

BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE

SPRING 2019

INSIDE THIS EDITION

| | |
|--|----|
| Jam Sessions | 2 |
| <i>Transitions: A Contrarian's Delight</i> | 6 |
| Remembering Baltimore's First Lady of Jazz | 8 |
| John Thomas Quartet: Hotel Indigo's Poet's | 10 |
| BJA Presents Father's Day Jazz | 12 |
| BJA Member Benefits | 12 |

VOLUME FIFTEEN + ISSUE TWO + THE BJA NEWSLETTER + WWW.BALTIMOREJAZZ.COM

BRANDON WOODY

Rising Trumpet Star

By Mitch Mirkin



PHOTO CREDIT: MITCH MIRKIN

I first encountered trumpeter Brandon Woody, now aged 20, last August, when he led an open-mic jam session at the Motor House on North Avenue with his group, Upendo (Swahili for "love"). I then caught one of his monthly gigs at An die Musik on North Charles. At both performances, three things about the trumpeter impressed me.

One was his fiery, intense yet lyrical and fluid style. He reminded me of Freddie

Hubbard, who once described his own playing as "very loose, elastic." Woody played blazes of short, repeated, melodically complex riffs that grew in intensity, driven by the funky, pumping keyboard and drums behind him. But he also blew longer, sweet melodic lines reminiscent of Clifford Brown.

The second thing was the dynamic variation in Woody's playing. There were soft, quiet interludes and dramatic crescendos. I've been to too many live-music events where the volume was painfully and relentlessly loud—and yes, I'm talking about jazz and not heavy metal.

The third quality that impressed me about this young, congenial brass man was his stage presence. There was an

(continued on page 4)

BJA Presents Father's Day Jazz
See page 12



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEXANDER JARMAN

Baltimore Kissa Society

By Bob Jacobson

Since 2016, BJA member Alexander Jarman has hosted the monthly jazz record listening sessions of the Baltimore Kissa Society (BKS). Named for the cafés (kissa) where people in over 600 Japanese cities and towns gathered in the 1950s-'70s to hear jazz recordings, BKS has afforded its members listening opportunities of everyone from Django Reinhardt to Sun Ra; themed sessions have included the jazz influence on Steely Dan and Afrofuturism.

Jarman, 36, is the Walters Art Museum's manager of community programs and contemporary art initiatives. He began listening to jazz in his teens in Cincinnati. Before coming to Baltimore in 2014 he curated a jazz series at the San Diego Museum of Art. He has had DJ residencies at Diskobar and The Elephant.

Bob Jacobson interviewed Jarman on January 26th, 2019 at his gallery, Cardinal.

BJ: How did the Baltimore Kissa Society start?

AJ: In San Diego a lot of musicians would invite others to listening sessions at their houses. Not long after moving to Baltimore I had an opportunity to use Maryland Art Place for one night. I decided to host a jazz record listening session. I was new to the city and wanted to find other people. I put it on Facebook and thirty people showed up, mostly strangers. I thought, "Okay, this is a thing. I think people are into it."

(continued on page 5)

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:
webmaster@baltimorejazz.com

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NEWSLETTER

Gail Marten, Jazz Palette
Editor/Designer

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!**

SUNDAYS

Germano's – 7-10

Weekly jazz jam hosted by Mike 'n' Ike.
Instrumentalists and vocalists are welcome. 300
South High Street. 410-752-4515.

MONDAYS

An die Musik Live! – 7:30-9:30

409 N. Charles Street. Jam sessions **SECOND**
and **FOURTH** Mondays co-hosted by Alex
Meadow and Christian Hizon. \$5 for musicians and
\$8 for others.

The Avenue Kitchen – 7-10

911 W 36th Street. Hosted by guitarist Michael
Joseph Harris, featuring the music of Django
Reinhardt, Gypsy jazz, swing, trad, Dixieland,
blues, standards, bossa nova, Gypsy rumba,
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Full bar with extensive draft beer selection and
food menu. No cover. 443-961-8515

Terra Cafe – 8:30-11:30

101 E 25th Street. Clarence Ward III presents
The Session. All are welcome to come out and
express themselves. No cover, one drink
minimum. Come on in and swing with us.
410-777-5277

TUESDAYS

Randallstown Community Center – 6-8

3505 Resource Drive, Randallstown. Sponsored
by BJA. Hosted by Derrick Amin. Jam sessions/
book and poetry live reading. Musicians and
vocalists are welcome. 410-887-0698

The Judge's Bench – 8:30-Midnight

8385 Main Street, Ellicott City. Charlie Schueller
leads informal jam sessions on the **FIRST**
TUESDAY of each month. 410-465-3497

