BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE

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By Michael B. Friedman

Although Christie Macdonald is very young (she turned 26 in July), she is already a fixture on the jazz scene in Baltimore. She's a very strong guitar player and a tasteful singer who gigs frequently and attends as many jam sessions as she can.

Christie plays with rock/metal bands, such as Queen Wolf, and with folk groups as well as jazz groups of many genres from trad to straight-ahead to the edges of recent experiments in formless music. She has played in the pit for Everyman Theatre, Spotlighters Theatre, and Vagabond Players, just to name a few.

But her love is the Manouche style of jazz—Gypsy jazz—with its roots in Django Reinhardt's music. Her new group, Hot Club of Hampden, finds new possibilities in this decades-old genre. The group has recently done a live-stream performance at An die Musik, and although like most musicians she has lost gigs due to the pandemic, she has played

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I'll Be Seeing You in All the Old Familiar Places

By Kwamé Jamal Kenyatta-Bey

It was a dark and stormy night . . . not really; it was actually rather drizzly, but nobody walked through the doors of the old venue on Pennsylvania Avenue, The Sphinx Club, without shaking a little drizzle off their hat or wiping down some of the wetness on their sleeves. Wordlessly making their way through the yellowish subdued light, filtered by the fog of burning cigarettes or cigars, to the brightness of the bar or the loneliness of that side table, they settled in, maybe ordering some wings or that great fish sandwich. They sank back and listened to the tinkling of glasses as the barkeep poured whiskey into one glass after the other and heard the gravelly voice of Biddy Wood, sage and mentor to patrons and performers alike, holding court in the corner. Some gravitated upstairs to the smaller bar for small-time gangsters gathering to parlay great deals that would either grow or destroy their empires.

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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.

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webmaster@baltimorejazz.com

Where Are They Now?

By Bob Jacobson

PHOTO COURTESY OF BERNADINE DORSEY

Since we presented BJA's Next Generation Artist Award to saxophonists Ebban and Ephraim Dorsey in 2015, the siblings have amassed a stunning array of achievements. Their latest coup was playing a medley of "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "Lift Every Voice and Sing" for the Orioles' 2020 home opener. The way that gig came about is emblematic of Ebban and Ephraim's musical lives since 2015.

In 2018 former BJA board member Todd Marcus recommended the young saxophonists for a private party at Orioles Park. Members of the Angelos family, the Orioles' owners, were so impressed that Ebban was invited back to play "This Land Is Your Land" during a later seventh-inning stretch. That appearance led to the Opening Day 2020 performance.

Ebban and Ephraim have continued learning their craft at jam sessions, Contemporary Arts, Inc. Summer Activity Extraordinaire (SAX) Camp, and lessons with Carl Grubbs, Ian Sims, Tim Green, Gary Thomas and Blake Meister. They attended Christian McBride's Jazz House Kids summer jazz program in 2018 and 2019. They have played in Peabody Preparatory's jazz ensemble, where alto saxophonist Ebban played baritone sax during eighth grade. She entered Baltimore School for the Arts (BSA) the following year and played bari sax in BSA's jazz ensemble at our 2019 Baltimore Jazz Fest.

Most of Ebban's accomplishments have been achieved with her brother. They have co-led combos twice at Caton Castle and three times at Keystone Korner and played some of the best venues in the DC area (such as Westminster Church).

But this past summer Ebban, who turned sixteen in June, achieved something momentous on her own. At the urging of Sean Jones, director of Peabody Conservatory's jazz program, Ebban auditioned for National Youth Orchestra's jazz ensemble. She was the youngest person selected. Due to the pandemic, the band's tour of South Africa was canceled, but Ebban still participated in the Carnegie Hall-affiliated program online.

What is next for Ebban? She has composed five tunes and hopes to include them in an EP (extended play) recording. In honor of her unswervingly supportive parents, Bernadine and Ephraim Dorsey, she titled her first tune "For Mom and Dad."

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 and Legacies of Baltimore Jazz.*

"To keep a band together you simply need a gimmick. The gimmick I use is to pay them money."
– Duke Ellington

Christie Macdonald: Musician, Teacher and Community Volunteer

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duo and solo gigs at Woodberry Kitchen and Trinacria Café in Baltimore and at Syriana Café in Ellicott City.

I have had the great pleasure of playing with her both at jam sessions and at a weekly gig she and I had in the bar at Germano's before the pandemic shut us down. Combining keyboard—my instrument—and guitar is not easy, but Christie is a great listener. She stands out as a musician by blending rather than dominating.

Other musicians agree. For example, Ian Rashkin, a bass player who loves to bring jazz musicians together in Baltimore, said about her, "Christie's ability to switch between and blend old-time beauty and modern grime makes her one of my favorite guitarists to listen to, and the way she can listen and react to changes of mood make playing with her a hoot!"

Recently, I had a long conversation with Christie. Here's part of it:

When did you discover jazz?

I fell in love with guitar when I was nine years old, but I didn't hear jazz until I was about thirteen. I didn't like it—except the blues. In high school I imitated singer-songwriters. I also played in pit orchestras. I learned that in the band I was a part of a whole, that it was the ensemble sound that mattered.

But I didn't love working in pit bands where I had to play the exact same notes night after night. I wanted more freedom and found it playing from the Great American Songbook with its great variety of melodic and harmonic structures. I could play the same song over and over and never play it in the same way twice.

I majored in guitar performance at Towson and learned a lot about different styles of jazz. I didn't have jazz heroes at first, but then I discovered Django Reinhardt, who became my major source of inspiration, although I still play in many different styles—especially rhythm guitar like Freddie Green and straight-ahead jazz with roots in Wes Montgomery.

You're popular with other musicians for your ability to play in multiple styles, but also for the way you play with other musicians.

Well, I think that's what it's about. Jazz is not a solo art. It's about playing together in groups. It's about adapting to fit with other players. Guitar is like piano mixed with drums. It needs to lay down a steady beat and provide harmonic clarity. That's part of what I love about Django's style of playing. Strong, steady rhythm with full chords that hold the band together.

I also like to solo, of course. I like the freedom to create my own melodies, but I always try to draw from the melodic and harmonic structure of the tune we're playing and from the style of the other players. Even when I solo, I try to be part of the whole.

Tell me about your teaching.

I teach people of all ages from as young as five to retired people. I speak the language of guitar and have spoken it since I was a kid. I try to teach my students to speak it, too.

