWorldMusic.com) for all of her help, patience, and incredible expertise, as we worked through our limitations and growing pains to continue to present, promote and preserve jazz. She’s a quiet force of nature and we’re so grateful that she’s become an integral part of NJJS.

If you’ve missed any of these incredible shows, they’re available on YouTube.com—search “New Jersey Jazz Society”—for your enjoyment. They’ll also be available in August on our website, once the last phase of upgrades are complete.

Wherever the summer takes you, here’s wishing you a safe journey, much joy and great jazz!
first became aware of Gerry Mulligan in the fall of 1965. Living on a U.S. Army base in Japan and working for the American Red Cross, I purchased *Gerry Mulligan '63: The Concert Jazz Band* in the PX and wore it out on my turntable. I wasn’t able to see Mulligan in person until November 1974 at his Carnegie Hall Reunion Concert with Chet Baker, but it was the first of many performances over the next two decades-plus.

I interviewed Gerry in 1981 at his home in Darien, CT, for a newspaper article that became the basis for a chapter in my book, *Jazz Notes: Interviews Across the Generations* (Praeger/ABC-Clio: 2009) and then, in 2011, I contacted his widow, Franca, because I felt no one had yet written a book chronicling Mulligan’s enormous contributions to jazz and American music as a composer, arranger, bandleader, and baritone saxophonist. Thanks to Franca, I received access to Gerry’s oral autobiography, and that was supplemented by more than 40 interviews as well as countless excerpts from articles, reviews and books.

At 3 p.m. on Sunday, July 18, I am honored to be the second presenter in the new Virtual Jazz Education Series, co-produced by the Metuchen Arts Council-Jazz and the New Jersey Jazz Society. I’ll trace Mulligan’s career from his early days as an arranger for bands led by Tommy Tucker, Elliott Lawrence, Gene Krupa, and Claude Thornhill ... to his enormous contributions to Miles Davis’ *Birth of the Cool* recording ... to his super stardom in the ’50s and ’60s as leader of a pianoless quartet and concert jazz band ... to his place as one of the giants of American music.

Shortly after Mulligan died in January 1996 at the much-too-early age of 69, the *Los Angeles Times*’ Don Heckman wrote that, “Gerry Mulligan appears to have been taken for granted by the jazz world,” pointing out that this might have been caused by “his versatility: Soloist, bandleader composer, arranger, and songwriter.” Mulligan’s sound on baritone saxophone, Heckman added, was “immediately recognizable, a rich, warm inviting timbre. Smooth and flowing on ballads, overflowing with energy and vigor in up-tempos ...”

Jon Newsom, Retired Chief of the Music Division, Library of Congress, once described Mulligan as “one of the truly unique figures in American music, not just speaking of jazz, but of music in a broader, general way.” George Wein, Founder of the Newport Jazz Festival, described Mulligan to me as, “one of the greatest jazz musicians I ever heard. He had all the traditions in his playing, but he was contemporary at the same time. A very rare thing. He’s one of the all-stars of all-stars.”

The presentation will be live streamed on the New Jersey Jazz Society website, njjs.org, as well as the NJJS Facebook page and YouTube channel. It is free, but donations are encouraged. To register: https://bit.ly/3iaEWqt.
ABOUT NJJS

Founded in 1972, The New Jersey Jazz Society has diligently maintained its mission to promote and preserve America’s great art form—jazz. To accomplish our mission, we produce a monthly magazine, Jersey Jazz; sponsor live jazz events; and provide scholarships to New Jersey college students studying jazz. Through our outreach program Generations of Jazz, we provide interactive programs focused on the history of jazz. The Society is run by a board of directors who meet monthly to conduct Society business. NJJS membership is comprised of jazz devotees from all parts of the state, the country and the world.

Visit www.njjs.org or email info@njjs.org for more information on our programs and services.

MEMBER BENEFITS

- 10 FREE Concerts Annually at our “Sunday Socials”
- Monthly Award Winning Jersey Jazz Magazine - Featuring Articles, Interviews, Reviews, Events and More.
- Discounts at NJJS Sponsored Concerts & Events.
- Discounts at Participating Venues & Restaurants
- Support for Our Scholarship and Generations of Jazz Programs

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Sherman Irby and Marcus Printup Bring Their Small Groups to Morris Museum

Trio and Quartet Provide Big Band Players a Chance to ‘Stretch Out’

BY SANFORD JOSEPHSON

AUGUST 12

Sherman Irby

Alto saxophonist Sherman Irby spent four years playing with the late trumpeter Roy Hargrove’s quintet. During that stretch—from 1997 to 2001—two of his band partners were bassist Gerald Cannon and drummer Willie Jones III. That’s the trio Irby will be leading on August 12 at the Morris Museum’s Jazz on the Back Deck concert. “We go back a long way,” he said. “Coming out of the pandemic, it will be sort of a homecoming.”

The time spent with Hargrove, who died in November 2018 at the age 49, was special. “He was the spirit of the music,” Irby said. “He had that spirit that was infectious to everyone. Roy connected the older generation to the new generation. He wasn’t a talker; he was a doer. When he played, he gave you all the instruction you needed. It was an experience...
unlike anything else I’ve ever experienced, sort of like Elvin Jones talking about playing in Coltrane’s band.”

After leading his own group for a few years, Irby joined Jones’ band in early 2004. “I got a call from Gerald,” he recalled, “who was Elvin’s Musical Director. He said, ‘Hey, Elvin needs a saxophone player, but he doesn’t like alto players. Can you get to Boston for a 7 o’clock gig?’ I headed straight to Newark and got on a plane. The gig was at the Regatta Bar. When I got there, they called the tunes, and I started playing. I’m just enjoying myself, thinking this is my one opportunity because he doesn’t like alto players. After the gig, he said, ‘Welcome to the Jazz Machine. You’re hired.’”

Jones passed away in May 2004, and Irby joined JALC in 2005. He also had the opportunity to play with McCoy Tyner’s quartet, again on the recommendation of Cannon, and he stayed with Tyner until the pianist’s death last year.

Irby was born and raised in Tuscaloosa, AL, and started playing music at the age of 12. While in high school, he had the opportunity to perform with gospel singer James Cleveland. He earned a B.A. in Music Education from Clark Atlanta University and joined pianist Johnny O’Neal’s Atlanta-based quintet before moving to New York in 1994. He now lives in Warren, NJ.

For several years in the ’90s, Irby was a regular at Smalls Jazz Club in the West Village. He remembers that one of his influences, alto saxophonist Lou Donaldson, “used to come down to Smalls. He’d only come to the bottom of the stairs and stand there. It was like ‘Yeah, I hear ya.’ He was always supportive.” During the ’90s, Irby also toured with pianist Marcus Roberts and was part of vocalist Betty Carter’s Jazz Ahead program with Hargrove.