Marie Louise Bisro – 8-11

111 West Centre Street. Hosted by Tom Lagana.
No keyboard at this session. 904 N. Charles
Street, 410-385-9946.

WEDNESDAYS

49 West Café – 7-10

49 West Street, Annapolis. Hosted by John Starr
and house band. **FIRST & THIRD** Wednesdays.
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HOMEslyce – 8-11

336 N. Charles Street. Todd Marcus leads jazz jam
sessions **FIRST** Wednesdays. 443-501-4000

THURSDAYS

The Place Lounge – 7:00-10:00

315 W. Franklin Street. Jam session/open mic is
hosted by Spice every **THIRD THURSDAY**.
Musicians and vocalists are welcome.
410-547-2722

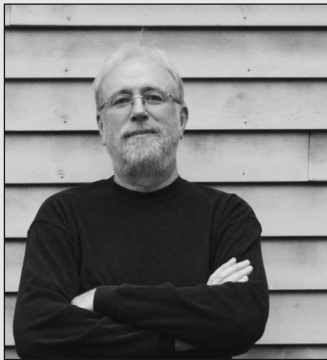
*If you know of local jam
sessions, or if any of the jazz
jam sessions listed are
discontinued, please inform
the editor at:
jazzpalette@gmail.com*



www.baltimorejazz.com



Baltimore Chamber Jazz Society



BILL O'CONNELL'S LATIN JAZZ ALL-STARS

Sunday, April 7, 2019 | 5 pm

Bill O'Connell, piano; Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone;
Ralph Bowen, tenor saxophone; Craig Handy, alto saxophone;
Conrad Herwig, trombone; Alex Sipiagin, trumpet;
Andrea Brachfeld, flute; Lincoln Goines, bass; Robby Ameen, drums
\$45 General Admission | \$43 BMA Members/Seniors

www.billoconnell.net



CHRISTIAN SANDS TRIO

Sunday, May 5, 2019 | 5 pm

Christian Sands, piano; Jerome Jennings, drums; Eric Wheeler, bass
\$45 General Admission | \$43 BMA Members/Seniors

www.christiansandsjazz.com

Please note: Programming is subject to change.

Student tickets (\$10) will be sold only on day of concert, subject to availability, with valid student ID.

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The Baltimore Chamber Jazz Society is a non-profit organization and is supported by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council, an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.

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in Baltimore.
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Details on page 15

BRANDON WOODY

Rising Trumpet Star

(continued from first page)

uninhibited joy, a sheer exuberance, about the music that you don't often see with jazz players. Woody is no sullen, brooding type—and anything but wooden—when he's up on stage. He's a physical player, moving about the stage, his knees bending, upper body turning and twisting as he coaxes expressive lines and exquisite high notes out of his Bach Stradivarius trumpet.

Check out the YouTube video of tenor man George Adams playing “You Don't Know What Love Is” at the 1989 Mt. Fuji Jazz Festival and you'll see what I mean about physical horn players. Adams almost knocks over the mic stand at one point, a result of the intense emotion in his playing. Now and then Woody also emits a groan or grunt between phrases, a sudden and forceful “aah!” that escapes like soda shooting out of a shaken-up bottle when you open the cap. It may arise from exhilaration over a unique and beautiful line that just



... his fiery and intense
yet lyrical and fluid style ...
reminded me of Freddie Hubbard,
who once described his own playing
as “very loose, elastic.”

emanated from his horn, or from exasperation that he has not quite reached the summit of expression and technical dazzle that he was hearing from his inner muse—a feeling common among even the most accomplished players.

The expressive, animated trumpeter reacts audibly and visibly not only to his own playing, but to that of his stage mates as well, with broad smiles and appreciative shouts—“Yeah!!!” He sways and bobs and grooves to the other musicians' solos. He is gracious and warm on the bandstand, exuding a generosity of spirit as he interacts with and introduces his fellow players, even those who are clearly still apprentices, bravely cutting their teeth in jam sessions. The energy and excitement—and love, or “upendo”—that he generates seem to spill over to everyone in the venue.

Woody is quick to credit local jazz artists who have helped him develop as a musician and as a person. While still in elementary school, he attended a summer camp led by saxophonist Craig Alston at the Eubie Blake Cultural

Center, on North Howard Street.

“He taught us about the history, he talked about his experiences with very notable jazz musicians. He taught us about the scene,” recalls Woody.

An alumnus of the Baltimore School for the Arts and Peabody Youth Orchestra, Woody built his chops partly through playing classical works, winning concerto competitions along the way. After stints at the Brubeck Institute and Manhattan School of Music, he returned to Baltimore last spring. He now has a monthly gig at An die Musik, and a CD of original music coming out this spring. On May 18th, he will be starting a monthly series at Eubie Blake.

