

FROM THE CHAIR

There are Calendar, Fiscal and Academic years. At PAJA we have now started our Performance year for 2019-20, our 27th. Just for the record, our first concert entitled "Jazz Guitar Heroes" was held on October 11, 1992, and featured Bruce Forman, Eddie Duran and Duncan James.

Our first event for 2019-20 was our annual free member party—Saturday, September 15th at the Palo Alto Art Center's pleasant courtyard. What a time we had on this early fall afternoon enjoying a group of college-age students from the Roots, Jazz and American Music program of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, plus a professional quartet arranged by drummer Akira Tana.

The gig started with a marvelous set presented by the student group, whose development is enhanced by undertaking public performances. After the intermission which allowed us to meet and greet old and new jazz friends (plus the refilling of wine glasses), the second set was also terrific. With Tana on drums and Ruth Davies on bass, plus two RJAM faculty members, Jason Hainsworth on tenor and Simon Rowe on piano, it was all a genuine treat for the 90 or so folks in the audience. The relaxed ambience that radiated from the tree-covered patio meshed with the great sounds, once again demonstrating the power and beauty of live music. Thanks to my fellow Board members and volunteers who made it all happen.

Next was "Bird With Strings," a more formal concert held on Saturday, October 12th, at the Menlo-Atherton HS Performing Arts Center. This group, organized by Andrew Speight, in association with the Alexander String Quartet (and friends), provided an excellent setting to hear those classic Charlie Parker selections like "Stardust" and "Just Friends." It was a fitting celebration of the upcoming Charlie Parker centenary. PAJA was able to arrange this concert thanks to a special grant awarded to us by the City of Menlo Park to help offset the total costs of the concert. We are most appreciative of this assistance. Special thanks to event chair Harvey Mittler for masterminding this gig.

It is unfortunate that many of you missed out on these enjoyable times. Let me suggest, as I did in the last issue of the Buff that you go to our website—pajazzalliance.org—and peruse the pictures taken at each of these shows. Some are in the Buff but on the website there are

many more and in glorious color—and will make you wish you'd been there.

Remember to mark your calendar for our next performance, currently scheduled for March 15th—the return of the Six Jazz Masters: Greg Abate, Andrew Speight, Erik Jekabson, Akira Tana, Jeff Chambers and Ben Stolorow. You'll recall we had this same group perform two years ago. That afternoon was so great and so exciting, we felt we had to get them together again. Details forthcoming.

In continued appreciation of your support,
C. Stuart Brewster
Chair, Palo Alto Jazz Alliance

ABOUT DUKE ELLINGTON

"What set him apart was not his virtuoso command of instrumental timbre but how he used it. Mere arrangers took pop songs and dressed them up in new colors and harmonies, but Ellington, though he recorded his share of engagingly catchy hits, was better known and more widely esteemed for the pieces in which he used the language of jazz to say things that it had never said before. [Andre] Previn compared him to Stravinsky and Prokofiev; Percy Grainger compared him to Bach and Delius; Ralph Ellison likened him to Ernest Hemingway. Within the tight confines of a single 78 side, he spun 'tone parallels' (a phrase he coined) to every imaginable human emotion. He and the 900 musicians who passed through his band sang of joy and loneliness, passion and despair, faith and hope." Terry Teachout, in "Duke Of The Three-Minute Masterpiece," in Wall Street Journal, October 12, 2013.

SAN JOSE JAZZ'S BLACK CAB SERIES

This series kicked off October 20 with Kendrick Scott's Oracle (with Taylor Eigsti); on November 8, vocalist Quiana Lynell headlines. February 21 it's Matt Wilson's "Honey & Salt" Quintet. And on March 3, it's the Melissa Aldana Trio. All concerts are 7-8:30pm at the Hammer Theatre's black box space.



NOODLING *Thoughts on jazz* By Michael Burman

THE JAZZ MESSENGER



Any list of the ten or so most influential jazz musicians is unlikely to include the name of Art Blakey. Certainly, he does not make my own list. Yet I would argue that his influence has been much greater and en-

during than casual consideration might suggest.

Last month—October 2019—brought the centenary of Blakey's birth in Pittsburgh, PA. So acclaimed was he, equally as a drummer and band leader, that many would be surprised to learn that his first instrument was the piano. He'd studied that instrument, apparently in parallel with the Bible, as part of the Seventh Day Adventist family into which he was adopted.

