

BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE

Fall 2017

Sarah Hughes: Creating a Sonic Temple	1
Jam Sessions.....	2
Kris Funn: <i>Comerstore</i>	3
BJA Newsletter Moves to Quarterly Publication.....	4
Keeping The Music Playing	6
A Tribute to Dexter Gordon	9
BJA Member Benefits	10
BJA member Notes	10
Ad Rates and Member Sign-up Form	11

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Sarah Hughes: Creating a Sonic Temple

By Liz Fixsen

Last July 23rd, a distressing post appeared on Facebook from Baltimore saxophonist Sarah Hughes. She told of how while on her way to a local jam session, she became the victim of a carjacking by a couple of teenage boys. Her wallet (with \$150 from that day's gig), keys, and cell phone were stolen—along with her treasured Selmer Mark VI alto saxophone. The car and some of its contents were later recovered—but not the saxophone. Since then, a YouCare crowdfunding campaign and a couple of benefit concerts enabled Sarah to replace her property and obtain another saxophone.

Sarah has expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Baltimore music community, which stepped up, as it has in the past, to help a fellow musician in distress. However, she also expressed concern for delinquent Baltimore youths such as those who stole her beloved instrument. "Something needs to be done about the social climate in Baltimore," she wrote on Facebook. "We are clearly a population fragmenting itself instead of acknowledging the truth, which is we are all connected and in close proximity and should work out our problems."

She envisions a new non-profit venture that she has been contemplating for some time, but which has received more impetus from the carjacking experience. In December of 2016, she started an entity called Positive Structures, Inc., with the intention of creating a "safe space," which she calls a "Sonic Temple," where "traumatized" Baltimore youth can find healing through music and art. She has recently moved into a town home on Maryland Avenue where she occupies the second floor. She envisions using half of it as a living room and as a space for large-group wind instrument classes, for both youths and adults, a space that would be already stocked with instruments available for use on the site. Why wind instruments? Because, she explains, playing a wind instrument "regulates and calms breath and body," just as mindful breathing does in the practice of meditation.

This would not be a money-making venture; rather, it would

(continued on page 4)

The Baltimore Jazz Alliance is a
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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
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accomplishments and future goals.

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JAZZ JAM SESSIONS

Where the cats congregate to groove and grow!

*** NOTE: As these events may be subject to change, it's always a good idea to call ahead for confirmation!**

MONDAYS

An die Musik Live! – Jam sessions second and fourth Mondays. This jam is hosted by Joshua Espinoza, piano and Alex Meadow, bass. 409 N. Charles Street. Adult \$10, Student \$5. No charge for participating musicians. 7:30 pm. joshua.espinoza@gmail.com

Five and Dime Alehouse – Jam session is hosted by Hot Club of Baltimore, mostly Django Reinhardt music, 1930s-40s & standards, some bebop for more advanced players. Vocalists are welcome. 7-11 pm. 901 W. 36th Street, Hampden. 443-835-2179.

Taybor Ethiopian Restaurant – Clarence Ward III presents The Session at 328 Park Avenue. All are welcome to come out and express themselves. No cover, one drink minimum. Come on in and swing with us. 8:30-11:30 pm. 410-528-7234

TUESDAYS

Randallstown CC – Open jazz jam sessions/book and poetry live reading, hosted by Derrick Amin from 6-8 pm. 3505 Resource Drive, Randallstown. Musicians and vocalists are welcome. Sponsored by BJA. 410-887-0698

The Judge's Bench – Charlie Schueller leads informal jam sessions on the first Tuesday of each month from 8:30 pm-midnight. 8385 Main Street, Ellicott City. 410-465-3497

WEDNESDAYS

49 West Café – FIRST and THIRD Wednesdays. "Starr's Jazz Jam" at 49 West Street, Annapolis. This jam is hosted by John Starr and house band. Musicians and singers very welcome! Delicious and reasonably priced food and drink available! \$10 cover. 7-10 pm. Reservations 410-626-9796

Da Mimmo's Italian Restaurant – Jam sessions are hosted by Lynn Roxy. Musicians and singers welcome. Piano, mic & bass amp provided. No minimum, no cover, free parking in private lot. 217 S. High Street. 6-10 pm. 410-727-6876. (lynnroxy3@gmail.com)

