

FROM THE CHAIR

As I drove home today (the first day of March) after depositing some PAJA renewal membership checks in the bank—and thank you, renewers—KCSM Jazz 91.1 was paying homage to New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz—since today was Mardi Gras. It brought back memories of having heard trad jazz LIVE at Preservation Hall with, for example, Sweet Emma. Emma had had a stroke but was playing a beat-up piano with one hand.



Sweet Emma Barrett and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band

When I got home, my computer was flashing a message from my ever-loving editor Ed Fox, yelling that it was past time for my March From the Chair column. But first I wanted to hear President Biden's State of the Union address. After the speech, KQED, Channel 9, segued into a show featuring big bands of the forties and fifties, particularly Glenn Miller playing his classics. This was the final push that got me moving on this column, or you might say "In The Mood." Some of you will remember when PAJA presented the Woody Herman big band, with that big sound. What a night that was for all.

Each of these interludes underscores for me once again how special LIVE concerts can be. We are fortunate, in these advanced technological times, to be able to hear jazz on demand, some created in the forties and

fifties and earlier, via vinyl records, CDs, iTunes, and other platforms. (Grandpa, what's a phonograph?) Plus we have KQED to listen to at home, and while driving. But, as I say, LIVE music is so special. You are there, in the moment, for artistic creation—spontaneity tied in with improvisation which is unique to that performance; it's what draws us to this music and these live shows.

Sadly, due to the pandemic, PAJA has been prevented from offering this service. The Jazz Masters group, featuring Greg Abate, has been scheduled and postponed time and again.

Now happily restrictions are being lifted and we will try once again to present this group in October. The musicians are willing and the Community School of Music & Arts auditorium in Mountain View has been reserved for an October Sunday afternoon. I suspect we'll still be requiring face coverings for the gig. That's fine; they don't cover your ears.

So, we are off and running. Our events chair Harvey Mittler is working on some other earlier possibilities, and we'll let you know as they mature.

In continued appreciation of your support,

C. Stuart Brewster
Chair, Palo Alto Jazz Alliance

JULIAN LAGE SPEAKS



"I've always had a kind of allegiance to this pure sound. . . To play acoustic guitar, for me, is the most honest way of playing the guitar because you can't hide behind anything. If you don't have

that clarity of intention, you get a little sloppy, you miss notes. . . It's not pretty. So, if I play a note, I like to hear just the note in its entirety with no effects." Reported by Bill Milkowski, from "Julian Lage," *DownBeat*, July 2014.

BRIAN HO — THOUGHTS ON JAZZ TODAY

Brian is a local jazz Hammond organist. In fact, a dozen years ago he performed for PAJA at a concert at Mountain View High School. PAJA board member Doris Harry asked Brian to give us his thoughts on jazz today, and these are his comments:

From dixieland to cool jazz to hard bop to fusion/jazz rock and beyond, jazz has always evolved through the years. To me, jazz is as alive and exciting today as it's ever been because while players are often rooted in tradition, they are influenced by their varied upbringing, surroundings, and the seemingly endless stream (pun intended) of music. Playing jazz now means you do not have to be confined to a singular subset of sound. Players of today can also push the boundaries and conventions of jazz.

Jazz is as diverse now as it ever was. Robert Glasper injects elements of hip hop into his playing. Vijay Iyer infuses his Indian roots, and a group like Kneebody uses influences of alternative and punk rock. Personally, as a second generation Chinese-American, growing up in San Jose, my mother and father never owned a jazz record or cassette. However, they somehow had all the Motown, Rolling Stones, and Michael Jackson records. I was introduced to the blues and jazz through a music teacher and through my own curiosity and circumstances like playing organ in an all-black Baptist church in high school; it has shaped the music I play.

Sadly, the lack of venues (compounded by the pandemic)

has made things tough for all musicians, especially younger musicians. Gone are the days where you could see a local legend playing every night of the week and, for a musician, glean valuable insights. There are few "jam sessions" these days where one could hone his skills. This certainly pertains to the Bay Area, but also to the whole world in general.

Someone who says "I love jazz" to me is similar to someone saying, "I love food." What kind of food? What kind of jazz? Not everyone likes the same food and everyone has his own preferences. To continue this analogy, every musician or "cook" adds his own blend of influences, techniques and ingredients. I hope we listeners continue to have an open mind to new artists, just as we would be open to try a new restaurant.

It's important to realize that it takes serious dedication to play any kind of music, let alone jazz, at a high, professional level. I encourage all of us to continue to support musicians so they can continue to grow and contribute to the evolution of jazz and other music genres.