I'm happy to teach jazz if that's what a student wants to learn. But little kids need to learn the basics. And my older students often don't want to learn jazz. They may want to play like someone they admire. I had a student who wanted to play like George Benson. He told me that he had heard Thelonious Monk play in person, long before I was born, and hated him. I love Monk, but I just tried to teach him how to play like George Benson.

And what about your charity work?

I am very distressed about how many people have lost income and cannot afford adequate food. I've been working with Baltimore Community Food to deliver food to people in need. Soon they'll open a building of their own and put in a restaurant with music. Hopefully, I'll be able to combine charity and music.

This article will come out in the fall. Any sense of where you will be playing then?

Hard to know, of course. But a few of my favorites are Rye in Fells Point, and the 13.5% Wine Bar, and The Lou Costello room at Zissimo's, both in the Hampden neighborhood. An die Musik is a great venue. And there are so many more.

Michael B. Friedman is a retired social worker who moved to Baltimore in 2019 to be closer to his grandchildren. He is also a semi-professional jazz piano player and photographer.

I'll Be Seeing You in All the Old Familiar Places

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I sat down in front of Charlie at the bar, ordering my Johnny Walker Red and water, scouting out the femme fatales: beautiful ladies holding court with the dreams of young men, both in age and imagination. Normal activity. It was like that old tune—"I'll be seeing you in all the old familiar places."

Conversations grew louder and louder until the air was filled with cacophony. Then the rhythms of conversation ceased to be consistent, broken by the staccato of people noticing an entrance—a face . . . who was it that just walked in? It was a face familiar to those in the know, the man coming in with his ax, his sidemen, maybe a sax, somebody else lugging in a drum set—there was always a drum set there, but drummers tend to bring their own accoutrements. He may have sat down at the piano or the house Hammond B3 or stood in front of the microphone, but the staccato voices slowly settled down for an evening filled with the rhythms of the night.

Couples moved a little closer while hunters and huntresses—wondering if they could share that cab drive home, or maybe a bed, or maybe even more, a shared dream for a moment—began making initial approaches. Between sets, the rain outside issued a pad upon which the worries of the day were washed away.

One war was over, its scars still in the faces of older patrons who had returned, and a new war had begun, the burden carried on the shoulders of my generation. One economic struggle was big news, but the daily economic struggle was reality for most of us.

It was the birthplace of mainstream thought, emotion, and spirit. It was also the garbage pit where all those who had been discarded gathered. There was a soaring sound of hope in the air and the somber blues of the struggle of the loss. There was a hope of tomorrow still intermingled with all. Maybe he or she will be my next bride, wonder the hunters; maybe he will be my next husband, wonder the huntresses; maybe this fantasy in my head will come true, maybe tomorrow we find freedom.

All this remembrance prefaces this article which is a question but not to the patrons. The question is to you who create the music, the platform upon which dreams have been built—you, the musicians.

I put these questions forward because each generation each moment in time has an impact on all your creative voices. Yes, I have reached back into a time that some of you may fondly remember, or some of you may not even know, but it marks a change attained, a mental change in expression. From the juke joint to the jazz club to the spoken word venue, all have reflected the times in which they were created.

Today we have a new challenge. Whether you want to call it a pandemic or a moral episode, or an escape from the bondage of the past, or the prophecy of doom, we have a change—a paradigm shift.

So I pose to you, the musician, this question: how has the current climate influenced you as an artist? This question does not ask about the platform of your delivery, but the messaging that is attached to your stylistic endeavors. Sure, it is to be noted and considered—the loss of live performances will bring changes in your method of presentation. But musicians, especially good creators, express themselves in their anger, their pain, their joy, even in their boredom.

The desperation of oppression that drove us to cling to houses of worship eventually led to a genre we know as gospel, which led to jazz. That same desperation led musicians to wail about their life and cultural servitude, and therefore we have the blues. We morphed jazz, blues, and folk into rock, protest genres of the spoken word, and reggae and house and rap.

- What have you noticed that is different in your approach to your music?
- What have you noticed that is different in your message?
- What have you noticed that is different in the constructs that you have pulled from in the past and are pulling from now?
- How do you reinforce your unique ideas to your audiences, to the world?

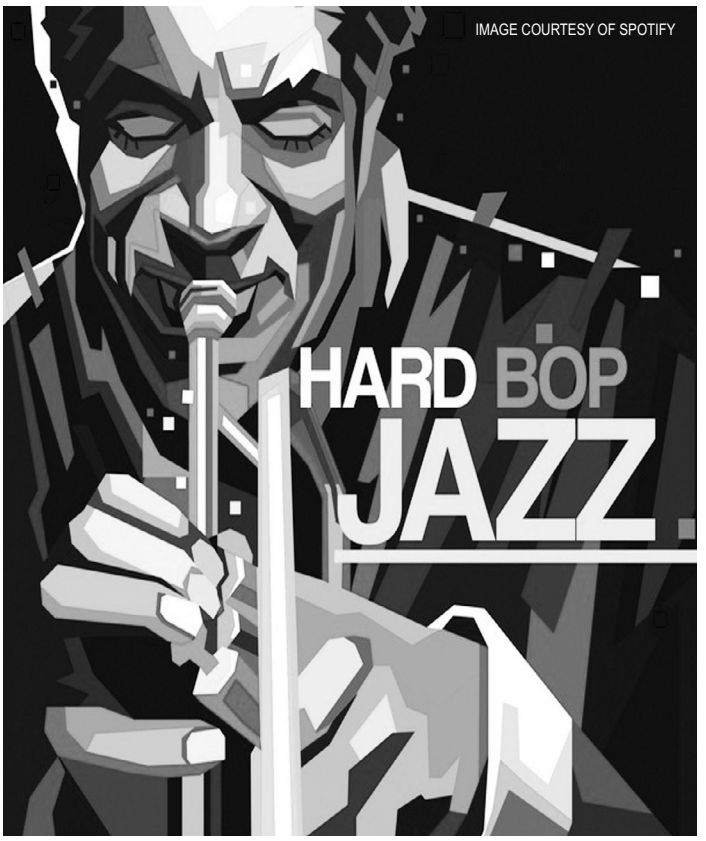
Please give your response on the Facebook page of the Baltimore Jazz Alliance, to begin a conversation, an investigation of how you are expressing yourself—which will forecast our next step forward.

On the corner, carved in stone, Billie Holiday opens her mouth in a perpetual scream at an empty lot that echoes back to her from across the street. Her scream is not asking "Where has it all gone?" Her scream shouts forward, asking, "Where do my children go from here?"