Baltimore trumpeter Theljon Allen continues to be a key mentor for him, and while Woody's talent and ambition are likely to propel him toward wider acclaim, he is enthusiastic about the musical opportunities that lie ahead for him right in Charm City.

“I grew up here, went through all these programs and schools here, and now I'm playing at some of the venues I've grown up at. Everything's coming full circle.”

MITCH MIRKIN is a writer and editor with the research program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He contributed to the recent BJA website series of profiles on local big bands. Mitch has written several jazz compositions and is collaborating with a quintet to produce a CD featuring some of his work.

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Mike Joyce, *Washington Post*

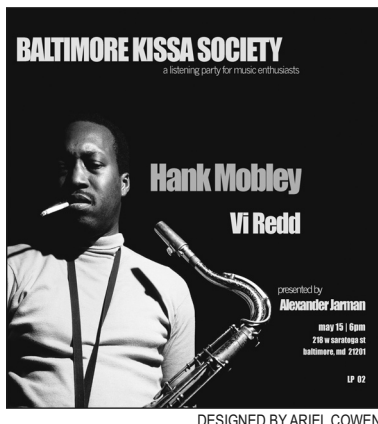
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Baltimore Kissa Society *(continued from first page)*



There's a little bit of a family thing that happens. People bring food. That's something special about Baltimore, the intimacy. Most of the time we still have around thirty people. The premise is that you spend two hours on a Sunday consciously listening to some jazz. We have never paid for a venue or presenter. This town is open and generous in so many ways. It just blows me away.

BJ: Can you describe the audience?

AJ: Half of the crowd I've never seen before, which is great. It's pretty consistently inter-generational, which is awesome.

BJ: How are artists or themes identified?

AJ: We're talking about vinyl. So-and-so happens to have a ton of this artist in their collection. [Jazz organist] Jimmy Smith was first. From that someone mentioned Shirley Scott, and from her, Trudy Pitts, so our next session is on women jazz organists. From that someone volunteered to present women jazz vocalists for Women's History Month.

BJ: How do you select presenters?

AJ: Presenters are people who attend and volunteer with an idea. My job is to help people do the best with their idea. I present about four times a year.

BJ: How do you pick venues?

AJ: Occasionally I approach a venue owner, but a lot of times people who attend volunteer their space. One person asked if we ever do them in homes and we ended up at his loft downtown. Our gallery, Cardinal, is always a back-up.

BJ: Please talk about the cover art aspect of BKS.

AJ: That's part of the reason we wanted to have a website. People ask, "Why vinyl?" I was always drawn to records as aesthetically beautiful. That was part of the experience of enjoying my records. We pass the album covers around. I think they're beautiful objects. I wanted to highlight these [visual] artists. The blog posts are a fun writing project. I'm just so excited to share what I know about these artists. I send the blog posts to the artists who are still living. Some have written back.

BJ: Are there kissa in cities other than Baltimore?

AJ: Yes, although they're not called that. A lot of them are connected to one venue. Most charge or there's an obligation

to buy something, like drinks. One is a subscription series. We're not tied to one venue. We like to move it around. We never charge. That frees us up to present a program that might not be popular, to not be afraid to take risks.

BJ: What's in the future for Baltimore Kissa Society?

AJ: We've talked about whether we should make some of these into podcasts. It would also be really cool to go on tour. We recently took two months off after our son was born and ten people emailed me to ask when the next kissa is. That was very motivating.

Baltimore Kissa Society's website is baltimorekissasociety.com. There you'll find event listings, album art (click on each for more information on the musical and visual artists), playlists and link to BKS's Facebook site.

BOB JACOBSON has written for DownBeat, allaboutjazz.com and jazzreview.com. He also wrote chapters on Ellis Larkins and Hank Levy in the 2010 book Music at the Crossroads: Lives Legacies of Baltimore Jazz.

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"There's nothing like the eureka moment of knocking off a song that didn't exist before. I won't compare it to sex, but it lasts longer." – Duke Ellington

TRANSITIONS

A Contrarian's Delight

By Gregory Lewis

Transitions, a recently released CD by the John Lamkin Favorites Jazz Quintet/Sextet, featuring vocalist Eartha Lamkin, is a welcome addition to my digital music library.