HOMEslyce – Todd Marcus leads weekly jazz jam sessions. 336 N. Charles Street. 8-11 pm. 443-501-4000

THURSDAYS

Trinacria Café – Third Tuesdays. Instrumentalists and vocalists welcome (vocalists, bring charts). No cover. This jam is hosted by the Steve Caballero Trio with Liz Fixsen. 111 West Centre Street. 7-9 pm. 443-759-4082

The Place Lounge – Jam session/open mic are hosted by Spice. 315 W. Franklin Street. Musicians and vocalists are welcome. 7-10 pm. 410-547-2722

FRIDAYS

NEW! House of Chiefs – Live jazz and late night jam session with House of Chiefs Jazz Band led by Sam King. 4603 York Road. \$10 cover patrons, \$5 for musicians. STRICT DRESS CODE. Visit www.thehouseofchiefs.com for details. 10 pm-3 am. 410-323-4098

**If you are aware of any changes in the jam sessions listed,
PLEASE INFORM THE EDITOR at: jazzpalette@gmail.com**

Kris Funn *Cornerstore*

By Ken Avis

"On the corner of bebop and hip-hop, hard rock and hard knocks . . . here in West Baltimore. This ain't just a store. It's a metaphor for our lives." The opening, spoken-word introduction of bassist Kris Funn's *Cornerstore* switches on the shop lights, illuminating the musical offerings of Funn's long-awaited debut CD as a bandleader.

The album is unmistakably personal and unapologetically Baltimore. From the cover-photo bench seat, declaring Baltimore to be the "Greatest City in America," to the deep talent bench of Baltimore musicians gathered around him, Funn has created an album which the city should be proud of. The experience of growing up in Baltimore inspired the compositions, evocatively described in his concise album liner notes for each track. *Cornerstore* is a bright torch of an album—impeccable musicianship stretched over passionate, emotional compositions and polished with an original contemporary soundscape.

True to the opening-track words of "Welcome" recited by Funn's wife Paige Hernandez, tunes like the Coltrane inspired "Arithmetricks" give us bebop. We get a touch of hip-hop with the looped, sampled drums of "PIF," and hard rock comes in the exciting guitar of John Lee, at times reminiscent of John McLaughlin, always adventurous and complementary. Hard knocks are reflected in tracks like "Ghettobird," which Funn describes in the liner notes as having been inspired by the type of "lullabies" kids might fall asleep to in the inner city: helicopters' propellers overhead.

The opening track also reassures us that "there is always hope in a system that's broke—a church around the corner, or when the love of your life becomes your wife, or when the craft your father taught you before you could speak keeps you from being out on the street." For all the crackling intensity of *Cornerstore*, the album is never short of joy and beauty.

Pianist Allyn Johnson's gospel progressions on "Thursday Night Prayer Meeting" take us to church, accompanied by Funn's effervescent bass lines. Meanwhile, the gentle, meditative interplay between bass and piano on "PIF" provides the beauty. Described as a ballad that tries to paint his wife's portrait, this track features Janelle Gill on piano, leaving open spaces against a repeated bass motif that gives way to a hip-hop beat. This, and the closing track "The Day After," have a cinematic quality. "The Day After" features a conversational bass line that offers calm after the storm of conflict, a soundtrack to recovery and resolution as the composition reflects on the aftermath of Baltimore's recent riots and the need for change.

Funn describes his approach to composing for this album as building from the bottom up, starting with bass and drums, and aiming for simplicity and groove. The phenom-



. . . a bright torch of an album—impeccable musicianship stretched over passionate, emotional compositions and polished with an original contemporary soundscape.

enal virtuosity of his collaborating musicians leads to a final product that is anything but simple, yet the groove remains, due to the interplay with drummers John Lamkin III and Quincy Phillips.

Many people in Baltimore will know Kris Funn from his high school band playing days. He moved on to the Howard University Jazz Ensemble. After graduation, he quickly established himself as a top-tier sideman, touring the world with saxophonist Kenny Garrett. More recently he has been recording and touring with trumpeter Christian Scott, one of the most prolific and exciting contemporary players on the scene. You can still find him, at times, appearing regularly with musicians around the Baltimore-DC area, notably with vocalist Akua Allrich.