It's 1:45 am—time for one more Johnny Walker Red and water, before hearing the bartender sing his old familiar tune. "You don't have to go home, but you have to get out of here."

Walking back into the Baltimore night, the clouds have dispersed and stars are in the sky, and you know that the dawn will break. The ground is still damp from the rain the night before, but there is a new clean crispness in the air. You look at the sky while waiting for a cab to take you to tomorrow, you know that you will return, and you say to yourself, "I'll be looking at the moon, but I'll be seeing you."

Kwamé Jamal Kenyatta-Bey has worked in journalism as a reporter and editor. He holds a degree in theater arts from Morgan State and has years of experience in theatrical production work, including as director for the Kroll Opera Company. He is currently president and CEO of JAG Productions, which curates and produces new, contemporary and classical theatre; his last production was Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He is new to writing for the BJA.



Memories of Hard Bop

By Bob Jacobson

I recently read in Jazz Education Network's newsletter that State University of New York Press is looking for authors for a series of introductory books on various jazz styles. I considered sending a submission for the volume on hard bop, my favorite style. I ultimately decided to pass on the opportunity, but certain memories of my encounters with hard bop were evoked in the process.

First, some background about hard bop. You probably know about bebop, the modern jazz style which took hold in the mid-1940s, became quite popular into the early '50s, and remains foundational to many jazz players to this day. Soon after bebop's heyday came cool jazz and hard bop. The latter, popular from the mid-'50s to mid-'60s, retained elements of bebop but was characterized by fewer chords, simpler melodies and more blues and gospel sounds. Among its main practitioners were the bands led by Art Blakey, Horace Silver, and Cannonball Adderley. Some hard bop tunes actually became hit singles.

My first encounter with hard bop took place in 1961, when my fellow sixth grader, aspiring drummer Jerry Smith, turned me on to Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man." I already loved the mainstream jazz on the radio, but this was even hipper and funkier. A couple of years later I began taking records out of the public library. I latched on to the album *Cannonball Adderley Quintet in San Francisco*, borrowing it several times. Bobby Timmons's "This Here" was my favorite tune on the album, which Scott Yanow, in the *All Music Guide to Jazz*, calls "a gem . . . essential for any jazz collection."

I was still in junior high when my next encounter with hard bop took place. Our ninth-grade English teacher, Mr. McSweeney, in between required readings of *Ivanhoe* and *Great Expectations*, would occasionally have us do creative writing while listening to jazz records or viewing impressionist paintings. One of the jazz albums he played was Herbie Mann's *At the Village Gate*, and, oh man, did I dig Ben Tucker's "Comin' Home Baby" (and still do to this day).

Around the same time, I first heard Lee Morgan's bugalú tune "The Sidewinder" on a car commercial. What? Jazz on a nationwide TV commercial? Amazing!

Twenty plus years later I found myself jamming with other musicians who introduced me to the music of Horace Silver. These players included pianist Wayne Landsman, from Silver's hometown of Norwalk, CT, and trumpeter Eric Heavner, who is still active on the Baltimore scene. We repeatedly played Silver's "Señor Blues," "Song for My Father," "The Cape Verdean Blues" and "Nica's Dream." I was living my dream.

Hard Bop In Baltimore

By Daniel Wallace

Hard bop as a style was the next logical step after bebop. While bebop was centered around developing a vocabulary that could be used over standard chord progressions, hard bop used that same vocabulary to create stories over those chord progressions.

My first introduction to hard bop was through the playing of Sonny Rollins, who to this day I still consider the quintessential example of a hard bop musician. Whenever I listened to Rollins, I felt like I was getting to know him. This to me is the essence of hard bop—it's about personal expression using the language of bebop. That is why Ornette Coleman and the free jazz style developed out of hard bop.

I use hard bop as the foundation for much of my jazz playing. While I love the bebop and swing mentality that came before, and also love the avant garde and modern approach that came afterward, hard bop has been my center ground. There's a certain kind of playfulness that stems from hard bop that gives it great flexibility. I wouldn't consider my playing "playful" in any way, but I appreciate the freedom given to me by the masters of the art form.

I have been told by the elders of the Baltimore music scene that back before I was born, every club in the city had a Hammond B3 organ and soul jazz (an offshoot of hard bop) ruled the land. The greatest practitioner of the music that permeated Baltimore was a sax player named Mickey Fields. I never got to meet him, as I was very young when he passed away, but all of the musicians I respect in the city speak of

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DRIVEN TO INNOVATE

Todd Marcus Trio+

By Marianne Matheny-Katz

One of the great pleasures I take in being a participant in Baltimore's jazz community is bearing witness to the endless stream of original and innovative projects produced by Baltimore's exceptionally talented local musicians. Baltimore, and the Maryland-DC-Virginia area in general, continue to be a remarkably consistent fertile ground for new musical ideas, easily equal to cities like New York, Philadelphia and Chicago.

Bass clarinetist Todd Marcus is one of the best-known jazz leaders and composers in Baltimore and is a major contributor to the new Baltimore sound that has evolved over the decades that includes a strong dose of blues, R & B, and gospel.

Before the pandemic hit in March 2020 and live venues had to close until further notice, Marcus hosted one of Baltimore's longest-running jam sessions, at Home Slyce on Charles Street. More recently, Marcus could be seen most Tuesday nights at Keystone Korner, playing with The Baltimore Jazz Collective (which includes regulars Sean Jones and Warren Wolf), along with frequently scheduled concerts at An die Musik and the Creative Alliance. Since March, Marcus has become one of many local jazz musicians who have turned to streaming platform concerts, including at Blue House Productions, Keystone Korner, and An die Musik. He also recently performed outdoors as part of the "Creative Alliance: Sidewalk Serenades" with live audiences and social distancing.

Marcus has also gained prominence nationally and internationally as a virtuoso player and composer within the small fraternity of his relatively obscure instrument.

One aspect of Marcus's projects that I appreciate—and have even emulated—is his uncanny ability to choose the perfect band for his various projects. As a leader, he has worked with groups ranging in size from trio to nonet. He often includes local Baltimore musicians on the same disc with nationally known musicians, and always aims to create an exciting cross-pollination of styles and musicianship to produce the exact mood and sound he seeks.