And it was on piano that Blakey had his first professional gigs. Interestingly, his career as a pianist at the Pittsburgh night spot The Democratic Club came to a sudden end when the owner (possibly a gangster, this being the tail end of the Prohibition era) ordered the teen-aged Blakey at gunpoint over to the drum stool, to be replaced on the piano bench by the owner's new preference. It is said that his replacement was fellow Pittsburgher Erroll Garner, but this seems unlikely given that Garner was two years younger still than Blakey, but why ruin a good story with the facts?

Asked whether he was self-taught on drums, Blakey replied, "I was self-taught on everything." This, like those reports of the death of Mark Twain, may be exaggerated: an early job for Blakey was as valet to drummer Chick Webb. The influence on the young drummer of the great pianist and arranger Mary Lou Williams is often mentioned, too, even if not always in terms that flatter either. For example, after a period in New York City, Blakey returned to Pittsburgh (dates cited include 1937 and 1941, so he'd have been aged about 20), where he formed a band which was "appropriated by Mary Lou Williams after she left Andy Kirk's band." Jazz archivist Annie Kuebler reported of the sextet that "Williams. . . said [she and husband Harold 'Shorty' Baker] felt that Blakey

PART ONE: THE EARLY YEARS

just didn't have his rhythm down so she planted him right between [herself] and Baker until he got it!"

One way or another, though, Blakey had learned enough behind the kit to land a spot with Fletcher Henderson in the 1942-43 period. This was not to be a marriage made in heaven, however. Jeffrey Magee in his excellent biography of Fletcher, quotes George Floyd, the band's singer of the era: "Art was playing bebop drums, dropping bombs with his bass drum, and Horace [Fletcher's brother] could not stand that." Blakey found a more suitable seat in Billy Eckstine's ground-breaking bebop big band, and Kenny Clarke was quoted: "That's when he [Blakey] changed his style: Dizzy Gillespie and Billy Eckstine taught him to play like me; so he began to play in my style—but in his own way. Blakey is really unique." Blakey spent two years with Eckstine, beginning in late 1944. Band members included Dizzy Gillespie, Fats Navarro, Miles Davis, Kenny Dorham, Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt, Dexter Gordon, Tadd Dameron, Lena Horne and Sarah Vaughan, among other luminaries. What a band!

But the Big Band Era was over. As George T. Simon tells it in *The Big Bands*, "The supply of bands far exceeded the demand. . . in the single month of December 1946, eight of them called it quits—Woody Herman, Benny Goodman, Harry James, Les Brown, Jack Teagarden, Benny Carter, Ina Ray Hutton, and Tommy Dorsey!" Playing bebop did not immunize Eckstine against this economic environment, and he, too, disbanded.

Soon afterwards, Blakey went to Africa. He disputed claims that the motivation for that voyage had been to improve on the drums. "I went to Africa because there wasn't anything else for me to do. I couldn't get any gigs, and I had to work my way over on a boat. I went over there to study religion and philosophy. I didn't bother with the drums, I wasn't after that. . . When I was growing up I had no choice. I was just thrown into a church and told this is what I was going to be. I didn't want to be their Christian. . . When I got back people got the idea I went there to learn about music." He took the name Abdullah Ibn Buhaina, and although he never worked professionally under that name he was widely known as "Buhaina" or simply "Bu".

Once back in the U.S., it was ironic—given the events that had caused him to leave—that the first band Blakey worked with was another big band, The 17 Messengers, which included Idrees Sulieman, a

trumpeter who, like Blakey, had converted to Islam, but who had abandoned his birth name permanently. ("Most of the guys in the band were Muslim," wrote Sulieman.) Sulieman and Blakey had known each other since the Henderson and Eckstine eras. His appraisal of Blakey's performance with Henderson had been negative, but he was impressed by Blakey in his Eckstine period. Though Blakey claimed he never wanted to be the leader of the new band, Sulieman recalled Blakey saying: "Well, if I'm not the leader I'm not going to play." Sulieman also claimed that "Dizzy [Gillespie] gave us a whole repertoire from his band, his whole book . . . [when] we made our appearance at Smalls' Paradise. Dizzy came up and sat in, said 'This is the band I should have had.'" But Blakey said Kenny Dorham did most of the writing. The band included great players like Sonny Rollins and Bud Powell, but despite that, "economically the band was a disaster." Unfortunately it left no recordings for our retrospective analysis.

