

March 2012

PO BOX 60397, PALO ALTO, CA 94306

Ed Fox, Editor

## FROM THE CHAIR

What is jazz anyway? Thinking it might give me some insight, I turned to my old Webster's Dictionary, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 1944. It defines jazz as "a type of American music characterized by melodious themes, subtly syncopated dance rhythms and varied orchestral coloring." Not a very broad (or particularly helpful) statement as to how we view jazz today, covering everything from Dixieland, Big Band Swing, Bebop, Smooth, Latin, New Orleans, etc. I wonder how the iPad dictionary defines it. (Once upon a time a dictionary was a favorite high school graduation gift; today it's probably an iPad.)

Whatever it is, where does jazz stand in the current cultural hierarchy? Sadly, not too high. The Grammys have reduced the number of jazz award categories. But what a delight to see Christian McBride and Chick Corea receive awards, even though those awards haven't received much publicity. So-called jazz festivals and clubs now routinely include performers who in my judgment are not exactly jazz artists. For example, SF Jazz recently presented The Chieftains, a traditional Irish folk group. I know SF's motto is "Jazz and Beyond," but that's *way* beyond.

You can depend on PAJA, as we enter our 20<sup>th</sup> year, to continue to offer what is known as mainstream or straight-ahead jazz. We remain committed to presenting live Jazz, with a capital "J," the music we all love and want to see survive and flourish.

Speaking of mainstream jazz, what a nice surprise to see Esmeralda Spalding deliver a beautiful rendition of "What a Wonderful World" on the recent Oscars telecast. She is a stunning talent but few in the vast TV audience were aware that she's one of the jazz world's best young bassists.

Special thanks to the Palo Alto Adult School for its recognition in their spring catalog of Herb Wong's courses on jazz and how they led to the founding of the Palo Alto Jazz Alliance.

I hope to see you at our great May 18<sup>th</sup> show at the Oshman JCC Theater. It's a must-see event featuring an all-star group of jazz giants.

In continued appreciation of your support.

*Stuart Brewster, Chair*

P.S. As loyal Bay Area citizens, we all loved hearing Tony Bennett celebrating 50 years of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." But who remembers the writers of that ditty: George Cory and Douglass Cross?



Esmeralda Spalding at the Oscars

## MAY 18—MARK YOUR CALENDAR

What a group Dr. Herb Wong has assembled for the next PAJA concert! Two major alto saxophonists, a great tenor man who can also shine on alto, one of the world's great jazz trumpeters, a world-class rhythm section and a superb guitarist. Before we get into the players, here are some nuts and bolts of the event:

**Where:** Oshman Family Jewish Community Center (Cultural Arts Theater)  
**When:** 7:30pm, Friday evening, May 18  
**How much?** \$35 general admission; \$30 PAJA members; \$15 students  
**Who** OK, see below.

### Richie Cole's Alto Madness Plus



Richie Cole

The all-star group starts with alto legend **Richie Cole**. He's joined in the sax section by local heroes **Andrew Speight** and **Noel Jewkes**—both very familiar to and loved by Peninsula jazz fans. The trumpeter is none other than **Carl Saunders**, arguably one of the two or three top jazz trumpeters in the business. **Larry Vuckovich** (piano), **Akira Tana** (drums),

**Rick Vandivier** (guitar), and **Jeff Chambers** (bass) complete this top-tier group, one of the most scintillating combinations Herb Wong has ever assembled. Herb loves to bring together giants of the genre, and he has hit a home run with this ensemble.



Andrew Speight



Carl Saunders

This will be a night our jazz fans will long remember. Make sure you don't miss it. Tickets will be available by mail, starting March 15, from E. Fox, PAJA Tickets, 294 Tennessee Lane, Palo Alto, CA 94306, and at the usual outlets starting April 1.

The May 18 concert will be PAJA's first venture at the beautiful Oshman JCC theater. The theater has comfortable raked seating and a state-of-the-art sound system. There is plenty of free parking below the theater, with elevator access to the event. Complete directions will be printed on every ticket. The Oshman complex is located at the corner of San Antonio Road and Charleston, with the parking entrance on Fabian Way.

## IN CONCERT EVENT MARCH 10

In Concert is a musical evening which brings together the finest high school musicians from the six schools of the San Mateo Union High School District. PAJA has contributed financially to this wonderful event for the past ten years.