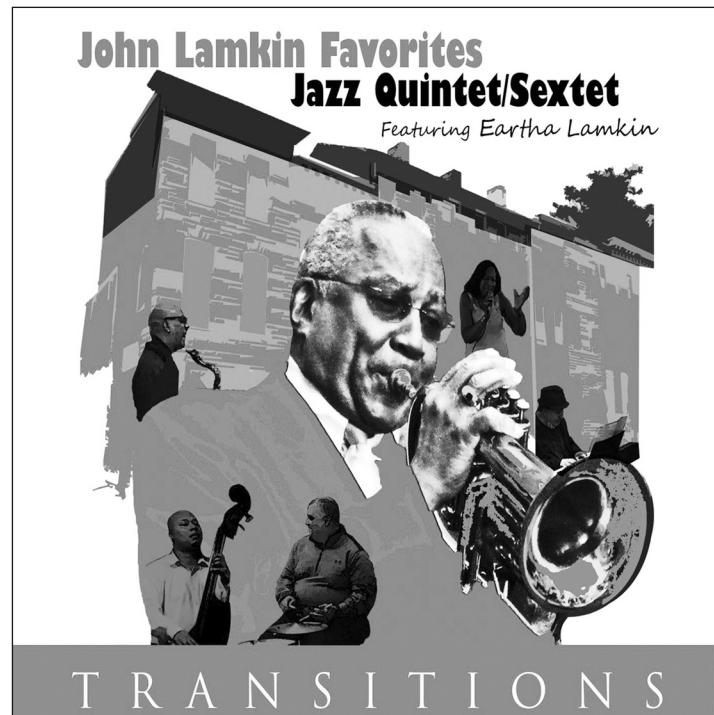
Not to be confused with his namesake son John Lamkin III, a gifted drummer who appears on three tracks of the CD, John Lamkin II brought his working group—with some choice additions—into the recording studio to memorialize the polished sound that's been honed over years of live performances at straight-ahead jazz venues around town, notably West Baltimore's Caton Castle, with three live appearances over the past year by the core ensemble: John Lamkin II on trumpet and flugelhorn, Michael Hairston on tenor and soprano saxophone, Bob Butta on piano, Michael Graham on acoustic bass and Jesse Moody on drums.

"Transitions," the title tune, an original by John Lamkin II, demonstrates the influence of composer/pianist Horace Silver on Lamkin's musical approach, which he expressly acknowledges in insightful liner notes. Introduced by a chorus—flugelhorn and tenor sax—that gives a brassy context to a Silveresque funky Latin beat, a sort of cha cha rhythm maintained by Moody's tapping rim shots behind Graham's propulsive bass line, the tune gives way to Butta's expansive treatment of the melody with spirited piano runs that build to a climactic resolution, all a prelude to the harmonically searching horn solos that follow.

A couple of tracks were inspired by local institutions, like "Swingin' at The Castle," a middle-tempo swaggering blues . . .

I know a contrarian who views bebop as the gold standard of jazz and is, therefore, pleased with the *Transitions* CD because it is straight out of that tradition. In fact, he was so impressed by "Somumin3 (You Dig!)," with its boppish jazz waltz melody, that it muted his objection to "Get On Up and Get On Down," a tune with a funky upfront bass and drum downbeat that mimics the trademark vibe of the late Godfather of Soul, James Brown, playing "on the one," which my acquaintance considers a concession to popular fashion.

Indeed, this CD is eclectic. A couple of tracks were inspired by local institutions, like "Swingin' at The Castle," a middle-tempo swaggering blues tribute to impresario Ron Scott's Caton Castle, the scene of old-school jazz for the past twenty-nine years. The alternate bassists on some tracks, Kris Funn and Herman Burney, frequently appear at the Castle, as do Todd Simon and John Lamkin III, the alternate pianist and drummer, respectively.



"Da Market" (note the 'hood-speak) was composed by Lamkin II in the carnival spirit of mid-day public music performances at Lexington Market, a venerable food and produce exchange that has become out-at-the-elbows like Baltimore itself. This number is, according to the liner notes, "a 24-bar funk blues, dedicated to the Lexington Market clientele, [and] written to please listeners, dancers, and musicians alike."

Something for everybody aptly describes *Transitions*, with the sensuous vocal styling of Eartha Lamkin on "God Bless the Child" (with Martin Lamkin on trombone) and a non-vocal gospel hymn (with Simon's particularly irreverent piano), "Down by the Riverside," covering a couple more stylistic bases. Note also that saxophonist Craig Alston performs on "722" and drummer Phillip Thomas appears on "V.M.W.," two more Horace Silver-inspired compositions.

As for my contrarian acquaintance, the guy who won't give up his flip phone, his favorite of the ten tracks is the original number by Lamkin II with the eccentric tag "All The Steps You Take (While Walking Through Your Brain)," an adulterated Dixieland-type rhythmic conceit with a meandering yet rollicking cadence that frames complementary solo breaks on trumpet and tenor sax.

Even so, in his contrariness, my acquaintance was probably most enamored by the title. Go figure! Defending his off-the-wall attitude, he would no doubt respond in the manner of Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno: "Life cannot submit itself to reason, because the end of life is living and not understanding."