Carter, he said, “was a force of nature. She taught a lot of us about how to put a band together, to think about the sound you put out, the stage presence. The things you don’t learn in school.” From 2003-2011, he was Regional Director for the Carmel, CA-based Jazz Masters Workshop, a mentoring program for young children. “We tried to teach kids to enjoy playing jazz and feel the music,” he said. “We exposed them to the joys of playing it.” Other musi-
Some of the music Irby’s trio will be playing in the Morristown concert will be reminiscent of music on his 1998 Blue Note album, *Big Mama’s Biscuits*, featuring Cannon on bass and Clifford Barbaro on drums with Hargrove featured on the title track. In a November 1998 review, *All About Jazz*’s John Sharpe described it as, “11 tasty, bluesy biscuits—all flavored with generous helpings of gospel, R&B, and funk.” Nine of the 11 tracks were Irby originals, including “Conversing with Cannon”, a tribute to Cannonball Adderley.

Irby is looking forward to playing outdoors at the Morris Museum. “We just want people to feel good and enjoy some good music,” he said. “Come with an open mind and an open heart, and we’ll make you feel good at the end of the day.”

**AUGUST 19**

**Marcus Printup**

“It’s gonna be great to play with a small group gig again.” When trumpeter Marcus Printup leads a quartet at the Morris Museum, it will be the first time he’s led a small group in two years. “I’m looking forward to stretching out,” he said. “Jazz is spontaneous and innovative,” he said. “I have no idea of what we’re going to play, but I do want to write something for it. Expect something original that you’ve not heard before.” He will be joined by bassist Philip Norris, drummer TJ Reddick, and alto saxophonist Godwin Louis.

“I’m super excited to play with these young musicians,” he added. “I remember when people hired me. Giving these cats a chance to play is going to be wonderful. I’m being a mentor for them and also learning from them. I’m looking forward to being inspired.”

Norris, originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, grew up in North Carolina and was in the Triangle Youth Jazz Ensemble, the jazz arm of the Triangle Youth Philharmonic in Raleigh, NC. In 2016, he received the Ella Fitzgerald Outstanding Soloist Award at JALC’s Essentially Ellington competition. He has played with trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, the late pianist Harold Mabern, and tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, among others. Norris can also be heard on pianist Isaiah Thompson, Jr.’s debut album, *Isaiah J. Thompson Plays The Music Of Buddy Montgomery* (WJ3 Records: 2020). (See Rising Star: Pianist Isaiah J. Thompson, Jersey Jazz, November/December 2020).

Reddick was part of the Jazz at Lincoln Center virtual Big Band Holidays concert in December 2020. He has appeared with Wynton Marsalis’ Quintet at Minton’s Playhouse in Harlem and with Marsalis’ Future of
JALC ON THE BACK DECK

Jazz Orchestra in Frederick P. Rose Hall. New Jersey Jazz Society members may remember him as part of alto saxophonist Alex Laurenzi’s quartet at the last NJJS live Social before the pandemic, in February 2020 at Shanghai Jazz in Madison, NJ.

Louis, a graduate of the Berklee College of Music, was a finalist in the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz saxophone competition. He has studied and performed with bassist Ron Carter, pianist Herbie Hancock, and the late trumpeter Clark Terry, among others.

Printup grew up in Conyers, GA, and graduated from the University of North Florida, winning the International Trumpet Guild jazz trumpet competition. In 1991, he met pianist Marcus Roberts, who introduced him to Wynton Marsalis, and, three years later, he joined the JALC Orchestra. “My first performance with the orchestra was in 1994,” he said. “During the pandemic, we’ve been teaching and doing virtual things. Last night (June 17), we played at the Central Park SummerStage—first time with a big audience. It was electric.”

In March 2020, Printup and his wife, classical harpist Riza Printup, released an album, Gentle Rain, on the Steeplechase label. It features just the two of them without any other instrumentation. “When we first met,” he recalled, “she showed me her harp, and I was so intrigued with her instrument. She’s a trained classical harpist, but she took a jazz course with the late David Baker at Indiana University. She has a natural ear.”

Since the album came out at the beginning of the pandemic, the Printups “haven’t done anything to promote it.” But JazzTimes’ Veronica Johnson noticed it. “Marcus Printup,” she wrote, “is known to many as the fiery trumpeter adjacent to Wynton Marsalis in his Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. A longtime fixture in the band, Printup has cut his teeth swinging to big band standards ... But he’s just as powerful on a ballad ... Those balladry
skills are well displayed by Gentle Rain, for which he’s backed solely by a harp, eloquently played by his wife Riza—a daring configuration that’s rarely been attempted in jazz. Although trumpet and harp may not seem the most likely match,” Johnson continued, “the Printups expose a striking beauty to the combination.”

At the Central Jersey Jazz Festival in downtown Metuchen, NJ, on September 11, Printup’s quintet will feature Riza, playing harp and also presenting a jazz education program for families. The Printups have a nonprofit organization called RiMarcable Music for Arts & Education which educates young children—pre-k through grade 5—about jazz through a jazz explorer camp, jazz story times, and other events.

Marcus was recently asked by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, to incorporate jazz into its summer curriculum at Tanglewood. “I’ll be doing five weeks of teaching online,” he said, “but I’ll be teaching at 2 in the morning because I’ll be on tour with JALC in Europe.” In July, he’ll be recording with saxophonist Greg Tardy, and, in August, he’ll be performing with Boston’s Silk Road Ensemble, a group of musicians, composers, arrangers, visual artists, and storytellers from Eurasian cultures.

The New Jersey Jazz Society is a proud sponsor of the Jazz on the Back Deck series. The August 12 and 19 concerts begin at 8 p.m. Seating blocks for tickets are available for purchase, ranging in size from 8’ x 8’ (maximum of two for $50) to 8’ x 16’ (maximum four for $100). Everyone should bring their own chairs and refreshments. Rain dates are the following evening. For more information or to order tickets, call (973) 971-3706 or log onto morrismuseum.org/jazz.

See JALC AT TIMES SQUARE, page 36
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RISING STARS

Sassy Award Winners: Gabrielle Cavassa and Tawanda Seussbrich-Joaquim

BY SANFORD JOSEPHSON

For the first time in its nine-year history, the Sarah Vaughan International Vocal Competition named two winners of its annual contest: 26-year-old Gabrielle Cavassa of New Orleans and 25-year-old Tawanda Seussbrich-Joaquim of Los Angeles. The finals for the 2020 competition, originally scheduled for November 2020, were postponed by the pandemic and held on June 6, 2021, at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.
Gabrielle Cavassa

At April’s socially-distanced Exit Zero Jazz Festival in Cape May, NJ, Gabrielle Cavassa ignited the crowd gathered near the Cape May Ferry when she invited her friend, vocalist Cyrille Aimee (and former Sassy Award winner) to the stage to join her in a duet of Frank Loesser’s “I’ve Never Been in Love Before”.