Allrich described her musical collaborator and friend of twenty years as follows: "Kris is a deep thinker; an ethical person who sees the importance of doing the right thing; someone who is generous with his time and energy. Brilliant. Modest. Loyal. Not an extrovert, but outspoken when he feels he needs to be." Funn's *Cornerstore* honors her description. The ensemble playing—featuring musicians with whom he has long been associated—complements the range of his material. The compositions are at times brilliant and outspoken, at times thoughtful and contemplative. Shop at the *Cornerstore*, and ideally buy the well-designed CD package with its fine liner notes.

Website: www.funndamentals.com

Sarah Hughes: Creating a Sonic Temple

(continued from front page)

operate on a barter/exchange basis, where lessons would be given in exchange for things like fresh vegetables grown in one's own garden or services like yoga instruction—or would just be given free to needy youths. At jam sessions, people would bring food to share for a communal meal.

"Why not use a site like Wind-Up Space or Metro Gallery?" I asked. Hughes explained that a personal space would make the shared artistic experiences and relationships more personal. Also, as a teetotaler, she wants a space free of alcohol or other additive substances—a place where people can escape their addictions. She believes that "a positive community space like this might help unite a segregated population and might also help give people a healthy way of dealing with complex negative emotions."

"Free," "collaborative," "personal," "mindful": these are words that can also describe Sarah Hughes as a musician. While she can lay down a swinging bebop groove with the best of them, she felt that she has needed to move beyond swing jazz to find her fullest form of expression and greater freedom in use of rhythm and tone. She is in love with tone, which, like colors in painting, can create an expressive experience, whether that tone is produced by a saxophone, or by bells, whistles, voice, a bag of beer cans, a spoken word, shoes, or coins dropped on a floor—all sounds that can be heard on a recording by her improvisation group Lead Bubbles. She has performed several times at The Wind-Up Space, a venue known for featuring free improvisational music.

At Twins Jazz in DC in July, 2017, she gave a trio concert entitled "Calling All Voices." Toward the end of the set, she invited participation by audience members—including "vocalists, poets, preachers, rappers, spoken-word artists, dancers—anyone with a free voice who wants to express themselves." Several people took up her invitation, including DC saxophonist Alisha Coleman and trombonist Shannon Gunn. Reviewing the concert in the *Washington Post*, Mike West called it one of the most inspiring nights of music he had ever witnessed, saying, "Spontaneity and creativity never felt more at home, and alive, with each other" (July 10th: "A one-of-a-kind performance from Sarah Hughes—and a handful of audience members").

More about Sarah Hughes as performer, composer, teacher and visionary can be found her website: www.sarahmariehughes.com. Anyone interested in following the progress of and contributing to her Sonic Temple endeavor should send an e-mail to positivestructuresinc@gmail.com.

To see who's playing where, visit:
www.baltimorejazz.com

BJA Newsletter Moves to Quarterly Publication

By Ian Rashkin

It is with mixed feelings that we announce that this newsletter will be moving from monthly publication (with occasional gaps) to quarterly publication, starting with this issue. While we love the newsletter, and know that many of you do as well, it is by far our largest ongoing expense, and our budget simply cannot sustain ongoing monthly publication. We know this will be a disappointment to some of you, but rest assured that not only will we continue to print new editions each quarter, we will also be stepping up our digital offerings to ensure that you have the news you need to stay in touch with the Baltimore jazz scene. Our website—baltimorejazz.com—will feature additional content not found in the quarterly newsletter, and we are working on an email delivery system for our calendar and other content to keep you up to date with the latest info and upcoming events. We are continually searching for new ways to connect audiences, musicians, and venues, and while the newsletter is one valuable tool in that effort, we are excited about the many other areas where we can focus our efforts—on digital delivery, on in-person events such as our new BJA Nights, and more to come. In any case, thanks for reading, and until the next issue, keep swingin'!



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PHOTO CREDIT: LESLIE IMES

From left: Ebban Dorsey, Ephraim Dorsey, Gary Bartz

Keeping The Music Playing

By Gail Marten

"Paralyzed with pleasure." That's what I said to George "Doc" Manning as I was leaving the musical tribute to jazz champion Mike Binsky at An die Musik on Sunday, September 3rd. Manning, who emceed the concert, hosts the jazz radio show *In the Tradition*, which airs Monday evenings from 8 to midnight at WEAA-FM. Jazz monsters Gary Bartz, Larry Willis, James King and Warren Wolf created the most heavenly music this side of paradise. The musicians gave it their all and Mike Binsky, who passed away on April 18th, would have been (or may have been) on cloud nine.