GREGORY L. LEWIS is a longtime Baltimore attorney whose jazz reflections frequently appear under the Caton Castle's "show review" tab at catoncastle.com and reflectionscatoncastle.blogspot.com



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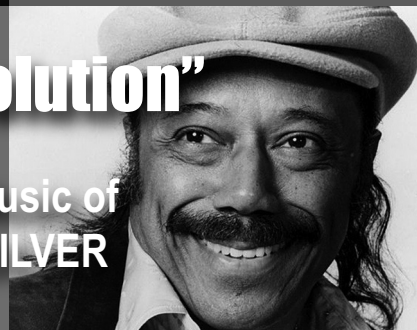
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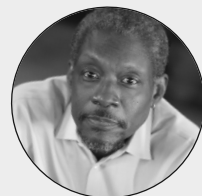
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Remembering Baltimore's First Lady of Jazz

By Gail Marten

Baltimore lost its First Lady of Jazz on February 17th, 2019. Ethel Ennis began her singing career at age 15 and continued into her 80s. In 1967 she met and married a *Baltimore Sun* reporter named Earl Arnett (defying Maryland's existing miscegenation laws), and they bought the house behind Mondawmin Mall where they lived from that year to this. Some of Ethel's friends shared their thoughts and recollections with me:

Robert Ford

As a native Baltimorean who has been involved with music in some form or another for most of my life, I can say I've had two "big sisters" on the Baltimore jazz scene: the late Ruby Glover and Ethel Ennis, who joined the ancestors on February 17th. Ethel would say she was a vocalist, a musician, or a singer of songs as opposed to a jazz singer. I suggest reading Sallie Kravetz's 1984 book *Ethel Ennis, The Reluctant Jazz Star: An Illustrated Biography* for more on that subject.

My relationship with Ethel and her husband began in the mid-1970s while I was working at radio station WBJC-FM on the Liberty campus of the then Community College of Baltimore. Ethel and Earl were great supporters of public radio and were there as guests during a fundraising drive. After their time on the air and our warm interaction, I ended up driving them home. It was not a long trip since they lived a few blocks from the station. I never knew them to own a car!

Over the years Ethel allowed WBJC-FM to work with her closely in her professional life, including permitting the station to broadcast performances from the King of France Tavern at the Maryland Inn in Annapolis. One would think that the radio station would have to pay a tremendous amount of money to an artist of Ethel Ennis's stature. Hopefully, the station increased its audience and attendance at the club in-



Ethel Ennis

creased; however, Ethel never charged the station a single dime.

In 1984, Ethel and Earl opened Ethel's Place, which became Baltimore's showcase for international music artists, mostly jazz legends. Joe Williams, Art Blakey, Freddie Hubbard, Carmen McRae, Wynton Marsalis, Astrud Gilberto, Toots Thielemans, Betty Carter and Louie Bellson were among the many A-list artists who regularly performed at the club's basement level stage during its four years of existence.

During the last two years of the club, I was fortunate to serve as public relations director. Since I was in the midst of a failing attempt to maintain my college football player shape, I would jog five miles around the lake at Hanlon Park five days a week. I would pick up Ethel and Earl so they, too, could get in some exercise. This prompted Ethel to send me a birthday card dedicated to "The Man who gets me Up in the Morning."

In August of 1986 or 1987, during an Eddie Harris engagement at Ethel's Place, vocalist Nancy Wilson was ap-

pearing at Pier Six on Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Since I was going to Nancy's show, Ethel asked me to remind Nancy of her invitation to come to Ethel's Place after her gig was finished. Later at Ethel's, I was a fly on the wall as I observed these two great vocalists reminisce. Suddenly, Ethel sat at the piano, looked to me and asked, "Robert, isn't today your birthday?" She started to play and sing a slow, sensuous chorus of "Happy Birthday to You." She then began to swing the song as she and Nancy took turns improvising several choruses. Best birthday EVER!!!