That song had special meaning. Cavassa was a finalist in the 2018 Sassy competition, and that was one of the songs she sang. She almost didn’t repeat it in the 2020 contest, but, “it’s kind of a tradition with me. I end with that song on gigs a lot. Maybe I just wanted something that I know like the back of my hand, something that felt really comfortable.”

Cavassa considers herself “a romantic. I think I’m changing,” she said, “but one of my favorite things about standards is that the concept about romance is so different than what we talk about today.” That’s the reason she loves the Billy Eckstine song, “I Want to Talk About You”, which is on her self-titled first album, released last year by 711330Records DK2. “Maybe someday I’ll grow into the independent woman,” she added, “but right now I’m so romantic and vulnerable in my emotions, and I feel the world isn’t. There are so many things that I sing that I don’t think I’m allowed to say.”

Growing up in Escondido, a suburb of San Diego, Cavassa heard “a lot of Frank Sinatra because my grandpa is Italian, and he just loved Frank Sinatra. At a certain point, I became obsessed with my parents’ Christmas album because it had jazz on it. One of the songs was Nancy Wilson singing ‘The Things We Did Last Summer’. There was also an Ella song on it.”

Cavassa moved to the San Francisco area to attend college at San Francisco State, and that’s when, “I really got into jazz. I didn’t like studying
voice, but I got into jazz history.” She started going to live jazz performances and collecting records. “I bought a lot of records and would learn things off the records. And, I would sit in at a club called the Club Deluxe. I learned through trial and error.”

On a vacation trip to New Orleans, Cavassa was “so amazed by the concentration of music, coming from everywhere,” and, in 2017, she moved there, quickly acclimating herself to the local music scene. She toured with Adonis Rose and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra and trumpeter Irvin Mayfield and met drummer/singer Jami son Ross, who co-produced her album. She also met legendary New Orleans vocalist, 80-year-old Germaine Bazzle, “who had an amazing influence on me.” Bazzle’s song, “To You My Love”, is included on the album as a tribute to her.

Cavassa is collaborating with keyboardist Ryan Hanseler on another album, with strings. There will be some original music and at least one standard, Cole Porter’s “So in Love”. The album, she said, “is a product of Covid. We were neighbors and quarantined.”

The Sassy Awards will return to their normal November date later this year, so Cavassa will be coming to New Jersey to present them as one of the most recent winners. And, she’s hoping to book some dates in the Northeast. WBGO’s Gary Walker, one of the Sassy judges, considers Cavassa “a producer’s dream. She has a truly original approach to the music, which is quite refreshing and much needed.”

**Tawanda Seussbrich-Joaquim**

To say that Tawanda Seussbrich-Joaquim was surprised by her selection as a co-winner of the Sassy Award would be an understatement. “I have the least experience of anyone,” she said, adding that, “I feel great. I feel wonderful. It’s a wonderful blessing to be part of this.”

Seussbrich-Joaquim grew up in a musical family, but the music wasn’t jazz. Her mother is from Germany and favored classical music with a little folk music mixed in. Her father is from Mozambique, and he introduced her to world music. In elementary school in Las Cruces, NM, she was part of the choir—“We did do a version of ‘Blue Skies’”. She was also active in stage plays and musicals as she progressed to middle and high school. Her favorite role was playing Crystal in a school production of Little Shop of Horrors.

WBGO’s Walker recognized her theatrical talents. “Tawanda uses her vocal skills with an acting background,” he said. “That makes her singing a story, something to build on.”

The discovery of jazz “happened gradually” after she began attending college at the Santa Fe University of Art & Design, majoring in Contemporary Music. And, she met Mirabai Daniels, her vocal instructor in college who
happens to be married to jazz clarinetist Eddie Daniels. “From the start, she would get me out of my comfort zone. She pointed out that you can embellish classical songs and show tunes, but they don’t give you the liberty to tell them as you. She encouraged different things out of me—that I can sing something different that isn’t on the stage.”

Daniels considers Seussbrich-Joaquim “a natural. Despite being relatively new to jazz,” she said, “she is developing her own style, with an authenticity to her story singing, a strong and flexible voice, and a courageous approach to improvisation. Her ear is good, she continues to study and listen and learn, and she brings a positive attitude to her music making. And,” Daniels added, “Tawanda is a delight to work with, which should bless her with a long and successful career as a jazz vocal musician.”

For the Sarah Vaughan competition, Seussbrich-Joaquim chose a 1920s blues song, “Tain’t Nobody’s Business If I Do” written by Porter Grainger and Everett Robbins as one of her selections. “I really resonated with the message,” she said. “It’s very repetitive and bluesy. I decided this could be the ‘Sassy’ song. One of the parts I really love is, ‘If I go to church on Sunday, then just sing the shimmy down on Monday, Tain’t Nobody’s Business if I do.’ It’s saying, ‘I am a woman in my own right. It really doesn’t matter what anybody else thinks.’ Music really is therapy for us. We resonate with the songs to learn some things about our own specific journey.” Early recordings of the song were made by Anna Meyers and the Original Memphis Five, Bessie Smith, and Alberta Hunter. Blues singer Jimmy Witherspoon had a hit with it in 1947, and Billie Holiday recorded it in 1949.

Seussbrich-Joaquim moved to Los Angeles last year and has been performing at Campus Jax, a bar and
grill in Newport Beach. Some of her other favorite songs—the 1931 Gerald Marks/Seymour Simons standard, “All of Me”, and “The Peacocks”, a tune written by pianist Jimmy Rowles for a 1977 Columbia album of the same name which featured Rowles and tenor saxophonist Stan Getz. British vocalist Norma Winston later added lyrics to it. Singing “All of Me”, Seussbrich-Joaquim said, is a tribute to Sarah Vaughan. “Her style and voice and contribution to jazz are really the foundation of my jazz education and love for jazz.

“The Peacocks’ is one of my favorite ballads to sing,” she continued. “Mira said that to me. It really feels like a painting to me. Every different word and every note is so chromatic. I feel like I’m painting an elaborate Monet. I love finding songs that you have to feel and hear what it’s trying to say.”

Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday, along with Vaughan, are Tawanda’s primary influences, but she recently became aware of Anita O’Day. “Every day I’m finding a new artist,” she said. “Only last year, I discovered her. I really like the way she phrases. She uses the words to improvise. I love using the exact same words but in completely different ways. Each time you sing the same song, it shouldn’t be the same. I really resonate with learning how to tell a story, really feeling like a jazz vocalist.”

On July 10, she will be appearing at the Crypto Jazz Festival in Newport Beach, presented by Resonance Records and Steamer Jazz. She will also be performing on July 22 at the Laguna Jazz Festival of the Arts in Laguna Beach. Seussbrich-Joaquim is beginning work on a Resonance album that, hopefully, will be released early next year. It will include “some wonderful mature songs that show off the best of me. Some songs will sound more like show tunes. There will be a little funk, and some straight-ahead jazz.”

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RISING STARS

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ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Vocalist Samara Joy to Release First Album and Perform at William Paterson

“*The Songs I Sing Have to Tell Stories. Otherwise, You’re Just Singing a Bunch of Notes.*”

When Samara Joy won the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition (Sassy Award) in November 2019, it was “a wonderful experience,” she said. “I was suddenly put on the jazz radar: ‘Who is this girl? ’ ‘Where did she come from?’”

Before she could answer those questions, though, the country was shut down by the pandemic. Now, as we return to normal, the 21-year-old Joy is embarking on an ambitious recording and performing schedule, highlighted by the July 9th release of her first album, *Samara Joy*, on the Whirlwind Recordings label and her July 21st live, in-person performance as part of William Paterson’s Summer Jazz Room Series.

Among other events on her schedule: the Umbria (Italy) Jazz Festival with the Emmet Cohen Trio on July 9, an album release party on July 15 at NJJS.ORG
ON THE ROAD AGAIN

On the Road Again

the Jazz Gallery in New York, and appearances at Philadelphia’s South Jazz Kitchen on July 16 and 17 and Tarrytown’s Jazz Forum on August 6 and 7.

Joy was exposed to a variety of music while growing up in the Bronx. “My mom was really into the disco funk era,” she said, “and gospel came from my father’s side. It was a great mix of grooves and really had an impact on me.” Her paternal grandparents led a well-known Philadelphia-based gospel group, the Savettes; and her father toured with gospel artist Andrae Crouch.

“I started performing in middle school and high school,” she said, “and my senior year (at Fordham High School for the Performing Arts), I joined the jazz band.” Since SUNY Purchase was close to her home in the Bronx, she took a tour of the campus. Pianist Peter Malinverni, who is Jazz Studies Chair for the Conservatory of Music, auditioned her, and she was accepted into the program where she became an Ella Fitzgerald Scholar. Malinverni, she said, is “a wonderful piano player and educator,” adding that, “He was really kind and supportive.”

“When Samara first came to us,” Malinverni recalled, “her talent was obvious—it was our job to nurture her gifts. At Purchase, singers and instrumentalists attend all the same classes, allowing them to build relationships based on mutual respect and the desire to help each other. Over time, Samara’s strong work ethic in classes established her as one to whom others would go.” Alexis Cole, Lecturer, Jazz Studies, Jazz Voice, at Purchase, described Joy’s voice as “an absolutely glorious instrument. During her time at Purchase, she developed a deep love for jazz and became completely steeped in the tradition. She could do any style of music. Lucky for jazz lovers, she chose jazz.”

During Joy’s freshman year,
ON THE ROAD AGAIN

“while I was supposed to be doing homework, I was looking up videos,” she said. She discovered Sarah Vaughan’s performance of the Jimmy Sherman/Jimmy Davis/Ram Ramirez standard, “Lover Man”, and, “It intrigued me because it was a live performance. When I heard the way she was singing the song, the way she interpreted the song, it made the story so much clearer. The songs I sing have to tell stories. Otherwise, you’re just singing a bunch of notes.”

Joy started working on her album during her senior year in college. To select songs, she began “basically narrowing down all the stuff I had come across in college, just revisiting all the stuff I had learned and paying homage to the great singers.”

The 12 songs on Samara Joy range from standards such as Hoagy Carmichael’s “Stardust” and Jimmy Van Heusen’s “But Beautiful” to “Jim” (Edward Ross/ Caesar Petrallo), “If You’d Stay The Way I Dream About You” (Arthur Herzog, Jr./ Irene Kitching), and “Only A Moment Ago” (Billy Rose/Milton Ager). And, of course, there’s “Lover Man”.

“Stardust”, said Joy, “is just one of those songs you have to sing. It must be one of the most recorded standards. I first came across Louis Armstrong’s version, then Sarah’s version, then Nat King Cole’s.” Although “Jim” is closely associated with Billie Holiday, Joy first heard Vaughan’s version with Clifford Brown. “But Beautiful” and “If You’d Stay The Way I Dream About You” caught her attention from a 1956 Decca album, Torchy, by Carmen McRae. She saw Dinah Washington sing “Only A Moment Ago”.

Her major influences? “Ella and Sarah are definitely the foundation,” she said, adding that others are: McRae, Betty Carter, and Etta Jones. At Purchase, “I was fortunate to study jazz history with (drummer) Kenny Washington. I studied voice with Alexis Cole, and I took transcription with (trumpeter) Jon Faddis. He encouraged me to write lyrics.”

At William Paterson, Joy will be accompanied by a trio led by Purchase faculty member Pasquale Grasso on guitar, Ari Roland on bass, and Keith Balla on drums. On her album, she is joined by Grasso, Roland, and Washington. Recalling that, “the world shut down”, shortly after she won the Sassy Award, Joy is “excited to play for people. I’m getting right back into it.”

Added Malinverni: “I’ve worked with Samara in classes and performed with her in churches and other venues and have marveled at the thrill in which she immediately holds her listeners. This is because she is lit from within and sings as the vessel for joy that she truly is.” —SJ
A Jersey Jazz Interview with Hendrik Meurkens

BY SCHAEN FOX

Vibratone/harmonica player Hendrik Meurkens brought his New Samba Jazz Quartet to play in front of a live audience at the recently reopened Jazz Forum in Tarrytown, NY, on June 13. That followed two weeks of performing in Switzerland and the October 2020 release of his Height Advantage album, *Manhattan Samba*. On the recording, Meurkens performed only on the harmonica, and, in a review, *AllAboutJazz*'s Edward Blanco called him, “perhaps the most important harmonica voice since Toots Thielemans.”
**Talking Jazz**

**JJ** How did it feel to play again in front of a live audience at the Jazz Forum?

**HM** “Honestly, it really just feels like a long vacation, this whole pandemic thing. Playing is like riding a bicycle or swimming. You just do it, no matter how long you’ve been off. I think we are back, and now we just need the gigs to come back in full swing. I already have gigs in the Northeast in the book for fall and a tour in Germany. So, it looks like we are on our way. I also hope to be back in New Brunswick at some point, too.