Brian Ho, with Dr. Lonnie Smith

THE GUILD—NEW PERFORMANCE SPACE

You'd think that the Midpeninsula—Menlo Park to Mountain View—would be a desirable location for a dedicated live music performance space, like the Fox Theater in Redwood City. Not counting the music facilities on the Stanford campus, there was The Edge on Cal Ave. in Palo Alto (now defunct), and this old-timer recalls the short-lived jazz club, In Your Ear (on University Ave. in Palo Alto), in the 60s, but nothing else comes to mind. Well, the situation has been remedied by a nonprofit called The Peninsula Arts Guild, a consortium of investors who have sunk \$35 million into a wholesale renovation of the former Guild movie theater on El Camino in Menlo Park.

The new Guild opened on February 25 with jazz pianist Robert Glasper featured. The schedule of events yields an eclectic mix of music genres, with some jazz (Glasper, Kamasi Washington, the Jazz Mafia, Ambrose Akinmusire, John Pizzarelli)—for us, the roses among the thorns? Check out the events list at www.guildtheatre.com.

This is a boon to those of us who love live music; the Guild management obviously believes there is an unfulfilled appetite for live music in our area and are bravely betting that fans will much prefer a local venue with high-profile musical acts instead of having to drive to San Francisco or San Jose.

PAJA board member Dave Miller, and his wife Bebes, attended the opening night gala, and they were duly impressed. Dave filled us in: "The new theatre will accommodate patrons on two levels. Permanent cushioned seats, about 60 in number, offer comfortable seating upstairs together with superb sight lines to the stage. Attendees on the main floor will stand for the most part, although for certain performances (jazz, we suppose) portable seating downstairs will be available. Overall the venue reportedly will be able to accommodate 500 people most nights. The stage is large, roughly double what is found in most small clubs. The sound system similarly is impressive. Extensive bars exist on both levels, each equipped with a video screen to enable a view of the stage while ordering drinks."

The renovation has converted the Guild movie theater into a beautiful, two-story performance venue. Ticket prices vary according to the attraction. Tickets for John Pizzarelli on April 22nd, for instance, are \$42 (orchestra 3, or \$60 (orchestra 2), so jazz lovers, mark your calendars. /Ed Fox



The Guild

Bebes Miller

ANOTHER JAZZ VIGNETTE FROM SUPERFAN KENNETH COBB

In August 1997, after having “blown up” big time and achieved box office appeal, recorded several albums (both jazz and classical), toured all around the world, and with nine years under his belt as artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, **Wynton Marsalis**, after a four-year absence, returned to Blues Alley in D.C. with a quintet. After a long day at work, I made my way across town from L’Enfant Plaza to Georgetown. Before the group descended the stairs, the club was abuzz with excitement, anticipation, and energy, looking forward to seeing and hearing the famous trumpet icon. The group included Walter Blanding (tenor sax), Marcus Roberts (piano), Rodney Whitaker (bass) and Wynton’s younger brother Jason on drums.

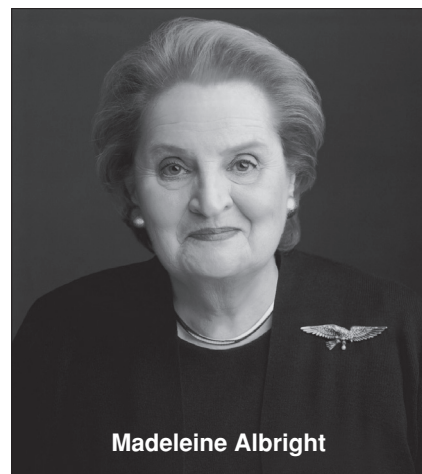
Once the quintet began playing, the sound was great, the band “let it rip,” and the set was outstanding: uptempo, midtempo, swinging, ballads, blues, etc. In fact, in one ballad, Wynton slowly strode through the aisles, flirtatiously serenading female guests at the tables (including my guest), with his bluesy, mellow, weeping trumpet sounds.

Throughout the show, however, although it was mostly dark in the club, out of the corner of my eye I noticed a few gentlemen—expressionless, in suits and ties—conspicuously standing up against the Alley’s trademark

brick walls, as well as by the front entrance and the staircase. Since they didn’t look like wait staff, nor was there standing room only, something seemed amiss. Well, midway through the set, Wynton made an announcement, acknowledging the presence of the

U.S. Secretary of State, **Madeleine Albright**, in the audience, seven full months into her tenure as a member of President Bill Clinton’s cabinet. The jazz fans warmly applauded. She happened to be on a month-long respite from her diplomatic travels, having returned from Singapore in July, heading to the Czech Republic in September.

After the set ended, on the way down from the upstairs restroom, I passed her on the narrow staircase and said, “You’re doing a great job, Madame Secretary!” I guess even the Madame Secretary, flanked by her own Secret Service detail, deserves a night out on the town every once in a while. . . and with Wynton Marsalis at the helm, this night was both unforgettable and historic!



Madeleine Albright

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Advance Notice

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2022

RETURN OF THE SIX JAZZ MASTERS

Community School of Music & Arts, Mountain View



Greg Abate



Andrew Speight



Erik Jekabson



Ben Stolorow



Sylvia Cuenca



Essiet Okon Essiet