In his disc, *Trio+,* he brings together nationally acclaimed drummer and educator Ralph Peterson; bassist Ameen Saleem from DC and Italy, who has been included on several of Peterson's projects and tours; and Baltimore-based drummer Eric Kennedy and bassist Jeff Reed. Also included on four of the tracks is the recent Baltimore arrival, trumpeter Sean Jones, who now heads the jazz department at Peabody Institute. Together they produce a precise and unified sound featuring the bass clarinet in a smaller, sparer ensemble.

"Something Suite" comprises four short movements that pivot between an innovative and sometimes avant-garde approach, alternating with an effervescent and lyrical narrative. It is an interesting juxtaposition, and very typical of Marcus's sound. The "1st Movement" begins as an energetic, multi-rhythmic piece, reminiscent of Sonny Rollins's "Freedom Suite," which Marcus credits as his inspiration for the piece. The "2nd Movement" reminds me of other Marcus melodies layered over a Latin tempo accompanied by beautifully weaving bass clarinet lines. The "3rd Movement" is a slow, lilting, and romantic melody underpinned with a steady but energetic drum and bass line that keeps the tempo moving and interesting. Finally, "4th Movement" features a rapid bass clarinet line with an urgent and muscular percussion backing—like a push from below to a burst of energy on top. The short but delightful "Amy Pookie"—a tune for Marcus's wife Emily (a dedicated teacher and community activist)—begins with a slow bass clarinet fanfare and launches into a hip, percussive riff that alternates with slower horn lines that expand on the introductory fanfare and finally ends with that playful percussive riff.

My personal favorite track on the disc is "Cantata." It's a beautiful, poignant waltz with a lovely intro, similar to a Spanish folk song. The waltz continues, but the melody morphs into a tune that has another signature Marcus sound. It even harkens back to his 2006 album, *In Pursuit of the Ninth Man*. The gorgeous and lush sound of Marcus's B-flat clarinet is a definite highlight on this track. The standard "Invitation" is also a favorite, with Sean Jones on trumpet joining Marcus. It highlights Marcus's great skill in arranging familiar tunes with two or more alternating tempos within a piece.

Marcus's past projects include *In Pursuit of the Ninth Man* (2006), with his jazz nonet; *Inheritance* (2012), referencing his ethnic Egyptian background and featuring two distinct quartets; and *Blues for Tahrir* (2015), with his jazz orchestra, dedi-

PHOTO MONTAGE COURTESY OF TODD MARCUS

cated to the people behind the Arab Spring. *On These Streets—a Baltimore Story* (2018) is about the unrest in Baltimore and his neighborhood following the death of Freddie Gray, featuring a carefully chosen sextet. These past works and his current disc, *Trio+*, illustrate that Marcus is never satisfied to stick to a formula. He is always experimental, relevant, topical and driven to create new compositions with as many musicians as he can include in his ever-expanding musical community. He also continues, almost single-handedly, to make the bass clarinet a better-known jazz instrument.

Marianne Matheny-Katz is a jazz vocalist well known in the Mid-Atlantic region for her twenty years of performing. She is two-time award winner of the Billie Holiday competition and has won praise for her 2014 album, *Somewhere in Paradise*. She and her husband Howard Katz co-founded and have run the non-profit Jazzway 6004 house concert jazz series for thirteen years and have presented more than eighty concerts. In 2016, she retired from thirty years of service as an economist for the federal government. She is currently working on plans for recording her Joni Mitchell project.

Hard Bop In Baltimore

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him with reverence. When I hear recordings of his playing, I can hear him telling his story through the language of bebop. Just like with Sonny Rollins, I could get to know Fields through his playing.

At this point, hard bop has fallen out of fashion among Baltimore musicians, who find the sound dated and tend to center their playing around more modern styles. One of the notable exceptions is the pianist Bob Butta, who carries on the traditions of great hard bop pianists like Cedar Walton and Wynton Kelly. Butta's playing focuses on the mysterious within the familiar. His language is bop-based, which is familiar to most jazz listeners, but he can lead you down what seems like a familiar path only to surprise you when you get to the ending. Butta is an absolute joy to play with, especially within a hard bop context. He always throws you something both familiar and exciting. His musical choices are easy to follow, but also push you to reach for more. That mentality in many ways is also the essence of hard bop, and I always get a kick out of playing music in that vein.

Daniel Wallace is a saxophone/woodwind player and music educator based in Baltimore. After growing up in the Baltimore area, Daniel attended Loyola University New Orleans to obtain a degree in jazz saxophone. Post-college he spent a year employed as a ship musician aboard Carnival Cruise Lines. Once he returned to Baltimore he developed a career as a professional musician and teacher. Daniel regularly plays music professionally in Baltimore and the surrounding areas.

IN THE MOMENT AND STIRRING UP JOY

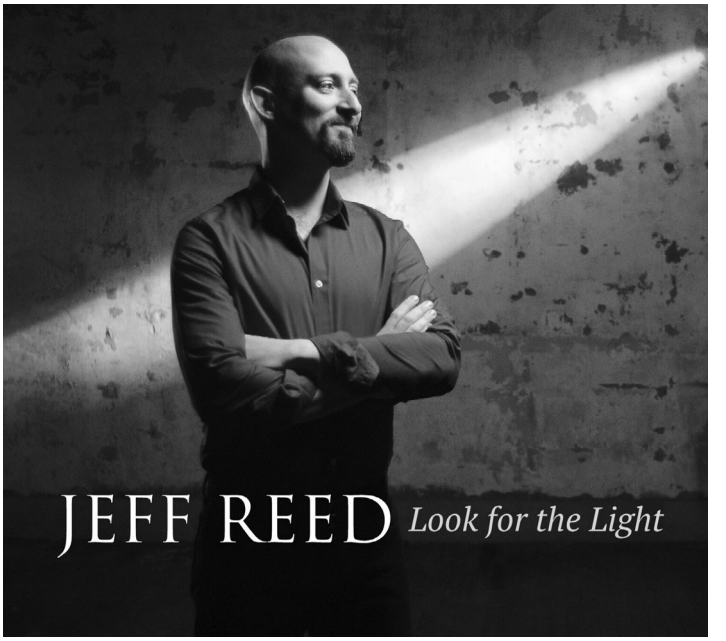
Jeff Reed: *Look for the Light*

by Marianne Matheny-Katz

I have known the quiet, humble superstar bassist Jeff Reed since 2004 and have been fortunate enough to work with him for years on many gigs and on in-progress Joni Mitchell project. He is one of the most in-demand, versatile, and consistently excellent bassists in the Baltimore-Washington area, one equally adept on acoustic and electric basses. His website documents his extensive jazz resume when it states: "As a sideman, Reed frequently works with vibraphonist Warren Wolf, trumpeter Sean Jones, and bass clarinetist Todd Marcus." Reed has also performed with a slew of nationally and internationally acclaimed musicians over the years and has been recorded on over fifty full length albums.