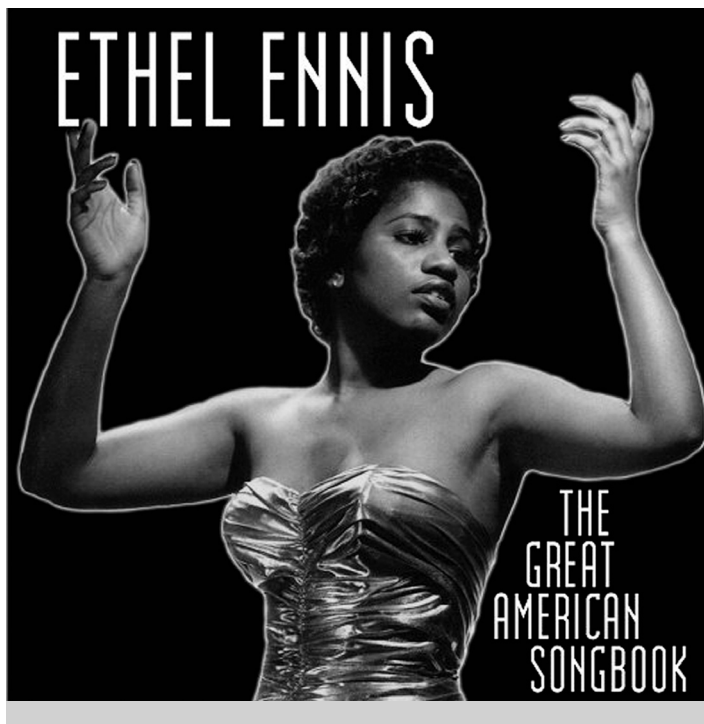
Andy Bienstock

She was not just a wonderful singer; Ethel could do what the really great singers do, and that is inhabiting a song and making it her own in a very special way. It's a very hard thing to do, and you really have to be great to do that. She did everything on her own terms, and that may have kept her from becoming a household name. She was a very strong woman and she did things her way.

Marianne Matheny-Katz

I met Ethel Ennis about nine years ago. She and her husband Earl came to our third anniversary concert at Jazzway with Warren Wolf and Tia Fuller. I had known about her for years as a jazz icon in Baltimore and had listened to many of her beautiful recordings (she had a gorgeous voice). So, of course, I was thrilled to finally meet her. At the end of the concert, I asked her if she would please favor us with a song. She was gracious enough to agree, but not before wisecracking, "Well, I WAS having a good time," which drew a hearty laugh from the audience. She took the mic and delivered a killing version of the Bessie Smith classic, "Empty Bed Blues" (with ALL the ribald lyrics). It was one of the Jazzway moments I'll always remember with crystal clarity.

A few years later I had the honor of



interviewing Ethel and Earl for our jazz documentary *Tell Me More and Then Some*, and we spent an entire day with them interviewing, reminiscing and sharing some great food and wine. Then in 2017 I had the pleasure of participating in a team producing a charity event where Ethel was the guest of honor and received a lifetime achievement award. I greeted her, we spoke briefly, and then she gave me a warm hug and we held each other's hands for a long time, before she had to move on to mingle with others who wanted to talk to her.

RIP Ethel: I'll never forget your spirit, your magnificent voice, your kindness and your dedication to Baltimore and particularly the city's young people. You will always be Baltimore's First Lady of Jazz.

Dr. Estella Ingram-Levy

It is with heartfelt sorrow that I share fond memories of my dear friend and adopted big sister, Ethel Ennis. I met Ethel over 40 years ago when she and my late husband, O'Donel Levy, performed and traveled together; oftentimes she would ride with us to Annapolis to perform at the Maryland Inn. I recall many times, before they did a show, she would record original songs on cassettes, and asked O'Donel (Butch) to put the music to them. The songs sounded very strange to me and I could hardly wait to hear the outcome during their performance. Every time, they were exceptionally appreciated.

When my husband had a stroke in 2006, she and her husband Earl were two of my greatest supporters. She was a big hit, and we talked about after she did her thing at Butch's memorial service. When she asked what I wanted her to do, I told her to just be Ethel, and that she was.

When she had a stroke and was hospitalized, she asked if I would go to physical therapy with her. During one session,

I asked the attendees if they knew who she was, and asked her to give them just a little of Ethel's style, and she attracted all the workers on the floor while she did her thing.

She will forever be truly missed and loved.

Gail Marten

To know Ethel Ennis was to love her. When she invited me to perform with my band at Ethel's Place in the late '80s, wow, I was thrilled! For too short a time, Ethel and Earl's beautiful nightclub, located on Cathedral Street across from the Meyerhoff, had been the showcase of jazz luminaries including the magnificent Ms. Ennis, George Shearing, Joe Williams, Gary Bartz, Max Roach, Charlie Byrd, the Modern Jazz Quartet and other world-famous artists. To perform where so many superstars had played was a rare privilege for me at the time.

Later that summer Ethel asked me to fill in for her at an event in Gatwick, England, and one afternoon, accompanied by Ethel's husband Earl, my pianist Lionel Jiggetts and I flew from BWI to the UK. What a treat! I didn't even mind when TWA misplaced my luggage and I had to perform in my traveling clothes. Fortunately, in those days people didn't board the airplane in sweat pants.

Upon returning, I called Ethel to express my thanks for the opportunity and privilege I had been afforded. Throughout the following years, whenever I saw Ethel, she was unfailingly gracious, kind and generous. She will be missed, but long remembered. She was a marvelous vocalist and an exceptional human being.



