

FROM THE CHAIR

The December issue of *Punch*, a local magazine devoted to reporting on various aspects of life on the Peninsula, has a very nice story entitled “Our Piano Prodigy’s Path to the Grammys,” about Taylor Eigsti and how his career started in our neighborhood. I recommend that you go to Taylor’s website—tayjazz.com— and check for yourself what Taylor’s been up to lately. The one-time wunderkind turned 40 this year and his latest album, *Plot Armor*, has been nominated for a 2025 Grammy for “Best Contemporary Instrumental Album.” It seems like just yesterday that many of us were astounded by Taylor’s pre-teen performances, and now he’s in his 40s, a top-tier jazz pianist.

There is some mention in the *Punch* article of Herb Wong’s role in helping launch Taylor’s career. I want to add that PAJA was also involved in those early days, and, in my opinion, we were his first fan club. While



Taylor Eigsti

our official records indicate that Taylor first played for PAJA at a piano summit at his high school alma mater, Woodside Priory, in 2009, I am pretty certain he played for us a time or two before that.

Herb and a number of PAJA members took Taylor down to Disneyland when he was 12 or 13 for a meeting of the International Association For Jazz Education where we were able to introduce him to various artists like Billy Taylor (“Taylor meet Taylor”) and others. At some point in this period, he opened for a Dave Brubeck concert, impressing the master.

In 2010, we made Taylor an honorary lifetime PAJA member and we are happy to fill the seats at Dinkelspiel each year when he returns to teach and perform at the Stanford Jazz Workshop. Bravo, Taylor!

Let me conclude by wishing you all a very happy 2025. These are tough times for jazz (see Page 3) and we are grateful for your loyalty and support. Thank you for your membership and donations made above and beyond dues payments (also see Page 3). We could not, of course, do this without you.

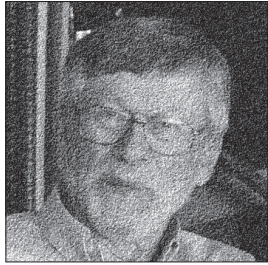
In continued appreciation for your support,

C. Stuart Brewster
Chair, Palo Alto Jazz Alliance

COLTRANE IN 1966

“The fact that Coltrane [in 1966] was on a never-ending search for new and uplifting ways to play, coupled with the drive to do whatever he heard in his head—despite pushback from the public and critics alike—is inspiring and life-changing. His work gives many current musicians confidence to try to find new avenues of expression.” John Irabagon, as quoted in “John Coltrane: Restless Energy,” by James Hale, *DownBeat*, September 2014.

LOOKING BACK *By Ed Fox*



BRUCE

Many of you may remember Bruce Powell, who passed away last year after a long illness. When I first joined PAJA's Board of Directors (2011?), Bruce was a Board member and we became friends. Not that we had much in common. Bruce drove a sporty little Jaguar with JAZZBO license plates; I drove a beat-up used Honda without vanity plates. And our politics were poles apart. But when it came to jazz, we clicked. Soul brothers.

I soon started hitting lots of the South Bay jazz spots with Bruce and often his lady Jan: the San Jose Jazz Festival, Cafe Pink House, Cafe Stritch, Bach D&D, and the Three Flames restaurant (they still have a jazz night on Tuesdays). At Stritch Bruce knew some of the regulars who would save prime seats for us for Vincent Herring, Eric Alexander, and many others. At Three Flames we enjoyed local talent like Christian Tambour on vibes and Mo Brisenno on trumpet. At Bach's, Bruce and I would stake out the seats nearest the ocean-view windows, so we could enjoy the sunset along with the music.

As a PAJA board member, Bruce decided he wanted to be a concert promoter, and for a trio of exceptional gigs, he was. First, he presented Octobop and Kenny Washington at a Brazilian steakhouse in Sunnyvale; and then the big time, with the Jeff Hamilton Trio at the Palo Alto Elks Club, and finally the Hot Club of San Francisco also at the Elks. I helped him a bit with the Elks Club negotiations, and some little problems (Do we need risers? Where to rent a piano?). The Elks Club allowed for cabaret style seating, with drinks and food. Very cool. These events eventually ran afoul of PAJA's regular artistic director, Herb Wong. Herb didn't mind Bruce presenting local groups, but the headline groups were his area. So Bruce's concert producing career came to an end..

Bruce introduced me to the Jazz Superfan, Kenneth Cobb, who was then working at NASA in Mountain View and commuting on weekends to New York City where he'd visit five or six clubs in two or three days. Bruce and I interviewed Ken-

neth and published that conversation on the PAJA website. Unfortunately, that interview is now lost in Internet oblivion.

Bruce and Jan actually went on one jazz cruise during my own jazz cruise years, but they much preferred the Newport Beach jazz weekend festivals. They'd attend with other PAJAnS and provide me with copy and photos for the Buff.

Bruce was proud of his Detroit origins and would happily name all the great jazz performers who hailed from the Motor City, many of whom he saw in his younger day.