Reed, a native Baltimorean, holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Towson University and a Master of Music from the University of Maryland, College Park and is an adjunct jazz faculty member at Towson University. He has taught and influenced many young bassists in the area. Until January 2020, Reed also held down one of the longest running and most coveted gigs in Baltimore: the Thursday night jazz ensemble gig at Bertha's in Fells Point. Before the pandemic arrived, you would see him there every Thursday night, tucked into a dark, cozy corner at the front of the tavern, often with drummer Eric Kennedy and a rotating line-up of keyboardists and guitarists. Various influential Baltimore jazz musicians would frequently drop by to sit in. When you watch Jeff play, he makes everything look so easy, but it is obvious that years of rigorous training, listening, playing, and communication with other musicians are behind his effortless style.

Look for the Light, on Todd Marcus's label, Stricker Street Records, is, surprisingly, Reed's first disc as bandleader, given that he has appeared on so many other recordings. The nine tracks on the album include five jazz standards and four originals performed in mostly a quintet format. Obvious choices for the quintet were Eric Kennedy on drums and Todd Marcus on bass clarinet since Reed has such a long history of performing and recording with them and they share an unmistakable chemistry. Reed decided to add guitarist Jonathan Epley, who plays for the US Army Jazz Ambassadors, after he encountered Epley at some of Marcus's Home Slyce jam sessions. Epley's diverse influences—bluegrass, folk, and Appalachian styles, along with modern and progressive jazz—bring a welcome synthesis of musical ideas to the table. As the project developed, Reed turned to the Baltimore transplant and Peabody Institute educator, trumpeter Sean Jones, who became a pivotal part of this recording, especially on the title track where he and Reed carry the melody with so much poignance. The quintet presents an unusual and interesting mix of styles with seamlessly conveyed ideas.



The CD includes five standards: "Segment" and "Quasimodo" by Charlie Parker, "Waltz New" by Jim Hall, "A Look Inside" by Kenny Drew Jr., and "Tricotism" by Oscar Pettiford. All are executed with artful precision and respect for the composer albeit with a stamp of individuality. It is apparent that Reed has been living with these tunes for a long time and knows exactly how he wants them to sound. "Segment," for example, is given the full Baltimore treatment. Jones's trumpet leads with a rapid bebop entry; the other ensemble members join him in unison. Tasteful stop-time solo sequences are filled by Reed in between repetitions of the main theme before the ensemble launches into their solos.

His four originals include "Conversion," "Paragon," "Look for the Light" and "Your Name Never Came Up." "Conversion" is in 4/4 time with a triplet feel that makes it sound like a complex polyrhythmic bop piece. The band really burns this tune up. The wide-open solo section gives the instrumentalists an opportunity for extravagant and, I daresay, competitive solos that lend excitement and texture to the dynamic. Reed said that the rhythm and solo sections were influenced by his extensive listening to live recordings of Miles Davis's group from the 1960s.

Reed says the basic melody of the title track was written as he and his wife were resting on the sofa at home one evening and sharing "the most perfectly peaceful moment" he's ever experienced. Shortly afterward, Reed was taking his wife to the hospital to deliver their son, and life became less quiet, more exciting, and even more meaningful. He finished the tune eight years later, and the ideas just fell effortlessly onto the paper, just like the first time he wrote the original melody. The track is a beautiful contemplative ballad that begins with Reed's quiet, tender bass melody, then is joined and echoed by Jones's muted trumpet. As the other instruments enter, the tune takes on a feeling of a gorgeous

fanfare, and Epley's guitar breaks through like sunlight, with a counter tune above the fanfare. It ends with the bass, trumpet and drum sequence from the beginning until all drop out, except for Reed, who finishes the tune with that contemplative bass line.

"Your Name Never Came Up" is a lively bebop-meets-blues-meets-Latin tune that really swings. I asked Reed about the inspiration for this tune. Bertha's, Baltimoreans know, has famous bumper stickers declaring, "Eat Bertha's Mussels," and Reed said that patrons are inclined to cut up this slogan to make other words and statements with the letters. One night, Reed looked up at the ceiling and saw letters from some of these bumper stickers configured into a message that read" "Your Name Never Came Up." He thought it would make a great title for a tune and decided it would be even more fun to use it as a contrafact (a musical work based on a prior work—often used in jazz) based on "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone." During the years at Bertha's he tried performing the tune, changing, adjusting, and rearranging it. But he said he could never quite make it work. In the end, he dropped the contrafact idea, and the tune finally morphed into a minor blues in B minor. Reed says it represents his time at Bertha's and his joy at having the freedom to play with so many musicians with "complete reckless abandon."

Near the end of Reed's recent CD release performance at one of Blue House Production's streaming concerts, he read a quotation from Hindu guru Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj that summed up the meaning of the title song and the CD for him:

> *Once you realize that the road is the goal and that you are always on the road, not to reach a goal—but to enjoy its beauty and its wisdom—life ceases to be a task and becomes natural and simple and in itself, an ecstasy.*

Reed went on to say that living in a complicated time makes him fully appreciate being in the moment because it's all we have. He concluded with his belief that the "role of the artist is to stir up joy and to elevate people." Reed's highly personal, masterly CD makes its listeners contemplate the beauty of moment, and it undoubtedly stirs up infinite joy.

This project has been funded by Mayor Jack Young
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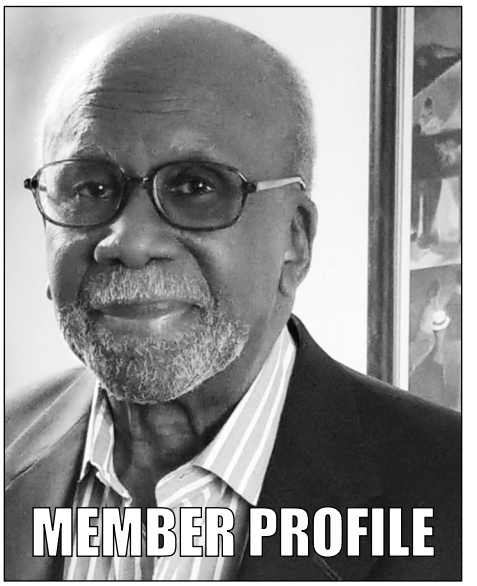
Our next issue will be distributed
at the beginning of January 2021.