Young Baltimore saxophonists David Diongue, and siblings Ebban and Ephraim Dorsey were invited to step up on the stage and play with the masters, an experience they will not soon forget.

Diongue received a BJA scholarship in 2011 and is currently studying under the tutelage of Gary Bartz, who has been a professor of saxophone at Oberlin Conservatory. Ebban and Ephraim Dorsey, who were awarded BJA scholarships in 2015, have studied saxophone with Carl Grubbs since 2015. Baltimore jazz artists and audiences have taken these talented youngsters under their wings, and the young musicians are frequent guest artists at jazz venues and events throughout Baltimore and beyond.

Members of the audience were visibly moved as pianist Willis eloquently played one of Mike Binsky's favorite songs at the close of the concert. "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?" How? You keep on playing it and supporting it—and keep encouraging the next generation of jazz artists to carry the torch.

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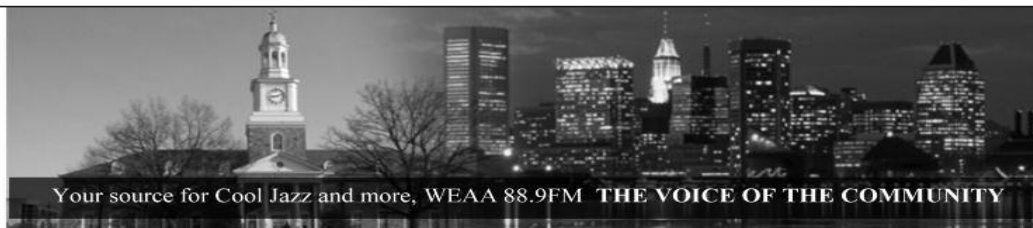


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WEAA's Julius White won the Chesapeake Associated Press Broadcasters Association award for "Outstanding News Series." The winning series was about the Inauguration of Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh.

Visit www.weaa.org or call 443.885.2075 for more information on becoming a member!



A Tribute to Dexter Gordon

By Liz Fixsen

It seems that tribute concerts have become all the rage, featuring tunes composed by or made famous by this or that great jazz figure of yesteryear. The Dexter Gordon Tribute Concert at Creative Alliance on September 17th, played to a packed house, provided a glowing and satisfying contribution to a long list of such concerts.

Dexter Gordon (1923-1990) is recognized as one of the greatest jazz saxophonists, along with John Coltrane, Stan Getz, Sonny Rollins, Lester Young, and others. The writer of web blog *Burning Ambulance* calls Gordon “a big man with a big sound” and says, “he had a roomy, galloping sound that never sounded rushed or hasty, swinging slowly behind a song’s rhythm and giving it an instantly recognizable breathy tone.” According to *Wikipedia*, “he was famous for humorously inserting musical quotes into his solos. . . . [H]e was an advocate of playing to communicate with the audience,” and would often precede the playing of a ballad by reciting some of its lyrics. His studio and live performance career spanned over 40 years, and he played the lead role in *Round Midnight*, a 1986 film portraying the life a jazz musician who resembles Gordon himself.

Baltimore tenor saxophonist Dan Wallace says, “Dexter Gordon was always the player that my teachers told me was the quintessential sound of the tenor. ‘If you’re going to play tenor,’ they said, ‘you need to really study his tone—more than Coltrane, more than Rollins, more than anyone, Dexter is the person you need to emulate.’” When I mentioned Stan Getz, Dan replied, “Stan Getz was the only person who sounded like Stan Getz. EVERYONE tries to sound like Dexter at some point.” Wallace recommends that anyone interested in Gordon listen to his albums *Go* and *Our Man in Paris*.

For this concert, guitarist Michael Joseph Harris assembled some of the best musicians of Baltimore, including Wallace, vibraphonist Warren Wolf, bassist Jeff Reed, and drummer

Lee Pearson II. As the concert MC noted, with players like these in our midst, why would anyone need to go to New York City to hear jazz? He might have added DC, although most of these guys often play in DC, and indeed, far beyond.

