

FROM THE CHAIR

Alexander Barantschik, Concert Master for the San Francisco Symphony, recently remarked in the SFS Playbill that he “admires the ultimate freedom with which jazz musicians make music. You could almost compare a great jazz session to the naturalness of a bird singing, especially when you hear a live performance.”

An interesting insight to the significance of live presentations, a theme that PAJA has long touted. Our last offering is a case in point. The solo piano evening with Benny Green was a reinforcement of the power of being there. I fear that many folks are missing out, thinking that what comes via streaming, CDs, etc., is no different from live performances. Why should I bother to pay up and go out into the night? Sadly, it’s not easy to convince some people of the qualitative difference, even if acoustics can greatly vary from hall to hall. With Benny Green, we were so fortunate to hear a master at the top of his game share his virtuosity in a modern facility with excellent sound.

But how do we get more fans to recognize this difference and to take advantage of these memorable musical opportunities? Those of you who did attend the Green evening were welcomed by Chet Douglas, husband of longtime PAJA board member and handler of various membership duties, Shirley Douglas. Chet had the notion that it would be useful in promotion planning for future events if we had some idea as to how attendees had heard about the gig and were prompted to attend. His survey had a number of categories, such as notice in the mail, KCSM announcement(s), website, school, poster, word of mouth, newspaper ad, e-mail notice, etc. The top three were notice in the mail, KCSM and word of mouth. Interesting—now

we have to figure out what this data means and how to apply it.

Do let us know of any thoughts and ideas you might have whereby we can optimize our concert publicity and improve and strengthen PAJA.

Bye, bye to 2016 and welcome 2017. And farewell also to those jazz artists we lost in 2016: vibes great Bobby Hutcherson, Mose Allison, Pete Fountain, Gato Barbieri, pianist Paul Bley, local hero Dan Hicks, blues singer Sharon Jones. And to two icons from my younger days: singer Kay Starr and Fred Hellerman of The Weavers. I’d like to express my thanks to you all for your continued membership support—with special appreciation for the many financial donations you’ve made during the year.

Sincerely and all good wishes for the coming year,

C. Stuart Brewster
Chair, Palo Alto Jazz Alliance



Vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson—one of the jazz artists who passed away during 2016.

CONFESSIONS OF AN OLD JAZZ FAN

At one time—long ago—I turned up my nose at **Charlie Parker** and **John Coltrane** as too far out and just so much noise. Now 50-60 years later these geniuses have exalted positions in my jazz pantheon. When did I change? When did I allow myself to be reached by these pioneers? When did their strange become the familiar?



Rudresh Mahanthappa

A month or two ago, I went to see altoist **Rudresh Mahanthappa** and his group at Café Stritch in San Jose. Mahanthappa has earned all sorts of awards and accolades in the last few years and has won the alto sax DownBeat poll four of the last five years. “Bird Calls” was named the #1 jazz album of 2015 by DownBeat and by the NPR music jazz critics poll. I had listened to a bit of the album on his website and I told myself I had to catch his act, well, to maintain my credential as a jazz fan, right?

I didn’t get it. I’m sorry. No melodies to speak of; it doesn’t swing. Just, it seems to me, furious “noodling” on his instrument in extended solos. We had enough after about an hour. It wasn’t helped by a drummer who overpowered everyone else, making it impossible to really hear his bandmates’ solos. The trumpeter, young **Adam O’Farrill**, sounded pretty good, but the pianist was generally drowned out.

Contrast this with another gig I went to a week or so later at one of my favorite clubs—Café Pink House in Saratoga. It was the remarkable jazz trumpeter **Carl Saunders** playing with the outstanding **Mason Razavi Quartet**. Ultimate straight-ahead jazz, mostly standards and tunes with actual melodies! Pure joy. Music easy to love, jazz designed to thrill and delight us. There was great ensemble playing, humor, and of course amazing trumpet work by the master, Carl Saunders.



Carl Saunders

I learned to love Parker and Coltrane. Will Mahanthappa and Vijay Iyer and Snarky Puppy ever make me love them? It can’t be too late for me; there were a number of people in the packed audience at Stritch who were genuinely carried away and excited by the music—some almost in my age group. What do they understand that I do not?

Like so many jazz friends who share my love of the music: we like warhorse jazz classics like “Along Came Betty” or “Hi-Fly” or “Miles Ahead” or tunes from the so-called American Songbook—the familiar elixir that stirs our memories and gets our toes to tappin’. “Why doesn’t Taylor play stuff we know and can relate to any more?” is something we hear all the time. But, darn it—I’m feeling like a troglodyte who is no longer hip or “with it.” Is that who I want to be?

