

BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE

JUNE 2014

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VOLUME XI

ISSUE V

THE BJA NEWSLETTER

WWW.BALTIMOREJAZZ.COM

BCJS Presents Roni Ben-Hur at Towson

On Sunday, April 27th, the Baltimore Chamber Jazz Society (BCJS) finished out their 23rd season with the Roni Ben-Hur Sextet at Towson University's Center for the Arts. Band members included Victor Lewis on drums, Santi Debriano on bass, George Cables on piano, Steve Wilson on alto sax and flute, Freddie Hendrix on trumpet, and Roni Ben-Hur on guitar. The concert was entitled "A Tribute to Wes Montgomery and Grant Green."

Ben-Hur moved to the US in 1985 from Israel and went to New York City to play and learn jazz guitar. Pianist/jazz educator Barry Harris was a major influence on Ben-Hur's bebop guitar concept, and through his association with Harris he played and made recordings with many great jazz musicians, including two with Harris, *Backyard* (1996) and *Anna's Dance* (2001).

Ben-Hur definitely comes from the Montgomery/Green/Jim Hall school of guitar. His harmonic concept sits right in the 1960s, with clean, single-note lines, the frequent use of octaves (à la Montgomery) and diatonic block chords. I also hear some Johnny Smith influence in Ben-Hur's block-chord ballad playing. He has a "pure" archtop guitar sound with no use of electronic effects and it suits him well. It's refreshing to hear this old school style: there are keepers of the flame and Roni Ben-Hur is a keeper.

Set one started with a couple of Montgomery's compositions—"Jingles" and "West Coast Blues." Wilson played flute on "West Coast Blues," and his work was welcome, because jazz flute is a sound you don't get to hear a lot. Hendrix, a veteran of the Count Basie Orchestra, spent much of his solo time in the mid and upper register of the trumpet. The next tune, "Body and Soul," began with a beautiful (yet brief) guitar chord solo. A relentless jazz educator who started a jazz program at the Kaufman Music Center's Lucy Moses School, a community arts school on Manhattan's Upper West Side, Ben-Hur did a little bit of teaching from the stage in his introduction to the tune, noting that many of us do not know



PHOTO COURTESY OF RONI BEN-HUR

Ben-Hur . . . has a "pure" archtop guitar sound with no use of electronic effects and this suits him well. It's "old school" and it's refreshing to hear it. There are "keepers of the flame" and Roni Ben-Hur is a keeper.

who wrote tunes like "Body and Soul" and other treasured standards.

The fourth tune of the set, "Afroscopic," was written by Debriano, and was recorded on the 2012 CD *Our Thing*. This 6/8 Afro-Cuban piece was a minor-blues-based tune with chord changes that sounded a hell of a lot like Montgomery's tune "Full House." The set ended with Green's composition "Jean de Fleur," from his classic album *Idle Moments*. Drummer Lewis took his time on his solo, displaying phenomenal technique, developing ideas, and getting some awesome tones and shades from his cymbals.

Set two opened with an Elmo Hope (remember him?) composition entitled "One Second, Please," on which Ben-Hur played a lyrical solo using both single lines and octaves. The next tune, "Something Went Wrong," was written by

(continued on page 3)

The Baltimore Jazz Alliance is a 501(c)(3)
tax exempt organization.

The Baltimore Jazz Alliance (BJA) is a grass-roots organization of jazz aficionados, musicians and venues dedicated to enhancing and promoting jazz in Baltimore and the surrounding areas. New members sharing this passion are always welcome as the BJA continues its efforts to build a stronger and better networked jazz scene. Together we can help this music thrive in the region and reward listeners and musicians alike.

BJA Priorities

- To develop new audiences for jazz
- To strengthen communication within the jazz community
- To improve media relations on behalf of the jazz community
- To bring greater visibility to the entire array of jazz offerings in the Baltimore region
- To provide greater access to performance opportunities for Baltimore-area jazz musicians

Visit www.baltimorejazz.com
for information about our
accomplishments and future goals.

