

FROM THE CHAIR

All kinds of thanks to you PAJA members who responded to our cry for help to pull off the Sarah McKenzie Quartet concert at Menlo Park's Guild Theatre. The upshot was a marvelous aesthetic success, though unfortunately not so good financially. The musical talent on display, however, was well worth going in the red for. (See Ed Fox's thoughts on page 3 of this issue.). Sometimes opportunities for music of such style cannot be ignored, even with financial challenges.

Lots of people were involved in planning and arrangements for the concert, led by PAJA's event chair and concert producer Harvey Mittler, with the invaluable assistance of Board member Dave Miller who shouldered a lot of responsibility for those arrangements. *BIG THANKS*. Also much appreciation to the Guild staff and the McKenzie crew.

You may recall that my theme in the April 2024 issue of the Buff was tied to the idea that listening to records via recording machines stimulates wanting to see/hear jazz live. Interestingly enough, the Museum of American Heritage, located at 351 Homer Ave. in Palo Alto, currently has an exhibit on record players and phonographs. The museum is dedicated to the preservation and display of electrical and mechanical technology (1750-1950). Their hours are 11am to 4pm, Friday through Monday. Email: mail@moah.org It's worth a visit.

Did you know that you can read back issues of the *Buff* by going to our web site (pajazzalliance.org). Why bother? Well, there is a lot of interesting articles of the past dozen years, a kind of Jazz Topics collection, if you will. IMHO, this is not bragging about how great we are; there is good stuff in these archives to enjoy and deepen your knowledge of the joyous world of jazz.

In appreciation of your continued support,

C. Stuart Brewster
Chair, Palo Alto Jazz Alliance



Ed Fox Miller

Sarah McKenzie at the Guild Theatre

BRIAN HO—MOVIN' ON UP

Local jazz organist Brian Ho, who last played for PAJA 14 years ago, has received a 2025 Jazz Aid Fund commission award from San Jose Jazz. As part of the grant he'll be composing a new original work. Brian played recently at Yoshi's in Oakland with the Mimi Fox Organ Trio and is set with his own group for November gigs in New York, one at Django, a hot jazz club at the Roxy Hotel in Tribeca, where it will be Brian's NYC Bridges album release show. That Mimi Fox Organ Trio, with Brian, Lorca Hart and Mimi, was featured at this year's Monterey Jazz Festival.



LOOKING BACK *By Ed Fox*



REGARDING KCSM

The previous issue of the Buff contained an opinion piece by our friend Michael Griffin in which he expressed his dissatisfaction with jazz station KCSM due to his perception that they have been increasing the level of talk over music. Michael recommended trying KKJZ Bebop for a music-only station—all bebop all the time. I had expected some blowback from readers about this issue, but the only complaint we received was from our Event Chair Harvey Mittler, a long-time KCSM listener who defended KCSM's announcers, like Michael Burman and Richard Seidel, for their expertise, valuable insight and professionalism. Griffin responded that he was not denigrating the announcers but was annoyed at the increasing time devoted to chatter as opposed to actual music.

I myself find nothing to complain about with KCSM, but I did try KKJZ Bebop and like Michael says, it's all bebop, all the time. No human voices, just one bop tune after another. If you want to find out the song title and/or the artist, you have to look on your computer. I am a bebop fan myself, but for me the steady bebop diet was a little boring; I much prefer the mix of straight-ahead jazz genres on KCSM, and the commentary of my favorite announcers like Michael Burman, Sonny Buxton, and Chuy Varela.

Anyone who wants to weigh in on this issue is welcome to email me at chezfox@mindspring.com.

THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK

According to Wikipedia, the Great American Songbook is "a loosely defined canon of significant 20th century American jazz standards, popular songs, and show tunes." I think we all get it: "Stardust" is in the canon, Tennessee Ernie Ford's "Sixteen Tons" probably not. What is important to jazz fans is that American Songbook tunes are often well suited to be played, embellished, and manipulated (in a good way) by jazz musicians.

Songwriting partnerships were major contributors to the Songbook: Rodgers and Hart, Rodgers and Hammerstein,

the Gershwin brothers. I'm going out on a limb and say Rodgers and Hart wrote more iconic Songbook tunes than Rodgers and Hammerstein. As wonderful as their musicals were, not so many GAS standbys flow from "The King and I," "The Flower Drum Song," or even "Carousel" or "Oklahoma." But Hart's love songs are perfect GAS examples: "My Funny Valentine," "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered," "Thou Swell," "Where or When," "Lover," and many more.