Hot can be cool,
and cool can be hot,
and each can be both.
But hot or cool, man, jazz is jazz.
– Louis Armstrong

Maurice St. Pierre

By Bob Jacobson



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARK ST. PIERRE

"I play no instrument," says Maurice St. Pierre, a BJA member since 2013, yet music has clearly played a major role in his life. As a youth in British Guiana (which gained independence as Guyana in 1966), he saw a wide range of American artists—Johnny Mathis, Louis Armstrong, Chubby Checker, Cab Calloway, Marian Anderson—and calypsonians from the Caribbean, notably The Mighty Sparrow. While at graduate school in England and later in Jamaica, he was drawn to reggae. In Montreal for further graduate study in the late 1960s, he saw Miles Davis at a small club and took his son Mark, then about four years old, to see Thelonious Monk and Nina Simone.

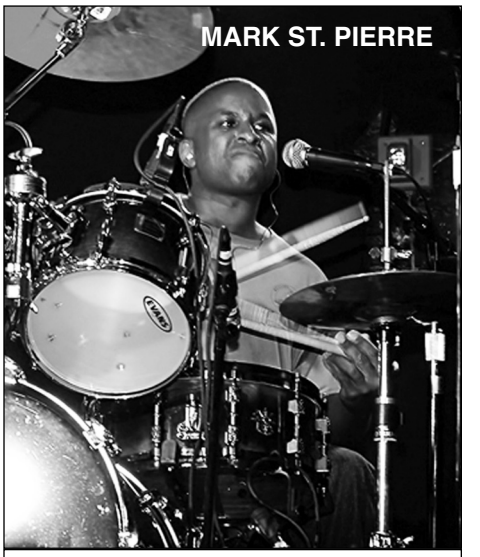
St. Pierre says that drums have always been important to him, citing Gene Krupa as an early favorite. He also listens to a wide range of pianists—Oscar Peterson, Errol Garner, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Monty Alexander (specifying the tune "Fly Me To the Moon") and classical icon Andre Watts. St. Pierre's LP collection includes a lot of Monk and Herbie Hancock, both of whom he describes as "critical in terms of composing."

Not surprisingly, given his broad academic background in sociology, economics and history, plus his travel experiences (to over 30 countries), St. Pierre displays a multi-faceted perspective on music. "I see music as an expression of originality," he says, adding, "improvisation is very important. You can express yourself." St. Pierre is also steeped in musical lore, repeating stories of how Charlie Parker got the nickname "Yardbird" and its shorter version "Bird," and how Michael Jackson developed the Moonwalk. He also describes how certain music has been critical in the fight against racism, citing The Mighty Sparrow's role as a social critic.

St. Pierre's son Mark is well known throughout the Baltimore area as a drummer and percussionist who plays in multiple genres—jazz with the Anthony Villa Trio, the Paul Soroka Trio, the Melting Pot Big Band, the BJA Big Band; rock with Carey Ziegler's Expensive Hobby; R&B and pop with Marcella, and Damon Forman's Blue Funk; wedding music with Meredith Seidel; and Latin music with Rumba Club. He teaches at Loch Raven Academy and directs Loyola University Maryland's jazz ensemble and jazz combo. Mark says that hearing his father's jazz albums as a child in Canada "started the whole obsession with music." His father, whom he describes as "always a staunch supporter," bought him a pair of bongos when Mark was three or four years old. He was the top drummer in elementary school. "It really all started to come together in middle school," says Mark, when his father encouraged him to try for a scholarship to Peabody Preparatory, which he won. That led to his becoming a student in a Baltimore County gifted and talented program, then to solo and ensemble auditions. Those were judged by Professor Dale Rauschenberg, later Mark's instructor at Towson University.

Maurice St. Pierre says that his son provides a lot of inspiration. He recounts watching one of Mark's performance videos. "He was massaging this box from Peru (a cajon) with his hands and heels. He was in another world almost. This is what jazz does to you," says the elder St. Pierre. He also expresses pride in his grandsons' musical accomplishments—Andrew on cello and Michael on drums.

In 2012 St. Pierre retired from Morgan State University, where he had taught and chaired the Sociology and Anthropology Department since 1977. Already the author of two books on anti-colonialism in the Caribbean, St. Pierre has continued writing in retirement: a recent article on historian Eric Williams in the *Journal of Labor and Society*, an article on the continuing relevance of Martin Luther King, Jr., and a 40,000 word essay about growing up in the Caribbean. He is an avid reader of biographies, including those of Dizzy Gillespie and Lionel Hampton, and viewer of documentaries, including films on Kobe Bryant, James Brown, and Michael Jackson. During retirement he has traveled to Brazil, Haiti and Cuba. St. Pierre says he keeps up with current events and is reading and thinking a lot about the philosophy of absurdism, chuckling about its relevance to current politics.



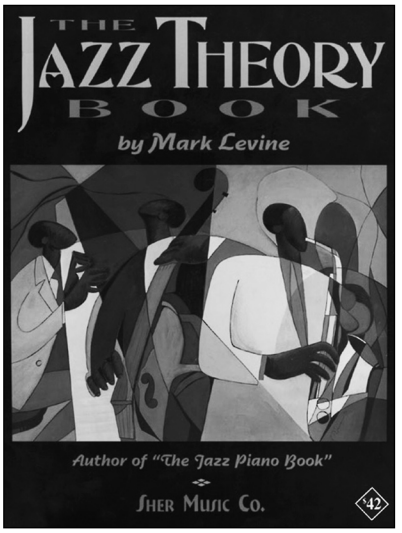
Mark St. Pierre says that hearing his father's jazz albums as a child in Canada "started the whole obsession with music."

Jazz In Theory and Practice

By Liz Fixsen

Back in the 1970s, as a young jazz enthusiast, I remember listening to pianist Victor Feldman playing in a club in Los Angeles and wondering, "What is he doing?" (meaning, what is happening when he is improvising a solo? Where does he get the notes?).

Decades later, I learned the answer when I began to study jazz myself and took a theory course at Towson University (and read Mark Levine's famous *The Jazz Theory Book*). Without having studied theory, I would not have gained even the limited improvisational skills that I possess.