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JOHN THOMAS QUARTET

Hotel Indigo's Poet's: A Lounge and Listening Room

By Liz Fixsen

Poet's Lounge (officially titled, "Poet's Modern Cocktails and Eats"), in Hotel Indigo on downtown Baltimore's Franklin Street, has been hosting Thursday evening jazz from 6 to 9 pm since 2015, featuring varying ensembles. Through 2017 and part of 2018, bassist Jeron White led a trio there; now saxophonist John Thomas has taken over the gig with a quartet.

Hotel Indigo is a pretty classy joint—in fact, the night I visited, the receptionist was busy checking in the whole troop of Shen Yun performers for their upcoming show in Baltimore. The jazz happens in the Poet's Lounge on the first floor, sometimes in its cocktail lounge, and sometimes in the room called the library, which is separated from the lounge by the foyer and check-in desk. Depending on the situation (such as a private event in the library), the bands may play in one or the other of the two rooms.

Each room has its own vibe. In the bar and cocktail lounge space, the lighting is muted, and waiters thread their way among the closely-packed round tables to serve drinks and food, while guests carry on their conversations over the music. For most patrons, the jazz seemed to be just background music, but some jazz aficionados came by to listen or sit in with the band. In contrast, the library creates more of a feeling of a listening room than does the lounge. It is a large, brightly-lit, high-ceilinged room featuring stylish décor: white walls, tall round-top windows, a contemporary-style chandelier, and blue-and-white carpet. Several small glass-topped cocktail tables with blue leather armchairs and a yellow-leather bench are arranged in a row along the street side of the room, facing a wall of dark wood bookshelves and a large white-framed fireplace. The night that I visited, the John Thomas Quartet was playing in one corner of that room.



From left: Michael Benjamin, John Guo, Byung Kang and John Thomas

Because the tables are arranged to face the band across a mostly empty space, patrons are likely to feel obliged to hold conversation to a minimum; there is no buffer between them and the musicians. The only drawback is that the wait staff could be more attentive to customers seated in the library. After I waited a while for a server to appear, I finally crossed the foyer and made my way to the bar to order a drink.

However, because of the casual setting, the band can interact with the listeners and vice versa. And the John Thomas Quartet, all alumni of Peabody Institute, are definitely worth listening to. Saxophonist John Thomas leads the quartet, with Michael Benjamin on guitar, John Guo on bass and Byung Kang on drums.

The night I visited, the group played an eclectic set, including several tunes by Dexter Gordon, a funky, playful "Hanky Panky" and a sweet and soulful "Jodi," with its intricate harmonies. They played an obligatory Christmas tune, "Winter Wonderland," with a whimsical bounce on the bass. Benjamin did a great solo with effects pedals on Bobby Hebb's "Sunny." Thomas introduced us to one of his saxophone heroes, Joel Frahm, before the group played Frahm's composition, "The Navigator." The last set is open to sitters-in, and saxophonist Adam Corson

joined the group and traded blazing fours with Thomas on Joe Henderson's "Black Narcissus." When another couple of listeners asked if the group played any Kenny G tunes, Thomas politely replied in the negative but accommodated the listeners with a pleasing rendition of "Summertime."

The hotel is located at 24 West Franklin Street. There is convenient parking practically across the street for only \$5 at Penn Parking, on the south side of Franklin, just west of Charles. As the website explains, the fare includes "eclectic regional cuisine" and "classic and artisan cocktails, including the Build-Your-Own Manhattan." Poet's—both the lounge and the library—is a great place to drop in for a drink after work, and Baltimore jazz lovers will do themselves a favor by supporting this beautiful venue and fine band.

Learn more at: <https://www.facebook.com/PoetsModernCocktailsEats/> and <https://www.jtsax.net/>

LIZ FIXSEN is a jazz pianist, jazz vocalist, and jazz enthusiast. She has written numerous articles and reviews for the Baltimore Jazz Alliance over the years and has served for several years on the board of the Baltimore Jazz Alliance. She teaches professional writing at the University of MD and also works for The Phillips Agency and Jazz Beyond Borders doing promotions of jazz and world-music artists.

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- **Germano's Piattini** often offers discounted tickets to specific events for BJA members, announced by email.
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Do you have a discount to list in the BJA Member Benefits column? Please email us at jazzpalette@gmail.com to let us know what you have to offer. Our next issue be distributed at the beginning of July 2019.

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: irashkin@gmail.com

The BJA newsletter is delivered by mail to members and to several distribution venues including: Caton Castle, Jazzway 6004, An die Musik, Eubie Blake Cultural Center, Bertha's, 49 West Cafe, Germano's, Creative Alliance, Reginald F. Lewis Gift Shop, Morgan State University and Dear Globe Coffee.