**JJ** You came to the United States in 1977 to study at the Berklee College of Music. After that, you moved back and forth between your native Germany and Brazil, finally settling in New York in 1992. Why New York?

**HM** Even if you like Brazilian Jazz, New York is already a better place. The people, back in the day, who were interested in Brazilian Jazz would actually move away, because there was no audience for jazz. Brazilians didn’t need jazz; they had their own stuff. Brazilian Jazz is definitely a New York thing. Now it has changed. San Paulo is important. But back in the day, Brazilian Jazz was definitely New York, and Claudio Roditi was the king, and everything revolved around Claudio. That was the scene. It definitely had to be New York. New York is the jazz capital of the world. There’s no question about it. I mean, people try to tell you Paris is also good, and we’ve got great players in London, and there’s a great scene in Denmark or whatever. That’s all true. There are great players everywhere. But the density and the importance of the energy of all this is definitely in New York. That never will change. That is just where this has been since the ‘20s. New York is not America. I mean, whatever happens with America, politically and culturally, that sometimes never reaches New York. New York remains an international cosmopolitan liberal city with people from all over the world in all professions. That is the attraction; you never feel you don’t belong there. And of course, the arts, I mean, it’s not only just Broadway, the theaters and the museums. It’s an arts city.

**JJ** When you moved to New York, was it difficult to find your place in the city’s jazz community?

**HM** Well, New York remains tough; it always was and probably always
If you come to the city, you have to pay your dues, but you can do your thing. I was lucky. Claudio Roditi actually introduced me to a lot of people. He was great. That opened a lot of doors because a lot of people got the message that I’m supposedly good. You still have to go through all the motions of hoping that somebody needs you and having the right vibe, be nice and all the good stuff. I’m sure it’s the toughest scene on the planet just because they have so many musicians in line for the same few gigs. But, if you have something to offer that somebody likes, and if you play by the rules and don’t piss people off, then something might happen. That doesn’t mean that it will, but it might.

**JJ** How did you meet Claudio, and how did he become interested in your music?

**HM** Well, back in the ’80s, when I was still living in Berlin, there was the Dizzy Gillespie United Nation Orchestra. And of course, Paquito D’Rivera and Claudio were in it. I was already big into Brazilian Jazz. Those guys were my heroes, Claudio and Paquito. They were touring, came to Berlin, and I went backstage. That’s how I met them. Then when I came to New York, the connection was already there. The Brazilians and Americans in general don’t have a problem with the harmonica. When I was still living in Germany, people were very arrogant about the harmonica. They didn’t consider that a jazz instrument. It was a toy or a vaudeville instrumental. Best-case scenario, it was a country or blues instrument but not a serious jazz instrument. But I already knew that the Brazilians were different. So, I already knew Claudio would be much more positive, and sure enough that happened.

**JJ** What’s your best memory of Claudio?

**HM** Everything with Claudio was always positive and inspiring. He was inspiring and always supportive. He was a positive force for our music - Samba Jazz. I mean, he was a character; he could also be difficult as we all are, but he was just an extremely inspiring presence.

**JJ** You remember the last time you saw him?

**HM** That must have been a long time ago, but we talked on the phone—not enough, now that it’s too late. We never lost touch. Every once in a while, we talked.

**JJ** You were involved with the film Dolores Claiborne. How did that come about?

**HM** Well, one of my friends was, and still is, John Clifford. He is a still photographer who goes on the movie set and does shots for promotion and all that. He was in Nova Scotia, where they film a lot of Hollywood movies. He was on the set of *Dolores Claiborne* where they are having this garden party and they needed a song. He said, “We’ll get my friend. He can write the song and play it on screen.” They flew me up. I wrote a couple of options. We went into a local studio with the musicians they organized. We recorded...
two songs, the director picked one, and we actually play that on screen in the movie for maybe 30 seconds. I’m doing this scene where they are having this garden party and then there’s an eclipse. And to this day, I still get tiny little royalties when they play that movie somewhere on the globe.

JJ I love your statement I found when researching you: “My mission is simple. I want to create music of great beauty. I like beautiful music: Sinatra, Jobim, Charlie Parker. So, I concentrate on playing things that the audience can enjoy. Complicated music doesn’t really mean anything except for professionals who want to analyze it.” Do you still stand by that?

HM Totally. The older I get, the more I enjoy the simple stuff, that actually means something. I don’t know how old that quote is, but since then, jazz has become more complicated. Also, the college thing doesn’t help. Most jazz musicians go to college and learn all the very advanced stuff. Once they spend time learning it, they want to use it, and the audience gets smaller and smaller, because people cannot follow that.

JJ You have spent time on the road. Who are some of the best musicians to travel with?

HM In the late ’90s, I spent a lot of time with legendary old guys on the road: Jimmy Cobb, Herb Ellis, Herbie Mann, Charlie Byrd, Ray Drummond, and Mundell Lowe. We did these tours in Europe that lasted maybe two or three weeks. You’d sit on the bus with these guys all the time and they’d usually tell stories. Hanging out with these people gave me the connection to the Golden Age. The old guys were great to travel with, because they have done it so much, and under such
worse conditions than sitting in a nice Volkswagen bus driving through Germany. That was a piece of cake [compared] to what they’d been through. They’d seen it all, so there’s no complaining. Whatever they got was much better than what they got back in the day. And they were always happy to be on the road. All the old guys were all troopers. They were just cool.

**JJ** In your notes about your second album, you wrote that your time in the former East Germany was rather bleak and scary. Why scary?

**HM** I had a long tour booked in Germany, like five or six weeks. That was less than a year after the wall came down. We actually traveled through East Germany when it was still completely East Germany. Legally we could travel, but nothing had changed. They looked at us as if we were animals from the zoo. We had a different car. We looked different. We had different clothes. And the vibe was just absolutely scary, like you drive through a black and white movie from the ‘50s. The buildings, the streets, the coloring, everything was gray. They had never seen foreigners like my Brazilian band. It was definitely weird.

**JJ** The harmonica has a long history in the blues. Why is it so rare in jazz?

**HM** The blues harmonica that everybody uses, that’s also used in Country and Western music, is the diatonic. The jazz instrument is the chromatic. They are two different instruments that are related, but they are different, and they sound different. It’s a natural for the blues because it gives you all these sounds and it’s cheap. That’s a factor for sure. In jazz it had a hard time, because it’s not really a section instrument. It doesn’t blend with anything, [but] at the
end of the day, in the right context with the right player, and the right repertoire, harmonica can easily be the strongest instrument on the planet. People always think of the saxophone and the trumpet as the main jazz instrument, and that’s all good. Toots showed us that, if it’s the right moment with the right player and right tune, it can really kill.