There may be those reading this who (like me) love the energy, the expressiveness and the creativity of jazz but who ask themselves the same question I asked at that Victor Feldman concert. "Where are they getting the notes?"

The simple answer is that they are following the chord progression of the song. Certain chords in a sequence imply a scale. For example, D-minor 7th and G7th both imply a C scale. And from that scale, an improvisor may choose notes to create an alternate melody. Of course, the reality is more complex: there are alterations to the chords (such as flat ninths, sharp elevenths, and flat thirteenths); there are passing tones and voice leading—and there is playing "outside" the implied scales of the harmony.

Bassist (and BJA President) Ian Rashkin has these observations on theory: "Essentially it is the study of context and expectations. . . . The theory tells me what the listener expects," which allows him to make the appropriate moves. "And that ends up," Rashkin continues, "being one of the great things about the jazz vocabulary, that the variants of expectations have evolved so far, and become so broad, that every note sets up a whole array of expectations, and yet still leaves room for surprises." In his view, "theory is not a set of arbitrary rules, but an attempt to define expectations and allow a common framework for conforming to or rebelling against as desired."

It is somewhat of a myth that early jazz musicians were not schooled in theory. Even great jazz figures like Thelonious Monk, who is described as mostly self-taught, learned some theory, not in a formal academic setting but from other musicians. Even in the early days of jazz, musicians such as pianists Teddy Wilson and Mary Lou Williams offered courses in music to a paying public, and as David Chevan, author of *Musician Literacy and Jazz Musicians in the 1910s and 1920s,* writes, "Every early jazz musician, even those who could not read music, encountered and interacted with written music"—and, no doubt, with the theory undergirding the written music.

JAZZ IS A LANGUAGE; THEORY IS THE GRAMMAR

Brent Vaartstra writes, in his *Ultimate Guide to Jazz Theory:* "Jazz is first and foremost a language. Music theory is simply the grammar, sentence structure and analysis element of understanding jazz language. . . . Learning the theory only helps you intellectually understand it better and expand your abilities to express and formulate your own ideas."

Our Baltimore and DC musicians agree. Vocalist Irene Jalenti, who is adept at vocal improvisation, says, "It's very hard to write a good book without knowing the proper grammatical structure of a language, and I think that's the same for music." Guitarist Jerry Bresee says, "Theory is a description of what musicians have discovered as they played or sang and gives us a way to talk to each other about music."

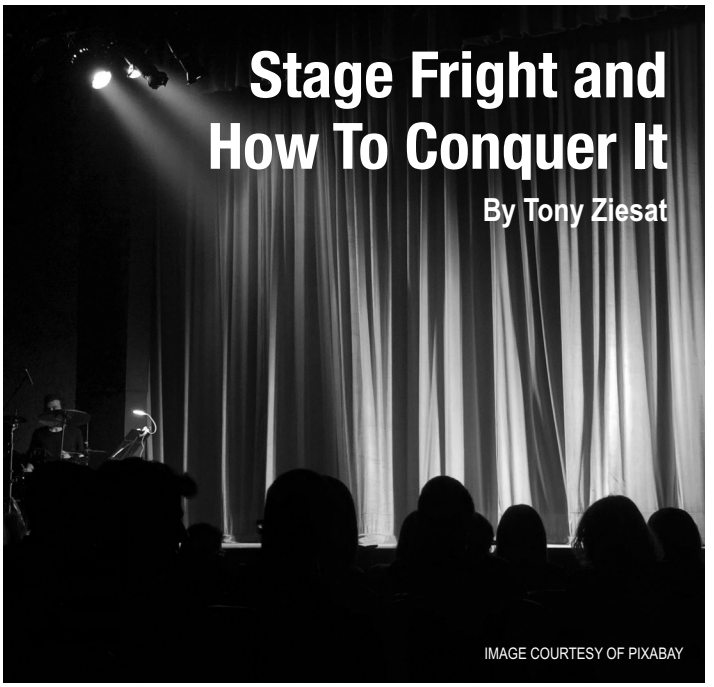
THEORY MUST ACCOMPANY PRACTICE

Theory alone, however, won't make a great jazz improviser. Peter Spitzer, author of *Jazz Theory Handbook*, says, "More important than [theory] is knowing the vocabulary—that comes from listening, with awareness, to great players, and playing as much as possible. Beyond grammar and vocabulary is the ability to communicate with listeners—to 'tell a story,' and to reach an audience on an emotional, or even spiritual, level." DC trumpeter Mary Lawrence says, "Practicing is way more important [than theory]. I learn theory best when I practice it on an instrument." DC bassist David Jernigan agrees: "My advice would be to never study more than you practice, but you can get good ideas on what to practice from studying theory." Bassist Mikel Combs says, "A well rounded musician is good in theory. A musician who only practices and doesn't study the mechanisms of music is only good in theory."

Above all, jazz musicians learn by listening to jazz, like Herbie Hancock, who as a young teen taught himself jazz by

(continued on page 13)


PHOTO COURTESY OF JAZZ PIANO SONGS



Is there anyone amongst us who has never had some stage fright? My question is, of course, rhetorical. Stage fright is a common denominator of virtually all musical performers, at one time or another. Moreover, the psychological phenomenon of performance anxiety is not limited to stage fright per se; it also applies to one's emotional response to any kind of performance: for example, doing a job interview, giving a toast at a wedding, going on a first date, and "rounding third base" some time after that first date.

Not only is some degree of anxiety entirely normal before and/or during a musical event, it's actually necessary for optimal performance. Consider the Yerkes-Dodson Law: The relationship between anxiety (manifested by physiologic arousal) and cognitive-behavioral performance can be graphed as an inverted u-shaped function. That is, peak performance occurs when you have a mild-to-moderate amount of anxiety! This motivates you to do your best. On the other hand, too much anxiety results in poor performance, because while you're in panic mode, you freeze. To use an old automotive analogy, an anxious over-reaction is much like flooding the carburetor.

So you may be asking, what's the solution? Severe stage fright, or diagnosable performance anxiety, is a type of phobia, which is a learned response to a situation or an activity. And since it is learned, it can be unlearned.

Yes, there may be a genetic component—some people are neurologically wired to experience panic episodes more readily than other people. This is called panic disorder. Although a physiological problem sometimes requires a physiological component to the treatment plan, e.g., medication, the phobic behavior still must be unlearned to achieve a complete recovery. But psychological treatment will be ineffective if the musician has neglected to prepare. Musicians are, of course, well aware that they must diligently refine their skills and spend hours and hours in rehearsal. This essay advises what to do if you have severe performance anxiety despite adequate musical preparation.