For several years a few of us PAJAnS would get together monthly or so for lunch, usually at a Los Altos Italian restaurant, and though Bruce had a serious hearing loss (like the rest of us), we still managed laugh-filled and informative conversations over good food. I miss those get-togethers. Everyone can use a good jazz buddy, and Bruce was one of mine for several years. A jazz buddy speaks your language, shares his music with you, and knows who you're talking about when you mention Miles, Trane, or Sassy.

Hopefully, Bruce is now rubbing shoulders with the likes of Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck, and Milt Jackson (from Detroit). I don't really believe that's happening, but it's nice to fantasize about.

THE FRESHMEN

Board member Shirley Douglas and I are big fans of the Four Freshmen. Shirley gets their fan newsletters and passes them on to me. After 76 years, the group is still going strong. There are constant personnel changes, of course, but drummer and low-note singer Bob Ferreira has been with the Freshmen for 32 years! I've been fortunate to see them twice on The Jazz Cruise and once in Vegas. Shirley and I lament that their schedule rarely takes them to the Bay Area.



The original Freshmen

NEWPORT FESTIVAL SOUNDS AN ALARM

A recent fundraising email from Jay Sweet, Executive Producer of the Newport Festivals Foundation, underlined two serious problems for music festivals like Newport (Rhode Island) that also certainly apply to jazz organizations like PAJA.

The first is **the live music industry is broken**. Sweet mentions musicians who have to end their tours early and inflation and exorbitant fees driving costs up. And to combat these ills festivals have to create expensive VIP programs and have to name their productions and stages after big corporate donors, if they can find them. PAJA always has the problem of locating reasonable-cost venues for its concerts. Further, available dates for our normal venues seem to be shrinking, and when there are available dates the fees have become unaffordable. We certainly don't want to lowball musicians; they deserve to make a living and should certainly be rewarded for what they do. But that has to be balanced against what kind of turnout can be attracted and how much we can charge for tickets.

The second problem is **we are failing the next generation when it comes to music education**. Sweet says "since the pandemic, budget cuts have decimated music education programs in America. Even here in Newport, band classes are understaffed and underfunded. This is a real problem, not just for students, but selfishly, for the future of

our Festivals. If the next generation isn't learning how to actually play real instruments, we aren't going to have artists to put on our stages in ten years."

Thankfully, in our area the Stanford Jazz Workshop does a fantastic job of educating the next generation of jazz musicians and providing opportunities for young people to play and learn at a high level. San Jose Jazz, the Monterey Festival and SF Jazz also carry the jazz education ball. PAJA's basic mission is to promote jazz education on the Peninsula, but when our concerts have disappointing financial results (see "live music industry is broken" above), our ability to support jazz education suffers.

You are probably familiar with pianist Emmet Cohen's Monday evening streaming concerts. His solution to the lack of gigs and inability to travel during the pandemic was to present weekly concerts on the Internet from his apartment in Harlem featuring his trio, with invited guests like Houston Person and Cyrille Aimee. These wonderful shows are free, but for \$150 a year you can be on the preferred list. Hundreds have signed on. Those who subscribe get any new records Emmet turns out (CD and vinyl), a weekly newsletter, and goodies like "Emmet's Place" hats and mugs. American entrepreneurship at work, and a great solution to the pandemic doldrums.

Obviously, it's not possible for all jazz artists to do what Emmet Cohen did and is still doing, but it illustrates there are imaginative solutions out there, from the artist's standpoint, and for those of us who produce and promote the music./ Frank Story



DONATIONS IN 2024

Once again our hats are off to those who made special contributions to PAJA above and beyond dues. This was a tough year, and your extra donations really helped keep us financially healthy.

Anonymous

Cheryl Bartholomew, Sunnyvale

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JAZZ ON THE PENINSULA
Selected gigs for January and February, 2025

BACH DANCING AND DYNAMITE SOCIETY, El Granada *www.bachddsoc.org*

/19	Tia Fuller Quartet	4:30pm
1/26	Jamie Baum Quartet	4:30pm
2/2	Isaiah Collier & The Chosen Few	4:30pm
2/16	Harold Lopez-Nussa	4:30pm
2/23	Edmar Castaneda Family	4:30pm

MEYHOUSE RESTAURANT, PALO ALTO *Meyhouserestaurant.com*

1/3	Tony Lindsay, w/Michael O'Neill Quartet	6:30, 8:30pm
1/4	Skylar Tang, w/Michael O'Neill Quartet	6:30, 8:30pm
1/10	Omar Ledezma Latin Band	6:30, 8:30pm
1/25	Jeff Denson Band	6:30, 8:30pm
2/14	Jackie Ryan, w/Michael O'Neill Quartet	6:30, 8:30pm

STANFORD UNIVERSITY *www.live.stanford.edu*

1/23	Johari Stampley Family Trio (Bing Studio)	7pm
2/26	Edmar Castaneda Family (Bing)	7:30pm
3/3	Stanford Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble (Dinkelspiel)	7:30pm



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

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Annual dues, \$35 for individuals \$ _____

Annual dues, \$50 family (two persons) \$ _____

Additional contribution to support jazz education \$ _____

Total enclosed \$ _____