Why it never became a jazz instrument before Toots, I don’t have a scientific answer for that. And even with Toots, it took a long time. He was the guitar player with George Shearing, and 95 per cent of his gig was playing guitar. Then he played a couple of songs, and everybody was fascinated, but it was really a novelty. It took a long time until Toots was a full act all night on just the harmonica. It’s really a solo instrument, there’s no other function. So that didn’t help. If there is a real explanation of why it took so long, I’d be interested. I don’t know the answer. It definitely took forever.

Toots found that thing that works in jazz. Nobody found that before. Actually, nobody has done it since. He kind of took that with him. There’s a whole generation of great virtuoso harmonica players out there. I’m definitely not the only one for sure. There are other great players, but they are going in other directions. They are visiting other territories, but that’s all good. But that’s emotional overkill, that’s a Toots thing. And well, he was very successful, because he found something that people wanted.

JJ Did you have much interaction with Toots?
HM A little bit. We knew each other, and I paid my respects. It wasn’t very intense, but he knew that I adored him.
SANFORD JOSEPHSON
Jeru’s Journey: The Life and Music of Gerry Mulligan

A modern jazz baritone saxophonist with an original and recognizable style, Gerry Mulligan (1927-1996) was also a talented composer and arranger whose work enhanced the legacies of many big bands, including his own highly regarded “Concert Jazz Band.”

Presenter Sanford Josephson is Vice President - Publicity for the New Jersey Jazz Society and Editor of Jersey Jazz Magazine. He is the author of Jeru’s Journey: The Life and Music of Gerry Mulligan and Jazz Notes: Interviews Across the Generations. Josephson has written jazz articles for several publications ranging from American Way to the New York Daily News.

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At the end of an interview with Billy Taylor in July 2008, he told me what he really enjoyed: “When someone comes up to me and says, ‘Man, I saw you at the Hickory House, and I’ve been listening to you ever since’. If I could touch somebody like that, wow!”

Taylor, who died on December 28, 2010, at the age of 89, would have celebrated his 100th birthday on July 24. During the 1960s, he led a trio at the Hickory House on New York’s 52nd Street, and, according to his daughter, Kim Taylor-Thompson, Dr. Martin Luther King was frequently in the audience. King was a fan of “I Wish I Knew How It Feels to be Free”, arguably Taylor’s most famous composition. But, said Taylor-Thompson, “He couldn’t remember the title, so he’d just say, ‘Can you play that churchy song?’” The song was inspired by Taylor’s daughter when she came home from school singing a spiritual. It became a favorite of leaders of the Civil Rights Movement because of its message of harmony and self-respect. “When I came home from school singing a Negro spiritual,” Taylor-Thompson recalled, “Dad said I was singing with a lot of feeling, but I was...
singing it wrong. When he tried to correct me, I insisted that I was singing it right because I was singing what the nuns had taught me. Yup, I was actually arguing that the white Catholic nuns knew more about Negro spirituals than Dad! He wrote ‘I Wish I Knew’ in 15 minutes, the song that would become his signature song.”

At the DC Jazz Festival’s Jazzfest at the Wharf over Labor Day weekend, Taylor-Thompson will speak about her dad during a celebration of his centennial on September 5. There will also be a performance of dueling pianos by Cyrus Chestnut and Allyn Johnson. And there will be special guest appearances by drummer Winard Harper and bassist Chip Jackson, members of Taylor’s last quartet.

Johnson, a DC-based pianist who is Director of Jazz Studies at the University of the District of Columbia, recalled giving a concert at the Kennedy Center when Taylor was Artistic Advisor for Jazz. “I was naming all these DC piano players, and he said, ‘Why didn’t you name me?’ Of course, he was a big important part of DC jazz. He was one of the staples of the history of jazz. Jazz pianists have to understand his importance in jazz education. He was one of those people who brought jazz to the forefront. And, he was mentored by Art Tatum.”

Chestnut played at a celebration of Taylor’s 80th birthday in 2001, subbing for the honoree who had suffered a stroke. Taylor-Thompson recalled that, “the Kennedy Center found a way to allow him to hear the concert live in his hospital bed. He got to hear it all, and he was bouncing around in his bed. Cyrus played his heart out. Dad just loved him.”

One tune that Johnson knows he will be playing at the DC Jazzfest is Taylor’s “A Grand Night for Swinging”. “It’s one of the first tunes of his I learned. It was on a Rahsaan Roland Kirk record.” (It was the 1967 Verve album, Now Please Don’t You Cry, Beautiful Edith for which Taylor wrote the liner notes). “There’s also a tune he wrote called ‘Somewhere Soon’ from an album he did with Ramsey Lewis. And, I’m sure we’re going to be doing “I Wish I Knew How It Feels to be Free”.

The album with Ramsey Lewis was Ramsey Lewis/Billy Taylor We Meet Again (CBS Records: 1989).
“When my father and Ramsey decided what to put on the album,” Taylor-Thompson recalled, “they asked Chick Corea to write something for it. That became the title of the album, and it is my favorite song on that CD.”

Lewis spoke about Taylor and the album in the April 2021 issue of Jersey Jazz. “I was a guest on one of his TV shows,” he recalled. “He had two pianos, and he would invite you to be the second piano. We had such fun that we thought we should do something else together. We did a concert in a park in the Midwest. The concert was free, so there were thousands of people to see these two pianos. The reception was great, so that told us maybe we should take this show on the road. We put together a nice show of about 10 to 15 dates a year,” and that led to the album.

The Chicago Tribune’s Howard Reich, reviewing the recording, wrote that, “Lewis and Taylor work together elegantly,” adding that it “never loses the loose, breezy feel of the best jazz improvisation.” In addition to Taylor’s original compositions and Corea’s title track, the album contained pieces written by Duke Ellington, John Lewis, Horace Silver, Bill Evans, and Oscar Peterson.

Taylor was born in Greenville, North Carolina, and his family moved to Washington when he was about five years old. In 1944, he arrived in New York City, hoping to make a living as a jazz pianist. During his first night sitting in at Minton’s Playhouse in Harlem, he was noticed by legendary tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, who hired him to play with his quartet at 52nd Street’s the Three Deuces. The alternating act was pianist Art Tatum, and Taylor became Tatum’s protégé, often accompanying him to hear other musicians. He related one story to me that made a lasting impression on him.
“We were at an after-hours joint,” he said, “and this guy came up and said, ‘Art, I’d like to play your version of Tiger Rag for you,’ and Art said, ‘Okay’. The guy sounded good. He had transcribed everything and really did a good job of it. I was impressed, but Tatum couldn’t have been more blasé about it. I said to him, ‘This guy is one of the few guys I’ve heard who’s close to what you’re doing. He said, ‘Yeah, he knows what I do, but he doesn’t know why I do it.’