Baltimore Jazz Alliance
847 North Howard Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Please direct your
questions and comments to:
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BJA Presents Ellington on the Avenue

Live Simulcast from Jazz at Lincoln Center

BJA members, friends, and all Baltimore jazz lovers are invited to a webcast of a live jazz concert at New York City's Lincoln Center on Friday, June 6th at the Harris-Marcus/Jubilee Arts Center, 1947 Pennsylvania Avenue in Baltimore. The evening begins at 7 pm with light refreshments and a meet-and-greet. You will be able to get acquainted with BJA board members and hear about the organization's goals and upcoming projects. Recent Baker Award winner and BJA board member Todd Marcus will also speak about the addiction recovery and arts programs that take place in the Harris-Marcus Center.

At 8 pm, we will all enjoy a webcast of the live concert at Lincoln Center. The concert, hosted by Wynton Marsalis, features the music of Duke Ellington, with new arrangements that illuminate the depth and complexity of the maestro's corpus and the distinctly democratic vision expressed in his music. This is a great opportunity to mingle with other jazz lovers and hear a fabulous concert. More details about the concert are found at <http://jalc.org/events/t-1473>

BCJS Presents Roni Ben-Hur at Towson

(continued from front page)

Frank Wess. Wilson's flute playing was no doubt meant to honor Wess's phenomenal work on jazz flute. When the front line traded fours, they created a nice game of musical "hot potato," passing around musical ideas among guitar, flute and trumpet.

After the tune, Ben-Hur brought our attention to the fact that April 29th was Jazz History Day, as declared by the United Nations. He also noted that it was Duke Ellington's birthday, and with that, George Cables launched into a solo performance of "Prelude to a Kiss." This was by far the most harmonically adventurous solo of the concert. Cables's touch, his use of the ENTIRE keyboard and altered chords, and his mastery of dissonance all created joyous musical excitement. Let's face it: most jazz pianists are light years ahead of most jazz guitarists when it comes to advanced harmonies. By the nature of their instrument, jazz guitarists have to work very hard to keep up with the keyboard. You guitarists know exactly what I'm talking about!

When "Prelude" ended, the band segued into "I Let a Song Go out of My Heart." The two highlights here were Hendrix's swinging trumpet solo and Debriano's bass solo. At one point he played flamenco-style chords with his right thumb brushing across the strings—shades of Jimmy Garrison. Cables's composition "I Told You So" featured fine Latin groove solos by himself, Wilson, Hendrix (on flugelhorn) and Ben-Hur.

The concert ended with Montgomery's "Four on Six," whose title alludes to four fingers on six strings. The band played a beautifully harmonized melody and Ben-Hur launched into a guitar solo that sounded a lot like something that . . . ah . . . Wes Montgomery might play. After everyone soloed, the band traded eights and fours with Lewis, who is an amazing musical thinker. Anything he can think of, he can play. It was exciting to watch and hear.

There were some problems at the concert. The folks running the sound at Towson were unable to give us a balanced mix: at times, the trumpet microphone was so loud I could barely hear the drums, the piano was not loud enough, and so forth. At one point, Ben-Hur had to turn off his monitor because it was too loud. Also, Bill Murray, who introduced the show, made it very clear that the BCJS has taken a hit financially this past season. From the stage, he suggested that if anyone in the audience had any good ideas about keeping things together for a possible 24th season, to please speak with him in lobby at the intermission. Like all jazz organizations, the BCJS needs your support.

— MICHAEL RAITZYK

If you have renewed your BJA membership since April 14, 2014, please contact LIZ FIXSEN at efixsen@yahoo.com.

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Somewhere in Paradise

Over the years, I have been privileged to write many record and CD reviews, as well as liner notes. Never, in all those years, have I found one that did not have at least some artistic or technical failings.

Well, it has happened. Marianne Matheny-Katz's new CD, *Somewhere in Paradise*, comes as close to being perfect as any I have heard! The vocalist herself delivers the material superbly, with no affectations or gimmicks and with a great jazz sensibility. The participating musicians are outstanding as well, giving her great support in addition to wonderful solo and ensemble work. In the best jazz tradition, she gives them ample blowing space and does not grab every moment for herself as many vocalists are wont to do.