Baltimore Jazz Alliance Presents Father's Day Jazz



By Ian Rashkin

We all know Mother's Day gets a lot of well-deserved love—brunches, teas, concerts, flowers, and more—but this year we're making Father's Day just as special with the re-emergence of the Baltimore Jazz Fest, and with a few added twists. In partnership with Saint John's in the Village and Jazz Productions, BJA will host the 2019 Father's Day Jazz Festival on

the grounds of St. John's Episcopal Church, on Greenmount Avenue in Baltimore's Waverly neighborhood. This free event will feature a full day of live music (jazz, with a hint of blues and some funk), plus a collection of classic cars, activities for kids, and food, beer, and wine.

As with our inaugural 2016 Jazz Fest, we will showcase a variety of artists from the Baltimore area, introducing them to some new audiences, while giving existing fans an opportunity to enjoy them in a festive outdoor setting that's fun for the whole family. Unlike the Druid Hill Park festival, however, this event will be smaller (though with plenty of room for all to enjoy!), and more embedded in the neighborhood. For those who are not familiar with Waverly, it's a bustling neighborhood of small businesses as diverse as Main Street Hats, Normal's Books and Records, 901 Arts, and Peabody Heights Brewery, as well as home to the thriving 32nd Street Farmers Market. Parking is plentiful, and don't worry—we have a great indoor option in case of rain!

The lineup is still in the works, but rest assured there will be a great mix of favorite local artists, sponsored in part by local presenters such as Contemporary Arts, Germano's Cabaret, 32nd Street Market, and more. We'll be bringing you details as they develop, through our website, our email list, and our social media pages, so please keep an eye out, and save the date! That's June 16th, at St. John's Episcopal Church, 3009 Greenmount Avenue in Baltimore.

One last note: sponsorship opportunities are still available, so please reach out if you or your business would like to help support this festival and jazz in Baltimore. Contact us at info@baltimorejazz.com to discuss different levels of participation, and to let us know if you'd like to volunteer at the festival. As always, the BJA is a non-profit group of volunteers, so we can use all the help available to make events like this possible, and to keep them free for all to attend.

Excited? We certainly are, for this festival and for our new partnership with St. John's—and for the chance to bring some live jazz to Greenmount Avenue. We can't wait to see you there!

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High Center - Messiah College
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**Friday
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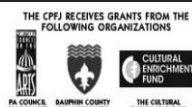
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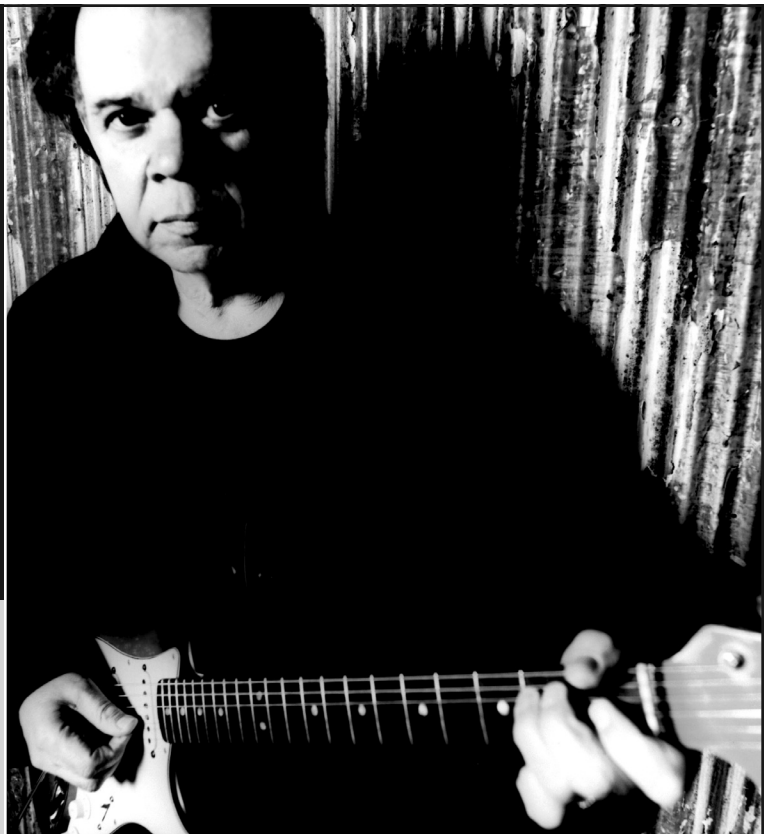
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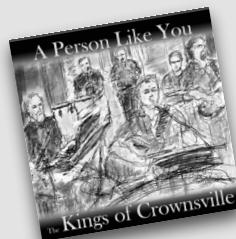
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