SO, I want to hear Mahanthappa again. He’s obviously a brilliant instrumentalist, and I owe it to myself to try to properly appreciate what he does. Not just him, but Iyer, Glasper, and others of the new generation. Though our preferences may run to the music of the 40s, 50s and 60s, don’t we have to make room, don’t we have to open our ears to what’s happening today? It’s a challenge, and perhaps it’s just a matter of listening to the edgy new stuff more often and becoming comfortable and familiar with it. In any case, I am going to continue to try and maybe, just maybe, make myself hip again. /Moldy Fig Ed Fox

BENNY REMINDS US WHY WE DO THIS

You all know that PAJA members involved in putting on jazz concerts are volunteers—we have no paid staff. **Harvey Mittler**, our Events Chair, has a busy law practice, but he spends many unpaid hours communicating with talent agents, musicians, sound engineers, media entertainment editors, and venue managers, among other chores. And he rounds up volunteers to design mailers, take tickets, hand out programs, pick up musicians at the airport, and so on. Why do we do this?

Well it's mostly because we all love the music and are happy to be involved in the backstage preparations and the concert presentation. But especially because we might be involved in touching artistic genius—something amazing and memorable.

And so we come to **Benny Green**, who gave us an hour and three quarters of solo jazz piano on Veteran's Day—November 11 at the Menlo-Atherton High School Center For The Performing Arts. Benny's selection of tunes composed by Oscar Peterson, Hank Jones, McCoy Tyner and others (including a couple of his originals) was ideal. He made it clear to us that pleasing his audience is

always a paramount consideration for him—and he succeeded brilliantly.

Benny gave us that rare thing—a performance we'll not soon forget and, yes, an opportunity to remind ourselves why we do this, and why we go to the trouble of seeing jazz live: there's always a chance you'll experience a small artistic miracle. Thank you, Benny, for giving us one of those evenings.



Benny Green signing CDs and greeting a long line of well-wishers after the concert. Teresa Anthony photo.

A VERY IMPRESSIVE LINEUP FOR SAN JOSE JAZZ'S WINTERFEST

The Kaiser Permanente San Jose Jazz Winterfest kicks off Valentine's Day and runs to March 8. Artists will be performing at various venues, including Café Stritch in downtown San Jose, the Café Pink House in Saratoga, Oshman JCC in Palo Alto, and other sites. It's truly an all-star roster, and here are some of the highlights:

2/14	Donny McCaslin	Café Stritch	7pm
2/16	The Cookers	Café Stritch	7:30pm
2/19	Mary Stallings	Café Stritch	5pm
2/22	John Abercrombie Quartet	Café Pink House	7, 9pm
2/23	Wallace Roney, Patrice Rushen	Café Stritch	7:30pm
2/26	Kim Nalley Band (Ella tribute)	Oshman JCC	7pm
2/27	John Scofield/Joe Lovano 4	Oshman JCC	8pm
2/28	Regina Carter So. Comfort	Trianon Theater	5pm
3/2	Jam at Hedley (Worley, etc)	Hedley Club	7pm
3/3	Marquis Hill Blacktet	Café Stritch	7pm
3/4	Nicholas Payton Trio	Jade Leaf Eatery	8pm
3/5	Bria Skonberg	Café Stritch	6pm
3/6	Jackie Ryan (Duke Ellington)	Café Stritch	6pm
3/8	Delfaeyo Marsalis Quartet	Café Stritch	7pm



Kim Nalley performs at Oshman JCC in Palo Alto on February 26th.

These are just a few of the outstanding events during Winterfest—there are many other exciting groups and all-star school orchestras. For complete information and tickets see www.sanjosejazz.org.

THE JAZZ PERISCOPE *Selected gigs for January and February, 2017*

YOSHI'S OAKLAND *www.yoshis.com/oakland*

1/5	Larry Vuckovich Benny Goodman tribute, w/Jackie Ryan.....	8pm
1/10-12	Tower of Power	8, 10 pm
1/17, 2/21	Tommy Igoe Groove Conspiracy.....	8pm
1/18	Brubeck Brothers, tribute to Dave Brubeck	8pm
1/29	Mads Tolling w/Kenny Washington.....	6, 8pm
2/7-8	Branford Marsalis w/Kurt Elling	
2/13-14	Keiko Matsui	
2/24	Wallace Roney, Patrice Rushen, et al.	8pm
2/28	Lionel Hampton Big Band (w/Jason Marsalis).....	8pm

SF JAZZ CENTER *www.sfjazz.org/center*

1/10-15	Chris Botti	
1/16	Anniversary Celebration/Open House	11am, 2, 5pm
1/26	Roger Glenn plays Cal Tjader's "Soul Sauce"	8, 9:30pm
1/26	Electric Squeezbox/Tommy Igoe Groove Conspiracy	7:30pm
1/28	Jazz Mafia plays Miles Davis's "Birth of the Cool"	8, 9:30pm
1/29	Joe Gilman plays Dave Brubeck's "Time Out"	5:30, 7pm
2/9-12	The Cookers	
2/17-19	Dianne Reeves	7:30pm
2/25	Marcus Shelby Orchestra	11am