The entire CD is done in excellent taste with a great choice and variety of tunes and tempos. The arrangements, mostly by Warren Wolf and Todd Marcus, are creative and attract the listener's attention. These charts make excellent use of the very talented sidemen, including reedmen Tim Green, Craig Alston, and Todd Marcus, the trumpet of Terrell Stafford, the piano of Vince Evans, the bass of Eric Wheeler, the drums of Eric Kennedy and the vibes and all-around musicianship of Warren Wolf. Along with the talents of Marianne Matheny-Katz, this is an embarrassment of riches!

The CD kicks off with the Gershwins' "Our Love Is Here to Stay" done beautifully, with tasty Vince Evans piano. Matheny-Katz, right off the bat, is so comfortable it's almost like George wrote it for her; I'm sure Ira would have approved of the little changes in the lyric. The second tune, Benny Golson's "Whisper Not," proves immediately that this woman is not just a vocalist but a jazz vocalist! It includes some sharp voicing of the horns, a nice stop time and fine vibes by Mr. Wolf.

Miles Davis's "All Blues" is not an easy song to sing, but Matheny-Katz carries it off beautifully, with tasty backing and solo trumpet by Stafford. The fourth number, Kenny Dorham's "Fair Weather," is beautifully done by our vocalist, again with superb trumpet work by Stafford. This is my least favorite tune on the CD, but that's no reflection on the singer or the band. The singer and band do it well, but the song kind of wanders and never seems to resolve itself.

"Comes Love" has a rollicking blues feel with a whimsical singer having fun. With a nice bass lead-in by Wheeler, the whole thing cooks, with Green's and Alston's saxes perpetuating the feeling. Marcus's bass clarinet sets a different mood for "The Way You Look Tonight," and our vocalist picks up on that mood very well. Love the tempo changes!

One sometimes forgets what beautiful music Thelonious Monk wrote. "Still We Dream," originally "Ugly Beauty," is a difficult song to sing, but Matheny-Katz pulls it off with



Available at:

<http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/mariannemathenykatz>

great control of her voice, reminiscent of our late friend Ronnie Wells. Wheeler's bass work is fitting and imaginative.

I do, I do, I do "Believe in Spring." I give thanks to Matheny-Katz for doing it the way that Legrand and the Bergmans intended it to be done! This tune also includes more superb alto from Green and vibes from Wolf. McCoy Tyner's "You Taught My Heart to Sing" likewise shows an outstanding vocalist telling a story. The ensemble work is particularly outstanding and I loved the ending. However, I've never liked "Look for the Silver Lining." For me it smacks too much of vaudeville and Jolson's "You Ain't Heard Nuthin' Yet" era. However, Marianne Matheny-Katz and the horns made me like it.

If I were given one of the famous blindfold tests and did not know the personnel in this band, I never would have known that they were a group of Baltimore musicians. Kudos to them and, most of all, to a lady who joins the ranks of the world's best female jazz singers—and with her first CD release. It isn't paradise, but it's darn close to it.

By the way, I was reviewing this CD when one of my sons, Eric, walked in, listened a minute or so and said, "There's a vocalist I could tolerate. That's the best thing I've heard in a long time. That vocalist and the group backing her should be working in New York and at festivals all over the world!" 'Nuff said.

— JOHN TEGLER

Goodbye to Bobby's



PHOTO CREDIT
IAN RASHKIN

If you never made it down to Bobby's Jazz Club, unfortunately you're not alone. But many of you did. To me it was one of the gems of the Baltimore jazz scene: a small corner walkup on an industrial block of Pigtown, down behind the Ravens' stadium. Bobby Garland sold cigars and encouraged their consumption out on the spacious patio. Inside was a comfortable, laid-back bar that always made the night seem

full and fun. For a time there was a dinner menu, but after a while that disappeared—maybe that was part of the reason for its ultimate demise—but it was very much about enjoying music and having a good time, not about selling expensive food and drinks. And those of you who were there know that one of the best things was the people. From Bobby and his great staff, to the small but loyal crowd of patrons, you could always expect a room full of folks who knew and enjoyed what they were listening to. People talked and drank and had a good time—no stodgy, respectful silence here—but they were listening, and musicians always got feedback about their interpretations of songs the crowd knew, and appreciation for new material.