The focus for us is the 18-piece Jazz Ensemble, this year led by guest director Steve Tyler of the De Anza College Music Department. PAJA's donation underwrites the jazz director's commission. There are also three other Honors ensembles, each with its own guest conductor: a symphonic band, a choir, and an orchestra, each ensemble offering a 30-minute program for a full evening of enjoyable music.

Many of the students from the jazz ensembles have gone on to further their musical education (including at Berklee College of Music in Boston, The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in NYC, etc.) and graduates include Kevin Gallagher, currently the Music Director at Hillsdale HS (a drummer with the jazz ensemble three years in a row) and saxophonist Steven Lugerner who is now making a name for himself in the jazz world. Lugerner's rendition of the Stan Getz solo on Johnny Smith's "Moonlight In Vermont" in 2006 is still talked about.

The concert venue is the San Mateo High School Gymnasium, 500 N. Delaware St., San Mateo. It goes from 7:00 to 9:30pm, Saturday, March 10, and tickets are available at the door for this 15<sup>th</sup> annual affair at just \$10 adults and \$5 seniors and students. Information available from Harvey Mittler, 650/345-9543 or e-mail: harvey.mittler@myastound.net.

## SAN JOSE STATE JAZZ PHOTO EXHIBIT

PAJA ace photographer Andy Nozaka is contributing photos to the San Jose State photo exhibit scheduled in April. Other featured jazz photographers are Tom Ehrlich and Walter Wagner. It's an event you won't want to miss; it will be at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library at SJSU, 4<sup>th</sup> Street and E. San Fernando in San Jose. The dates are April 2-29, and the library hours are Mon.-Thurs., 8am-9pm; Fri., 8am-6pm; Sat., 9am-6pm; and Sun., 1-7pm.

—Continued on page 6



## HELD HOSTAGE IN HEAVEN

By Michael Griffin

So, here I am on The Jazz Cruise, trapped on a ship with 1800 other jazz nuts in the middle of the Caribbean. And we don't get off until we're practically to Venezuela, so like there's no escape. The good news here is that I'm familiar with about half the musicians on the boat: Scott Hamilton, the Jeff Hamilton Trio, Gary Smulyan (all have performed for PAJA recently), the Heath Brothers, and many, many more. The bad news is the other half are totally unknown to me. Naturally I start off going to gigs with the tried and true—groups that I've heard and enjoyed in the past: the Heath Brothers [love 'em], Jeff Hamilton [what a tasteful sound], Wycliffe Gordon [the energy of this man!], Scott Hamilton [Mr. Straight-ahead], Bill Charlap, the Clayton Brothers, Renee Rosnes, and so on.

Now by the third day I've seen all these marvelous artists...a lot! Which means I either go on deck and read a book or take the plunge into the unknown. OMG, what if I don't like them? But, hey, that's the beauty of The Jazz Cruise—it all pays the same. In other words, you've paid the cruise price and now it's all a freebie. If you don't like what you hear, you just move on to the next gig, and there are always three gigs going on simultaneously, all the time, every day. Nonstop jazz—what a concept!

So with the thought in mind that I've already paid for everything [including the "free" food, yet another concept that appeals], it's now time to step into the deep end of the pool and go listen to *new musicians*. And what to my wondering ears appear, but...Anat Cohen, the lady tenor player. What? Yes, I said "tenor," as in saxophone. I knew she played clarinet and soprano, but her tenor is boss, too. Good? Let me tell you about good. She is all OVER her reed instruments—inventive lines, powerful expressions, new approaches to improv, and an audience-friendly demeanor to boot.

For me, she was the discovery of the cruise. And the thing is I could have seen her twice before, but didn't—at Stanford Jazz Workshop where she has worked as performer and clinician as recently as last summer. Drat!



Michael Griffin and Bruce Powell on the cruise.

On the boat fans are given a week to wander through performance venues, exposed to artists they might never have bothered going to hear otherwise. Except for being in the middle of the ocean blue with nothing much else to do except listen to an enormous roster [about 80 musicians] of really good jazz talent, whether you're familiar with them or not. It's like being held hostage in heaven, and all I can say—it's a great way to go.



PAJANS on the cruise: Corky Freeman, Ed Fox, Linda Kinipe, Shirley Douglas, Nancy Fox.