Unlike the post-Eckstine period, this time Blakey did not want for work. During his brief period in New York City he had met Thelonious Monk, and when Monk made his first recording as a leader (for Blue Note in October 1947), it was Blakey whom he called to play drums. In fact, Blakey played on four of Monk's six recordings for Blue Note, 1947-51. (By a twist of fate, Blakey was also to be the drummer on Monk's final studio recordings, in London in 1971 while they were touring as part of "The Giants of

Jazz" with Gillespie, Kai Winding, Stitt and Al McKibbin. There are later live recordings of Monk over the next year or so, but he spent most of his final decade as a recluse in the Weehawken home of Nica de Koenigswarter, "The Jazz Baroness.")

Over the next few years, Blakey—not yet the jazz giant we now recognize—recorded frequently and gigged promiscuously. He recorded as a sideman with almost everyone on the jazz scene, including Dizzy, Miles, Zoot Sims, Dick Hyman, Illinois Jacquet, James Moody, Charlie Parker, and Coleman Hawkins. In 1952 he became a member of a quartet run by clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, with Kenny Drew on piano and Curley Russell on bass (later Gene Wright). This might have been his "big break" had he not taken a different direction soon afterwards. Blakey said of DeFranco: "He was a fine person, something else. He turned down a lot of opportunities because of us. . . They'd expect [him] to come in with an all-white band. He'd show up with us. . . we get our reservations and come in to check in and we say, 'What do you mean there's no room?' . . . He'd come in and raise hell; he's a hell of a man."

NEXT ISSUE—PART TWO, "The Birth of the Jazz Messengers"

Michael Burman hosts "The Weekend Jazz Oasis" Saturday evenings on KCSM Jazz 91.1.

MJF—A View From the Grounds

By Dorothy and Andy Nozaka. Photographs by Andy Nozaka

The Monterey Jazz Festival celebrated its 62nd yer under ideal weather with the artists on the grounds representing nearly 100 different groups, performing at eight different venues over a three-day period—September 27-29. Some highlights:



Jenny Scheinman



Adam O'Farrill

Christone "Kingfish" Ingram. Straight from the Mississippi Delta and at 20 years of age, the "Kingfish" is an astonishing blues guitarist, vocalist and composer. With searing uptempo solos, Ingram quickly won over the Garden Stage patrons. Under the guidance of blues great Buddy Guy, Ingram, it is hoped, will soon develop the depth and maturity that many blues fans await.

Connie Han Trio. Connie Han is a young pianist with blazing technique, displaying fleet legato runs and a sense of urgency to play everything uptempo. Like the young "Kingfish" we must be patient and hopeful that Ms. Han's artistry will soon develop the maturity that will distinguish her as an accomplished artist.

Continued on next page

BIRD WITH STRINGS SOARS

Altoist Andrew Speight got all his ducks in a row and put on another superb Charlie Parker With Strings concert, this one for PAJA on October 13th at M-A HS's Center for the Performing Arts in Atherton. With the won-



derful collaboration of the Alexander String Quartet (and Friends), and with Keith Saunders (p), Michael Zisman (b) and Austin Harris (d), Andrew took us back to those great Bird recordings. Over the years he has collected the original charts of those record sessions and this lends a strong authenticity to these presentations. Close your eyes and you're back at those storied sessions—bebop with violins!

These recordings were the most popular albums of Bird's short career; they featured the ballads of the day, and we heard familiar tunes like "Stardust," "I'll Remember April," and "If I Should Lose You." All a fitting celebration of the centennial of Charlie Parker's birth. There are more photos (in color) of the concert on the PAJA website: www.pajazzalliance.org.

Photographs by Bebes Miller



The Monterey Jazz Festival

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Antonio Sanchez and Migration. The distinguished percussionist Antonio Sanchez, born in Mexico and a naturalized U.S. citizen uses his group, Migration, as a response to President Trump's behavior vis-à-vis the U.S.-Mexico border crisis. Sanchez's quintet presents his protest in the time-honored tradition established in the history of jazz.

Jenny Scheinman and Allison Miller. The weekend was a triumph for MJF artist-in-residence, drummer Allison Miller. In addition to appearing on the Main Stage with

fellow artist-in-residence, Derrick Hodge, she played on the grounds with her sextet Boom Tic Boom, and in the group Parlour Game. Both groups featured the remarkable violinist Jenny Scheinman. Long a member of the Bay Area avant-garde, Scheinman demonstrated accessible lyricism and improvisation along with an occasional folksy rhythmic lope. Boom Tic Boom also featured the MJF debut of young promising trumpeter Adam O'Farrill, grandson of the late Latin Jazz great Chico O'Farrill.

ANOTHER VERY PLEASURABLE MEMBER PARTY

It was a glorious afternoon in the leafy, shaded courtyard of the Palo Alto Art Center. Thankfully the heat wave had let up on this September Sunday (the 15th), and the musicians—assembled by drummer Akira Tana and PAJA event chair Harvey Mittler—were in splendid form.