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

1/29	Morchestra Jazz Orchestra, w/Nicolas Bearde	4:30pm
2/12	Donny McCaslin Group	4:30pm
2/19	The Cookers	4:30pm
2/26	Nicholas Payton Trio	4:30pm

KUUMBWA JAZZ CENTER *www.kuumbwajazz.org*

1/9	Barbara Dane, w/Tammy Hall.....	7pm
1/16	The Bad Plus	7pm
1/19	Brubeck Brothers Quartet	7pm
1/30	Tommy Igoe Groove Conspiracy (Steely Dan tribute)	7pm
2/6	Branford Marsalis, w/Kurt Elling	7, 9pm
2/18	John Scofield	7, 9pm

SAN JOSE JAZZ *www.sanjosejazz.org*

See page 3 for partial lineup for San Jose Jazz's Winterfest, 2/14-3/8

ANGELICAS 863 Main St., Redwood City *www.angelicasllc.com*

Every Tuesday evening Jazz on Tuesdays, w/Berthiaume & vocalists

1/5, 2/2	Pamela Rose band, w/Terence Brewer (1/5).....	7:30pm
1/29, 2/26	Mike Galisatus Big Band, w/Duane Lawrence.....	7pm
2/12	Nancy Gilliland Trio	7pm
2/14	Rebecca DuMaine, w/Dave Miller Trio	7:30pm

CAFÉ STRITCH, 374 S. 1st St., San Jose *www.cafestritch.com*

HOTEL SOFITEL, 223 Twin Dolphin Dr., Redwood City 650/598-9000

Sunday jazz brunch, with Michael O'Neill and vocalists, 11am-2pm

CAFÉ PINK HOUSE, 14577 Big Basin Way, Saratoga 408/647-2273

1/12	Michel O'Neill Quartet	
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SAVANNA JAZZ, 1189 Laurel St., San Carlos 415/624-4549 *www.savannajazz.com*

Jazz nightly Michael O'Neill 1/6 8pm

WE CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOUR HELP

As you know, PAJA's mission—in addition to promoting jazz on and near the Peninsula—is to support jazz education in general. Your PAJA dues provide the engine to keep us running, and as always we thank our members for their continuing backing of our efforts. There are a number of members who also contribute financially, over and above their dues, and we'd like to thank those who donated in 2016:

Patty Boyle, Menlo Park
C. Stuart Brewster, Palo Alto
Lew Creary, San Jose
Robert Couly, San Francisco
Claire Dikas, Redwood City
Cathy Dolton, Palo Alto
Ed Fox, Palo Alto
Beryl Gaidos, Danville
Kate Godfrey, Palo Alto
Mary Hand, Palo Alto
Jan Henrotin, Palo Alto
Ann Hessing, Palo Alto
Max & Lorraine Jedda, Sunnyvale
Robert Johnstone, Palo Alto
Judith S. Kays, Stanford
Raymond Kenny, Los Gatos
K. Knox, Santa Clara
Bob & Christine Kradjian, Hillsborough
Gayle & Walt Wood, Los Altos Hills
Rich & Beverly Marconi, Los Altos
Kent Mather & Marcia Pugsley, Palo Alto
Mel Matsumoto, San Rafael

Tom Meeks, San Francisco
Bill Newell & Roberta Roth, Redwood City
Chuck Nile, Portola Valley
Sally Normington, Palo Alto
Sam & Leslie Pearl, Palo Alto
Bruce Powell & Jan De Carli, Cupertino
Louise Rising, Palo Alto
Karl & Theresa Robinson, Saratoga
Lily Robinson, Los Altos
Geoff Roach, Redwood City
Justin Rockwell & Eileen Merten, San Diego
Steve Russell, Redwood City
Ron Sax, Palo Alto
B.J. Sorensen, Portola Valley
Jeffrey & Suann Stone, Menlo Park
Bill Whitmer, Palo Alto
Marilyn Wong, Menlo Park

JOHN PIZZARELLI ON MUSICAL GROWTH

"Since my banjo beginnings, I was always comfortable with the guitar. I think I know my limitations now, while realizing that I've mastered pieces I never thought I'd be able to play. . . And I still work hard on chord melody things at home just as though I were in my parents' basement as a thirteen-year-old, slugging it out with my uncle's tablatures. My confidence has grown through the years to the point where I almost enjoy throwing myself into the fire to see if I can play my way out." From *World On A String: A Musical Memoir*, by John Pizzarelli and Joseph Cosgriff.

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