Some comments on other musicians:

1. Tommy Igoe—an over-the-top drummer, but an engaging personality. His high-energy sextet was hot, tune after tune. Young lungs/embrace can't be beat. Igoe has moved to the Bay Area and supposedly will be forming a band here, though he'll continue to commute to NY for his band's Friday night gigs at Birdland. He was a major hit.
2. Ann Hampton Calloway. Blew the house down again, like she did two years ago. Tremendous pipes/power/range. Jazzy jazz rather than pure jazz, if that makes sense, but she is a force of nature.
3. Kurt Elling has a "different" style that's hard for me to describe. A huge voice with a nasal tone, and a kind of showbiz presence on stage. He got mixed reviews for his sometime bizarre lyrics and vocals. I might go try him again, maybe.
4. John Pizzarelli. While I consider him more a Vegas act than jazz, his rhythm guitar, good voice and humor were crowd pleasers—even without his dad Bucky not being there to help out.
5. Others who stood out were Niki Harris [wife of Wycliffe Gordon, daughter of Gene Harris], a very promising blues singer, and Houston Person, at least when he was playing his Texas Tenor style. Freddy Cole didn't make my list this time; if I want to hear Nat King Cole, I'll play his CD.

You can click on [www.thejazzcruise.com](http://www.thejazzcruise.com) for info on the 2013 cruise. An amazing array of talent is scheduled.

## IN THE OFFING—MARCH AND BEYOND

So much great music to pick from on the Peninsula and nearby. Here are some events you might consider:

### San Jose Jazz Winterfest—March 9-10-11

March 9, Fri. The Jamie Davis Quintet, 8pm \$30  
March 10, Sat. Altoist Grace Kelly, 4pm. \$35  
March 11, Sun. Ambrose Akinmusire & Gerald Clayton, 2pm. \$35  
*All SJWinterfest gigs at Theater on San Pedro Square.*  
*For complete Winterfest schedule see*  
*[www.sanjosejazz.org/en/winterfest-tickets.html](http://www.sanjosejazz.org/en/winterfest-tickets.html)*

### Bach's Dancing and Dynamite Society, El Granada

April 1, Sun. Trumpeter Dominick Farinacci Quintet, with  
vibraphonist Christian Tamburr. 4:30pm \$35  
April 22, Sun. Stan Kenton Alumni Band, Mike Vax, dir. 4:30pm. \$35  
(Also April 21 at Santa Clara U.'s Mayer Theater)

### Kuumbwa Jazz Center, Santa Cruz

March 19, Mon. Pianist Helen Sung and her trio. 7pm.  
April 30, Mon. Alfredo Rodriguez Trio. 7pm

### Yoshi's, San Francisco

March 14, Wed. Charles Mingus B'Day Celebration, with Mingus Dynasty.  
April 6-8 McCoy Tyner, with Gary Bartz

### Yoshi's, Oakland

March 8-9 Patricia Barber  
March 21, Wed. Helen Sung Trio  
March 30-April 1 SF Jazz Collective  
April 13-15 The Bad Plus

### Senzala Restaurant, Sunnyvale

Big Band Series: Footnote Jazz, Tues., March 6; Los Gatos-Saratoga Big Band, Wed.,  
March 14; A Touch of Brass, Tues., March 20; Ames Jazz Band, Tues., March 27

### New Orleans Jazz at the Sierra Point Yacht Club

Sunday afternoons, Feb. 19-April 29, 3-6pm. Macy Blackman and Friends.  
500 Sierra Point Pkwy (Brisbane Marina). Full bar and light snacks.

### Oak City Bar and Grill, Menlo Park

Jazz Wednesday and Thursday evenings: Neil Adler and Marty Honda groups.

### Hedley Club, De Anza Hotel, San Jose

Live jazz Thurs. 8-11pm; Fri. & Sat., 8:30pm-12:30.

### De Anza College

The Daddios, the 6 O'Clock and 8 O'Clock Big Bands, with special guest Anton  
Schwartz. 7:30pm at the DeAnza College Performing Arts Theater. \$15

### Ristorante Fratello, San Jose (Meridian Ave.)

Modesto Briseno and Friends. Thursday nights. Always good straight-ahead jazz.