“That stuck with me. The musicians who influenced me were delighted that you took something that was theirs and used it, but you were supposed to make something of your own of it ... Over the years, my style has become basically be-bop but with many things added. My style is really very personal ... the music I play is a compilation of all of the things that make up my style.”

While Taylor’s accomplishments as a performer and composer were extraordinary, they were almost superseded by his role as a continuing and powerful advocate for jazz and jazz education. In the 1960s, while performing at night with his trio, he hosted a daytime radio program on New York station, WLIB. He also helped found the Jazzmobile, which brought concerts to the inner cities and still
exists today. He was Musical Director of The David Frost Show, which aired on TV from 1969-1972, and he hosted a weekly radio program called Jazz Alive on National Public Radio in the late 1970s and early ’80s. In 1980, he began profiling jazz musicians for several years on CBS Sunday Morning, winning an Emmy Award for a 1983 interview with Quincy Jones. In 1988, he was named a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master, and, for the last seven years of his life, he had an annual residence at William Paterson University’s Summer Jazz Workshop, spending the week with young jazz students and presenting a Friday night concert with his trio. Taylor initially studied music at Virginia State University and later received his doctorate from the University of Massachusetts.

Taylor-Thompson talked of, “the number of musicians Dad opened doors for, enabling them to have a stage when they were just starting out.” Three of the many young musicians helped by Taylor were pianist Christian Sands and the previously mentioned drummer Winard Harper and bassist Chip Jackson. In 2008, Taylor told me the 19-year-old Sands was “so good that last season, I took him to the Kennedy Center with me. I let him close my set. I played with the trio, and then I got off the stage and let him do the last thing.” When I interviewed Sands in 2019 (Jersey Jazz, November/December 2019), he described Taylor as, “an absolute mentor for me, a huge beacon for where I continue to see myself as an artist and individual. He was such a prolific writer, arranger, and composer. The best of the best.”

In one of his CBS Sunday Morning appearances, Taylor did a feature on The Harper Brothers Quintet, which included Winard and his brother, Philip, a trumpeter. That developed into a long-term relationship with Winard, who became the regular drummer in Taylor’s last trio, spending about 10 years with him. “We became good friends—we’re both history buffs,” Harper told me in 2011, shortly after Taylor passed away. “I asked him a lot of questions; he was like a walking encyclopedia. He was a wonderful person, a wholesome spirit.”

Jackson described Taylor as “my mentor and a great friend. He always wanted to pass on what he learned from his legendary contemporaries. I’m proud to have been almost 20 years his bandmate and to have been around one of the true giants of mankind.”

Taylor told me he would like to be remembered for helping people recognize that, “Jazz is America’s classical music, and that we have done the world a service by creating this music.”
It was our esteemed editor who reminded me of Billy Taylor’s centennial and kindly suggested that I might have some thoughts about this truly memorable man. It so happens that Billy (we got to know each other well enough for me to call him that) was one of the very first American jazz musicians I got to see in the flesh after the end of World War II.

In the fall of 1946, the big band veteran arranger, composer, and alto saxophonist Don Redman had put together, with the help of the Danish “Jazz Baron,” Timme Rosenkrantz, a band that included such notables as trombonists Quentin Jackson and Tyree Glenn (the latter doubling on vibes), the underrated trumpeter and singer Peanuts Holland, and his fellow underrated Ray Abrams, whose fine tenor sax was definitely overshadowed by the band’s unquestioned star, Don Byas. The book contained a number Redman introduced as a harbinger of things to come: “For Europeans Only,” specially composed and arranged by Tadd Dameron. But that was the sole hint of bebop, though at the jam sessions with Danish musicians it became evident that there were two incipient boppers in the ranks, trumpeter Allan Jeffreys and trombonist Jack Carmen—the only white band members. The youngest member, 25-year-old pianist Billy Taylor, also showed awareness of the new sounds.

The young man also proved himself a splendid accompanist to the band’s well featured singer, a remarkable young lady named Inez Cavanaugh who also happened to be Timme’s companion. Timme’s memoir, Harlem Jazz Adventures (Scarecrow Press: 2012), edited and adapted by my esteemed Jersey Jazz colleague Fradley Garner, gave several concerts in Copenhagen, then still my home town (I left for the U.S. the following April). I was lucky to grab standing room tickets for two concerts. When I got friendly with Billy, I would tease him about having seen him as a kid. Billy remained in Europe for a spell, based in Paris. I can’t recall exactly when I encountered him again, probably at Birdland, where he was house pianist. Needless to say, it could have been in many settings, none of which could faze him. But Sanford has covered all that, so a few personal recollections.

One of Billy’s unlikely fans was William Buckley, author of God and Man at Yale (Regnery Publishing: 1951) and editor of the National Review—an era when conservatives were worthy of the name. He was a jazz fan, of piano in particular, and invited two of his favorites, Billy (who had vast TV experience) and Dick Wellstood (who hadn’t, but for whom Buckley had done a liner note) to talk about and demonstrate jazz. It was a most unusual get together and I hope it’s been preserved.

Also TV related but more personal: When Billy was musical director for the David Frost Show I did a Down Beat interview with him about this task (with the headline “Taylor Made Frostings,” cute, eh?). I then got to be backstage when Louis and Bing were guests, for which I’m eternally grateful to Billy, who—his multitudinous accomplishments as a musician, teacher, writer, presenter etc. notwithstanding—was wholly without any “side.” Not just a great but a wonderful man.
JALC AT TIMES SQUARE

Jazz Series Seeks to Highlight the ‘Hottest Young Bands’
Trumpeter Etienne Charles, Pianist/Drummer Luther S. Allison, and Alto Saxophonist Sarah Hanahan Among the Performers

Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Thursday night “Jazz in Times Square” outdoor summer series returns Thursday, July 8, with trumpeter Etienne Charles, leading a quartet. Other highlights include pianist/drummer Luther S. Allison leading a trio on August 5, and alto saxophonist Sarah Hanahan leading a trio on August 19.

The concerts, presented by Morgan Stanley, are held at 6 p.m. at Broadway Plaza between 43rd and 44th Streets and are designed to showcase “New York City’s hottest young jazz bands ... creating the feeling of an intimate club amidst the lights and sounds of Times Square.”