The partnerships were great, but it's the folks who did everything—the words and the music—really get my admiration: Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Frank Loesser, among others. Berlin's first language was not English, but he was a quick learner. How was he able to create such "hip" and clever lyrics as in "Cheek to Cheek," "How Deep is the Ocean?" and some of those tunes from "Annie Get Your Gun"?

Did you know that one of Cole Porter's first hit songs was "Don't Fence Me In?" Strange to think that this urbane sophisticate (is that redundant?) could write, "I want to ride to the ridge where the west commences." His sophistication is on display in "Kiss Me Kate," and my favorite lines from that show comes from "Always True to You (In My Fashion)": "If a Harris Pat Means a Paris Hat, pay, pay."

So what does this all have to do with jazz? Well, not much, except that, if you're like me, I'm always happy at jazz concerts when they take off on these familiar standards. We old-timers grew up with these songs and they are close to our heart. We are more than thankful to jazz musicians who help to keep them alive and show us another way they can be artfully massaged. One album full of GAS tunes I'm always happy to play, believe it or not is Taylor

Eigsti's 16th birthday concert at Filoli. On that record the teenage Taylor complains pianistically about his foolish heart and asks have I met Miss Jones? It's unchallenging, but completely pleasurable, *listenable* jazz, definitely soothing this savage breast.



Rodgers and Hart

SARAH MCKENZIE—BRAVA!

What an evening for jazz lovers. First, the venue—Menlo Park’s Guild Theatre—is an ideal setting for music, with comfortable seating, good sightlines everywhere, and state of the art sound quality. PAJA’s October 20th offering at the Guild of the Sarah McKenzie Quartet was a hit with the audience in every way.

Sarah’s bandmates were all All-Stars in their own right. Larry Koonse is a well-known guitarist who has toured with Cleo Laine, Mel Torme, Tierney Sutton, and many others; Jon Hamar succeeded Christof Luty as the bassist for the Jeff Hamilton Trio; and award-winning drummer Donald Edwards has produced four albums as a leader.

And then there’s the leader of this band—Sarah McKenzie, who is a virtuoso jazz pianist as well as a vocalist with considerable pipes. Sarah connected impressively with the audience, with personable intros to each tune and obvious enthusiasm for the music.

With an affinity for Brazilian music (evident on her recent album “Without You”), she did a wonderful set of Jobim tunes: Corcovado (Quiet Nights and Quiet Stars), The Girl From Ipanema, Once I Loved (vocal duet with Koonse), and No More Blues. And they supplemented with a few standards, like I Wish You Love and Irving Berlin’s Let’s Face the Music and Dance.

But the highlights of the evening were Sarah’s fascinating originals,

including two brilliant uptempo jazz pieces: LA Police Pursuit (!) and Schneller, a lightning-fingered composition which deserves to become a jazz classic. Two romantic ballads, Paris in the Rain and Secrets of My Heart (dedicated to Michel LeGrand) were also winners.

This talented group deserves the widest possible audience; it is my hope we’ll be able to bring them back next year or so./Ed Fox



Photos by Bebes Miller



JAZZ ON THE PENINSULA

Selected gigs for November and December, 2024

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

11/10	Kandace Springs Trio	4:30pm
11/17	Pat Bianchi Trio	4:30pm
11/24	Gary Meek Band	4:30pm

MEYHOUSE RESTAURANT, PALO ALTO *Meyhouserestaurant.com*

11/8	Mads Tolling, with Michael O'Neill Trio	5, 8pm
11/15, 16	Nicholas Beard	5, 8pm
12/4	Tony Lindsay, with Michael O'Neill Trio	5, 8pm
12/27, 28	Jamie Davis, w/O'Neill Trio	5, 8pm

STANFORD UNIVERSITY *www.live.stanford.edu*

11/15	Stanford U. Jazz Orchestra, with Dani & Debora Gurgel (Dinkelspiel)	7:30pm
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EARTHWISE Palo Alto *Google "Markweissdbaeathwise"*

11/10	Stephanie Chou Quintet (Palo Alto Art Center Aud.)	8:30pm
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