For the program, Harris chose his favorites among tunes written by others but which Gordon played often or recorded, including “**Loose Walk**” (Sonny Stitt), “**There Will Never Be Another You**” (Harry Warren/Mack Gordon), “**What’s New**” (Bob Haggart/Johnny Burke), “**Hi-Fly**” (Randy Weston), “**Love For Sale**” (Cole Porter), “**Darn That Dream**” (Jimmy Van Heusen/Eddie DeLange), “**Blue Monk**” (Thelonious Monk), “**The Days of Wine and Roses**” (Henry Mancini), and “**A Night in Tunisia**” (Dizzy Gillespie). They also played Gordon’s own composition, “**Fried Bananas**”; the set list did not include any of Gordon’s other compositions.

Nevertheless, the program was a pleasing selection of tunes, many of which are well known and often played, and the audience responded enthusiastically. Highlights of the concert included a couple of enthralling solo tune introductions, one by Reed, one by Wolf. And then there was a surprise appearance, a surprise even to all the musicians, except to Pearson, who introduced his uncle, trumpet player Vincent Gross, to sing a couple of tunes. Gross sang “Hi-Fly” and “A Night in Tunisia” with considerable ebullience and zest, winning raves from the audience. In a spellbinding trade-four duo with Wolf on “Love for Sale,” Pearson himself gave the audience a big charge with some theatrical flourishes at the drums, throwing his sticks in the air and then playing with his arms wrapped around his back and emerging at his sides. A couple of people in the audience were rolling their eyes, but I—and most of the audience—loved it. I’m guessing that Gordon, who had a sense of humor and believed in communicating with an audience, would also have loved it, and would probably have loved the whole wonderful concert.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOSH KOHN, CREATIVE ALLIANCE

For this concert, guitarist Michael Joseph Harris assembled some of the best musicians of Baltimore . . .

From left: Warren Wolf, Lee Pearson II, Dan Wallace, Michael Joseph Harris, Jeff Reed

BJA Member Benefits

Your support is crucial to the success of the Baltimore Jazz Alliance! When you join, membership benefits include receipt of our monthly newsletter, discounts on BJA merchandise, advance notice about all BJA events, and of course the satisfaction of being a part of Baltimore's best source of information and advocacy for jazz.

But that's not all! The following venues and businesses offer discounts to BJA members:

- **An die Musik** offers 10% discount for BJA members for music purchases at the An die Musik record store.
- **Baltimore Chamber Jazz Society** offers 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.
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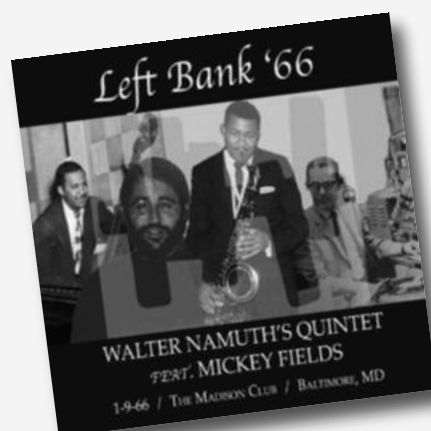
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If you are interested in sponsorship of our newsletter, or if you would like newsletters delivered to you for placement in your establishment, please contact:

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LEFT BANK '66 available from BJA!



Recorded in 1966 at the Madison Club, the CD features Baltimore sax legend Mickey Fields and guitarist Walt Namuth, who joined the Buddy Rich Big Band the following year. These two huge talents were rarely recorded, adding to the value of this CD. In his *City Paper* review, Geoffrey Himes wrote, "If you care at all about the history of Baltimore music or the history of the jazz saxophone, this is a recording you need to hear."

Six tracks include Sam Jones's "Unit 7," Monk's "Well You Needn't," Miles Davis's "Pfrancin" and "The Theme," Benny Golson's "Stablemates," and Billy Reid's "The Gypsy." Phil Harris is on bass, Claude Hubbard on piano and Purnell Rice on drums.

Total playing time = 67 minutes.

To purchase *Left Bank '66*, you may pay \$15 via PayPal at baltimorejazz.com or write a check for \$15 to:

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THE BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE

847 N. Howard Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

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

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

BJA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization



FALL 2017

Dedicated to promoting Jazz in Baltimore!

Join for only 7¢ a day.
www.baltimorejazz.com

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