The first group, students from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music's new jazz program, was terrific: Jason Hiyashi (sax), Carter Eng (trumpet), Michael Potter (piano), Chris Carrera (bass), and Robert Chapa (drums). They treated us to familiar numbers like Monk's "Evidence" and other standards. Particularly effective was "Stompin' At The Savoy," in which they combined some vocalese with their instrumental licks. You're going to hear from these youngsters, especially Eng on trumpet who seems ready for prime time.

Then a faculty group took over after intermission: Tana on drums, the popular bassist Ruth Davies, Jason Hainsworth on

tenor, and Simon Rowe on piano. Rowe and Hainsworth are top administrators in the SFCM jazz program (RJAM—Roots, Jazz and American Music) and they both have impressive resumés in playing with big names in the business. Wow—a dynamite world class group that grooved on tunes like "Green Dolphin Street" and "Alone Together".

The free member party continues to be a popular PAJA annual tradition, and about 90 members and guests turned up this year. The wine flowed and the snacks, provided by Shirley Douglas's great volunteers, disappeared quickly. The program certainly demonstrates

how much amazing local talent we have in this area, and we are pleased to have these annual parties to showcase that talent for the enjoyment of our members.

*Check out our website—
www.pajazzalliance.org
for many more photos.*



*Photos by
Bebes Miller*



THE JAZZ PERISCOPE

Selected gigs for November and December 2019

YOSHI'S OAKLAND www.yoshi.com/oakland

11/5-7	Branford Marsalis.....	8, 10pm
11/8-9	Hiroshima	
11/10	New York Voices.....	7pm
11/19, 12/18	Tommy Igoe.....	8pm
11/29-30	Pharoah Sanders "Icon"	
12/19	Jane Monheit	8pm
12/26	Larry Vuckovich	8pm



Emmet Cohen Trio

SF JAZZ CENTER www.sfjazz.org/center

11/7-10	Dorado Schmitt and the Django All-Stars	
11/14-17	Joshua Redman Quartet	
11/24	Mason Razavi	6, 7:30pm
11/29-30, 12/1	Sergio Mendes	
12/7	Erick Jekabson Sextet	7, 8:30pm
12/8	Jack DeJohnette, with Ravi Coltrane	7pm
12/19-22	Lavay Smith and Red Hot Skillet Lickers.....	
12/21	Marcus Shelby Orchestra.....	7:30pm

BACH'S DANCING & DYNAMITE SOCIETY, EL GRANADA www.bachddsoc.org

11/10	Emmet Cohen Trio	4:30pm
11/17	Miguel Zenón Quartet.....	4:30pm
11/24	Joshua Redman Quartet	4:30pm
12/8	Terry Disley Experience (Nutcracker).....	4:30pm

CETRELLA Restaurant, 400 Main St., Los Altos www.centrella.com 650/948-0400

Jazz vocalist every Saturday night, 6:30-9:30, with sax ace Michael O'Neill

KUUMBWA JAZZ CENTER, SANTA CRUZ www.kuumbwajazz.org

11/6	Dorado Schmitt and Django All-Stars.....	7pm
11/8	Branford Marsalis Quartet	7, 9pm
11/11	Joshua Redman Quartet	7, 9pm
12/2	Akiko/Jeff Hamilton/Graham Dechter	7pm

SAN JOSE JAZZ www.sanjosejazz.org

11/8	Quiana Lynell Hammer Theatre black box space/Black Cab series.....	7pm
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ANGELICA'S 863 Main St., Redwood City www.angelicasllc.com

11/9	Dave Miller Trio CD release event.....	8pm
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BING CONCERT HALL STUDIO Stanford University www.live.stanford.edu/venues

11/15	Allison Miller Boom Tic Boom	7, 9pm
12/11-14	Jazz Mafia/Holiday Heist	

CAFÉ STRITCH 374 S. First St., San Jose www.cafestritch.com

SAVANNA JAZZ 1189 Laurel St., San Carlos 415/624-4549 www.savannajazz.com

12/7	Rebecca DuMaine & Dave Miller Trio.....	8pm
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7 MILE HOUSE 2800 Bayshore Blvd., Brisbane. 415/467-2343 www.7milehouse.com

Jazz Sundays, 5-8pm(Lateano, Speight, Stoloroff, Zisman, et al.)

Jazz Tuesdays, 7-10pm (Bendigkeit or Molina groups)