Grace Kelly



Dominick Farinacci



Modesto Briseno

## PAJA CONTRIBUTORS

The following made contributions to PAJA during 2011. We thank you very sincerely one and all for helping us present great music and to support jazz education on the Peninsula and elsewhere.

Phil & Joyce Aranda, San Jose  
 Wesley P. Ayres, Los Altos  
 C. Stuart Brewster, Palo Alto  
 Lou Creary, San Jose  
 Malcolm Dudley, Atherton  
 Paul & Jeanne Foerster, Los Altos  
 Ed & Nancy Fox, Palo Alto  
 Beryl Gaidos, Danville  
 June & Bob Hayes, San Jose  
 Anne Hessing, Palo Alto  
 Greg Hull, Mountain View  
 Max & Lori Jedda, Sunnyvale  
 Robert Johnstone, Palo Alto  
 Judith Kays, Palo Alto  
 Bob & Christine Kradjian, Hillsborough  
 Suzanne Williams, Palo Alto  
 Thomas H. Meeks, San Francisco

Bill Newell & Roberta Roth, Redwood City  
 Sam Pearl, Palo Alto  
 Bruce Powell, Cupertino  
 Bonnie Rattner, Redwood City  
 Louise Rising, Palo Alto  
 Lester Roberts, Palo Alto  
 Karl & Theresa Robinson, Saratoga  
 Justin Rockwell & Eileen Merten, San Carlos  
 Steven Russell, Redwood City  
 Ron & Katoko Sax, Palo Alto  
 Eugene & Nancy Sharp, Palo Alto  
 Jay Siegel, Menlo Park  
 Phil & Betty Jo Sorensen, Portola Valley  
 John Sylvester, Palo Alto  
 Bill Whitmer, Palo Alto  
 Stuart Leeb, Palo Alto

And a heartfelt thank you to Terry Tran and Alice Nguyen, and especially to Roger & Mercy Smullen and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

## Neil Gordon Photos from The Jazz Cruise



Niki Harris



Guitar summit—Forman and Pizzarelli



Terrell Stafford



—Continued from page 2

In addition, in the spirit of the Smithsonian Museum's annual promotion of the April as Jazz Appreciation Month, two notable speakers from the Smithsonian will appear at the photo exhibit's opening reception. They are Dr. Anthony Brown, Smithsonian Scholar and Principal Oral Historian; and Ken Kimery, Executive Director of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. They'll offer a backstage glimpse of the Institution's jazz collections and programs. The lecture and opening reception will take place on Wednesday, April 4, 7-8:30pm at the library, Rooms 255-257 (take escalator to second floor).

### WISDOM FROM ARTIE SHAW

"If you live in your time, you have to change. How can you keep playing 1938 music in 1979? Somebody asked me once, 'Do you think swing will ever come back?' And I said, 'Do you think the 1938 Ford will ever come back?'" Artie Shaw, interviewed in Fred Hall's 1989 book, *Dialogues in Swing*.

### CODAS

The jazz world lost two mainstays recently—saxophonist Red Holloway and pianist Michael Melvoin. Both appeared at PAJA events in recent years, Holloway in a memorable gig with Kitty Margolis at the old Elks Club in 2007, and Melvoin backing vocalist Bill Henderson in a 2009 event at Cañada College. They will be missed.

### SONNY ROLLINS EXPLAINS IT ALL

"I let the subconscious take over. That's my thing. My subconscious takes over quickly and I don't know what I do after that. I surprise myself by what I play, and that's great. That's my whole thing, leaving the stage mentally, the process of improvising. You have to know your materials, the songs, the harmonics—all these things. You have to learn those back and forth. Then when you get on the stage, you forget all of it. . . See what I mean?" From Jazz-Wax Mindblower (Vol. 11), appearing in one of the best jazz sites, [www.jazzwax.com](http://www.jazzwax.com)

# Join PAJA

Mail your check to Palo Alto Jazz Alliance  
P.O. Box 60397 • Palo Alto, CA 94306

Palo Alto  
**Jazz**  
Alliance

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

☐ New subscriber    ☐ Renewal    ☐ This is a change of address

☐ Annual dues, \$35 for individuals    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Annual dues, \$50 family (two persons)    \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Additional contribution to support jazz education    \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed    \$ \_\_\_\_\_