I know it wasn't a money-maker for Bobby—we all know it's tough running a live music venue of any sort these days—but he put his heart into it, and it showed. You could tell, from his welcoming attitude to his huge jazz-themed mural on the outside wall, that that this was a place where jazz was at home and musicians were valued. Admittedly, I don't get out to hear music all that often—certainly not as much as I'd like—but I still find it sad when a club like this disappears. Hopefully, its closing will be a reminder to me—and some of you—to get out more to see, listen, and enjoy live jazz. In the meantime, Bobby, we wish you well, hope to see you around, and we thank you for the years of running a great bar. We'll miss it.

— IAN RASHKIN

member discounts

An die Musik offers 10% discount for BJA members for music purchases at the An die Musik record store.

Chamber Jazz Society of Baltimore is now offering BJA Members a \$2 discount off the general admission price. Just indicate your affiliation when ordering tickets.

Eubie Live! at the Eubie Blake Cultural Center at 847 N. Howard Street offers a discount to BJA members on rentals of its performance and events spaces.

Jazzway 6004 offers BJA Members a \$5 discount on performances at their venue.



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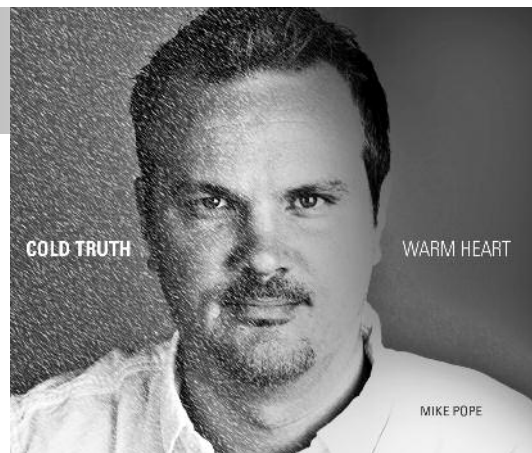
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** NOTE: As these events may be subject to change, it's always a good idea to CALL AHEAD for CONFIRMATION!*

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TUESDAYS

Trade Winds Restaurant at Best Western Plus – Jazz musicians are welcome to sit in at straight-ahead jam sessions.

5625 O'Donnell Street. 6-9 pm. 410-633-9500

Randallstown CC – Open Jazz Jam Sessions/Book and Poetry Readings every Tuesday at 5:30-8 pm. Hosted by Derrick Amin. 3505 Resource Drive, Randallstown. Musicians and vocalists are welcome. Sponsored by BJA. 410-887-0698

WEDNESDAYS

Phaze 10 – Jam sessions at Phaze 10 hosted by April Sampe and The Next Level Band. 885 N. Howard Street. 8-midnight. 410-462-2010

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THURSDAYS

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The Place Lounge – "Tho' Down Thursdays" jam sessions hosted by Jesse L. Powers, Jr. 315 W. Franklin Street. Musicians and vocalists are welcome. 7-10 pm. 410-547-2722

If you know of local jam sessions, please share the information with our readers by emailing the details to the editor at: jazzpalette@gmail.com

If any of the jazz jam sessions listed are discontinued please inform the editor at: jazzpalette@gmail.com

The BJA is dedicated to promoting Jazz in Baltimore!
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To all those who have been waiting for membership cards, they should by now have reached you in the mail. If not, **please contact Liz Fixsen at efixsen@yahoo.com**. We apologize for the long delay, but we expect that all the difficulties are now resolved, and we thank you for your patience.