Charles has been called a “daring improviser who delivers with heart wrenching lyricism” by JazzTimes’ Bill Milkowski. The New York Times’ Giovanni Russonello, in March 2019,
JALC AT TIMES SQUARE

wrote that Charles “has developed a magnetic sound on trumpet—clear and mellifluous, with a deep sense of economy ... and he’s becoming a composer to be reckoned with. Originally from Trinidad, Charles was mentored by pianist Marcus Roberts at Florida State University. He attended the Juilliard School’s graduate program and studies under trumpeter Joe Wilder and is currently Associate Professor of Jazz Trumpet at Michigan State University.

Allison, who is currently the pianist in drummer Ulysses Owens, Jr.’s Generation Y Quintet, has appeared on two of trombonist Michael Dease’s albums—as a pianist on Reaching Out (Posi-Tone: 2018) and as a drummer on Father Figure (Posi-Tone: 2016). He has also performed with Charles, saxophonist Greg Tardy, and pianist Rodney Whitaker.

Hanahan was Jersey Jazz’s featured Rising Star in the September/October 2020 issue. Influenced by the late alto saxophonist Jackie McLean, Hanahan studied under bassist Nat Reeves, trombonist Steve Davis, and saxophonist Abraham Burton at the Hartford Hartt School of Music’s Jackie McLean Institute. She is currently studying for her Master’s Degree in Jazz Studies at Juilliard.

Davis described her to Jersey Jazz as “the real deal. She has the fire! Her alto sound is powerful, fresh, and unique.” Drummer Sherrie Maricle heard Hanahan play in 2019 at the Jazz Educators Conference and invited her to play with the Diva Jazz Orchestra. Calling her “an extremely gifted player,” Maricle added that she has “great feel, sound, and a lot of creativity.”

The Jazz in Times Square series is made possible in part by Lisa K. Meulbroek and Brent R. Harris, with additional support provided by Susan and J. Alan Kahn.
Recovering from Virus, Ken Peplowski Started a Facebook Series

“I Like to Play Different Things, Running the Whole Gamut of Jazz History.”

BY SCHAEN FOX

In early March 2020 clarinetist/tenor saxophonist Ken Peplowski was in Sarasota, FL, to preside as Musical Director of the Sarasota Jazz Festival. “It was going to be an incredible weekend,” he recalled. “I had booked The Manhattan Transfer, Terrell Stafford, Houston Person, and Russell Malone.” One hour before the opening concert on March 12, featuring Peplowski, Dick Hyman, alto saxophonist Charles McPherson, and Malone, “The phone call from the governor’s office said, ‘Everything’s off. We’re shutting it down.’ I came back to New York.”

In late March, Peplowski had a 103-degree fever. “I called my doctor the next day. If you remember how chaotic things were in those beginning days, I think he gave me the right advice. He said, ‘Listen, if you think you can handle this on your own, just stay in bed and drink a lot of fluids. Avoid the hospitals, the doctors, and walk-in clinics because you’ll get worse if you go into those places right now.’ So, I did.”

Peplowski recovered but not without some after effects. “I’ve had some long-term health problems,” he said. “I’ve had a weird metallic taste in my mouth sometimes, or I wake up on certain days feeling completely exhausted and drained of energy. And, I’ve had congestion in the lungs but no difficulty breathing. That’s a good thing about what I do for a living. I keep the lungs pretty active.”

In June of last year, Peplowski started a live streaming series called “In the Moment” on Facebook. “I started with a series of very low budget duos with pianist Glenn Zaleski,” he said. “That was just the two of us, with him trying to operate an iPhone camera. It quickly became apparent that everybody was streaming, and people were getting fatigued of that single-camera, not completely professional sound quality.”

In February of this year, a West Coast-based “savior” offered to cover some of the costs of the bands and professional sound and video help. The first concert was held on February 11 featuring Peplowski and Zaleski along with drummer Matt Wilson, and bassist Peter Washington. Peplowski has continued, supplementing the sponsorship by requesting donations.

“For the last few months,” he said, “it’s pretty much been Ehud Asherie on piano, Peter Washington on bass, and Phil Stewart on drums. I like to play different things, running the whole gamut of jazz history. Nicki Parrott did two sessions on bass, and I might change up some of the other members, just so people see something different. Had this not grown,” he continued, “I don’t know what I would be doing now.”

In late June, Peplowski was “a little under the weather, so the next two weeks he offered “TWO episodes of In the Moment’ w/Ken Peplowski & friends, a special “Best of the first 10 episodes” on Monday, June 28. On Thursday July 1 at 7:30 p.m. EDT, “We’ll have a brand new episode for you - all on my music page Facebook.com/kpeps1. Thanks for your patience and your support! KP.”
In 2011, Linda Kiger Smith and her husband, Don Jay Smith, collaborated with Morristown Mayor Tim Dougherty to create the Morristown Jazz & Blues Festival. Through the years, the festival has featured a number of leading jazz artists including the late guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, trumpeter/vocalist Bria Skonberg, bassist/vocalist Nicki Parrott, and guitarist Frank Vignola. Linda Smith passed away on June 11, 2021, at the age of 72. The Jazz & Blues Festival—canceled due to
Covid in 2020 but returning on Saturday, September 18—became a “phenomenal success,” according to Dougherty because of Smith. “Her legacy will live on in future festivals,” he told the Daily Record, “and, with each event, we will honor and pay tribute to Linda and her dedication.”

Smith was also the prime mover behind the conversion of Morristown’s Community Theatre into the Mayo Performing Arts Center, becoming its initial Artistic and Executive Director. “When we first started renovations,” she told the Daily Record, in 2015, “there was a tunnel or air vent around the depth of the ceiling. There was a homeless person living there. I’m still not sure you can put it into words how wonderful it was [to see the first concert].” Many leading artists have appeared there since the renovation, but one of Linda’s favorite concerts was a reunion of Dave Brubeck with his former drummer, Joe Morello.

Pianist Jerry Vezza told the Daily Record the Smiths saved him from losing his house in 2007 by organizing a fundraiser for him during a life-and-death battle with cancer that left him unable to work for seven months. “They put on a jazz benefit concert for me,” he said. “Linda collected an enormous amount of money for us that kept us afloat. I’ll never forget her for that.”

Since 2004 Linda Smith was a performing arts consultant for several organizations and events including Seton Hall University’s Executive Suite program, Stockton University’s Annual Gala, and Jersey City’s Sounds of Summer program.

In addition to her husband, survivors include: two daughters, Allison Kiger of New York City and Rebecca Smith-Fuentes of Hackensack; a son, Charles Kiger of Long Beach Island; a sister, Janice Potash of Madison; and seven nieces and nephews. Donations in her name may be made to the Tewksbury, NJ, Rescue Squad; the Whitehouse, NJ, Rescue Squad; or Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.
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