Todd Marcus Wins Baker Artist Award

BJA board member Todd Marcus has been named a winner of a 2014 Baker Artist Award. The clarinetist/composer received the \$25,000 juried prize during MPT's *Artworks* program on May 1st. Although Marcus, of Egyptian-American parentage, draws on jazz and classical influences, he has been increasingly exploring the sounds of his Middle Eastern heritage. His CD, *Inheritance*, was inspired by the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings. More at: <http://www.toddmarcusjazz.com>

EBCC Seeking Experienced Grants Writer

EUBIE BLAKE CULTURAL CENTER AND JAZZ INSTITUTE is seeking an experienced grants writer with a solid portfolio of well-written grants along with some successfully funded ones. Contact Troy Burton, Executive Director, at 410-225-3130 for additional information.



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Email your print-ready ad* to: jazzpalette@gmail.com

***Ad Specs:** Original B&W line/vector artwork in **jpg format** at 600 dpi are preferred. Pixel-based images should be 300 dpi or higher resolution.

AD PLACEMENT RATES AND SIZES:

\$12.50 for 1/8 page	(3 ⁵ / ₈ in. wide x 2 ¹ / ₄ in. high)
\$25 for 1/4 page	(3 ⁵ / ₈ in. wide x 4 ³ / ₄ in. high)
\$50 for 1/2 page	(7 ¹ / ₂ in. wide x 4 ³ / ₄ in. high) horizontal ad
\$50 for 1/2 page	(3 ⁵ / ₈ in. wide x 9 ³ / ₄ in. high) vertical ad
\$100 for full page	(7 ¹ / ₂ in. wide x 9 ³ / ₄ in. high)

Deadline for ads and payments:

15th of the month prior to the appearance of your ad.

LIMITED SPACE. Reserve your ad space EARLY.

BJA reserves the right to reject inappropriate copy.

Payment (checks only) payable to BJA should be mailed to:

BJA, 847 North Howard Street, Baltimore, MD 21202

or via PayPal at www.baltimorejazz.com (click Donate button)

Please indicate ad size and month(s) for placement.

REMEMBER...BJA offers FREE online promotion of your jazz events!

Enter your gigs at:
www.baltimorejazz.com

direct questions or comments to:
webmaster@baltimorejazz.com

*DO YOU NEED A DISPLAY AD?

JAZZ PALETTE GRAPHIC DESIGN will design your print-ready display ad for a reasonable fee.

410-290-5638 jazzpalette@gmail.com

samples on pages: 3,4,6,8

Gail Marten, Editor/Designer
Baltimore Jazz Alliance Newsletter
jazzpalette@gmail.com

BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please return this form along with your check to:

THE BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE, 847 North Howard Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Your membership card will be mailed to you or the person named below.

You may also join online at: www.baltimorejazz.com

Note: All contributors of \$75 or more get a free BJA baseball cap.

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Street Address _____ Apt/Suite No. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone(s) _____ Email _____

Please DESCRIBE yourself: (just one please) ☐ Music Lover ☐ Musician ☐ Producer/Promoter ☐ Agent

☐ Media ☐ Club Owner/Manager ☐ Non-profit or Educational Institution ☐ Other _____

AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION: ☐ \$25 Basic ☐ \$50 Sustaining ☐ \$50 501(c)3 Organization ☐ \$75 Other

☐ \$100 Patron ☐ \$200 Corporate ☐ \$15 Student – (copy of ID required)

Thank you for joining! Your membership makes a difference!

BJA has been granted 501(c)(3) status by the IRS. Anything pledged above the basic \$25 membership is tax deductible and greatly appreciated!



847 North Howard Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
We are a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization

JUNE 2014

Dedicated to promoting **JAZZ IN BALTIMORE!**



Celebrate 88 Days of Summer with WEAA!

Join WEAA for

Thursday Night Live

Every First Thursday at
Phaze 10 Restaurant and
Lounge in Baltimore

Second Sundays Gospel Brunch

at Phaze 10 Restaurant and
Lounge in Baltimore

Third Thursdays
at the Reginald F. Lewis
Museum

All Summer Long!

Visit WEAA.org for more information