The well-established, state-of-the-art therapy for performance anxiety is an application of cognitive-behavioral treatment (CBT). As the name indicates, this consists of two components:

COGNITIVE THERAPY. Anxious people inadvertently tend to make themselves more anxious with excessively negative self-talk, imagining worst-case scenarios. This over-stimulates one's alarm response, which disables the ability to perform. If you approach a performance by anticipating and visualizing embarrassing missteps, you will probably create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Cognitive therapy teaches the person to challenge unrealistically catastrophic assumptions and re-program the self-talk.

BEHAVIOR THERAPY. The core of this component is systematic desensitization, or exposure/response-prevention (ERP). In the safety of the therapist's office, the patient first undergoes several weeks of training in anxiety-reduction techniques, e.g., progressive muscle relaxation, self-hypnosis, and/or meditation. Next comes imaginal desensitization, in which a hierarchy of feared performance situations is formulated, after which the patient is gradually exposed to each of those situations in his/her imagination while in a deeply-relaxed state. Once the patient masters those steps, the final phase is in vivo exposure to those performance situations, in ascending order of difficulty. The process begins with simulations in the therapist's office and only later moves on to real-life situations.

What follows is a hypothetical story that illustrates a typical course of treatment. (Regulations regarding privacy prohibit a description of an actual, specific case.)

Susan was first-chair violinist for a prominent orchestra. Her family doctor referred her for treatment of a severe case of performance anxiety. When Susan was a child, her parents had recognized her prodigious musical talent and arranged for violin instruction. Unfortunately, the instructor's teaching style was harshly critical, instilling in Susan an excessive fear of mistakes. Nevertheless, Susan's talent and hard work led to a rise through the ranks of school orchestras, and she earned a scholarship to one of the most highly regarded musical colleges in the world. She subsequently joined a major orchestra and ultimately became the youngest concertmaster in that organization's history.

All of this achievement, however, came at a great personal cost. Just prior to every performance, Susan would experience a panic episode, consisting of rapid heartbeat, hyperventilation, intense perspiration, dizziness, and nausea—so much so that she would often vomit in a restroom just before going on stage. Treatment began with hypnotic relaxation training, followed by imaginal systematic desensitization.

Once she was able to keep the anxiety under control while visualizing a solo during a concert, in vivo desensitization began. During repeated office visits, Susan played the violin after going through the hypnotic relaxation procedure. Next there was a series of private, solo performances in an actual recital hall, attended by trusted friends.

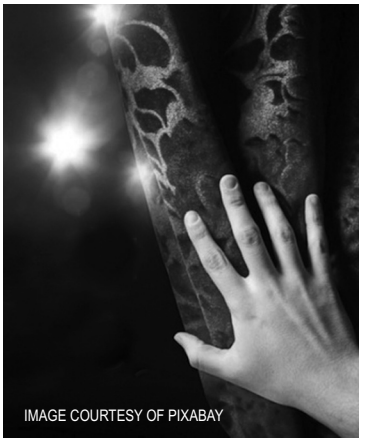


IMAGE COURTESY OF PIXABAY

Susan's graduation from treatment occurred after she had performed a solo during a major televised, recorded concert. Her performance was flawless, and her anxiety remained under excellent control. Moreover, the rave reviews she received further bolstered her self-confidence. In a follow-up office visit, she remarked that she had "vanquished the old demons!"

In summary, dear reader, TAKE HEART: Some stage fright is entirely normal, and even if it becomes severe enough to interfere with performance, it is eminently treatable!

Tony Ziesat is a jazz vocalist and a BJA member. But you know what we musicians always say: "Don't quit your day job!" So for many years, Tony has also been a clinical psychologist, specializing in the treatment of anxiety disorders.

Jazz In Theory and Practice

(continued from page 11)

listening to records and by playing it with others. After taking the jazz theory courses, listening to the albums, playing along with the Jamey Aebersold CDs, practicing in the basement, developing musicians just have to get out there in the jam sessions and try out their ideas while picking up ideas from other players.

Other folks like me—jazz enthusiasts with some musical background—might be able to follow along with the solos by bringing to a jam session a copy of *The Real Book*, a compendium of lead sheets of jazz standards, showing the melody line and the chords. Even with that, you will likely not completely solve the mystery of "where are they getting the notes," because the essence of great jazz is to use—and go beyond —the theory with inspiration and creativity.

Liz Fixsen is an editor of the *Baltimore Jazz Alliance Newsletter* and has written many articles for it, and she serves on the board of the BJA. She is an inveterate jazz enthusiast and plays and sings jazz when anyone gives her the chance. Her day job is teaching adult ESL classes with Project Literacy in Howard County.

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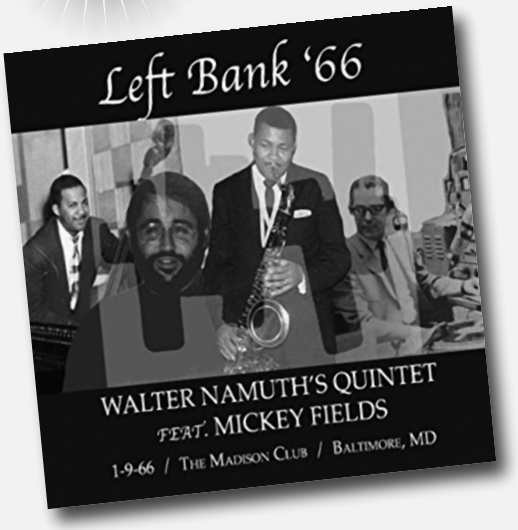

Recorded in 1966 at the Madison Club, the CD features Baltimore sax legend Mickey Fields and guitarist Walt Namuth, who joined the Buddy Rich Big Band the following year. These two huge talents were rarely recorded, adding to the value of this CD

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.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS
George Brown, Darlene Tuck, Wojciech Zbijewski

PHIL RAVITA
Phil Ravita was awarded his DMA from Boston University for his dissertation, "The Practice Habits of University Music Majors."

TODD MARCUS
Todd Marcus placed third in *DownBeat* magazine's 68th annual critics poll, under the Rising Star Miscellaneous Instrument category, for bass clarinet.

BJA MEMBER GRANTS
For details on the criteria and process for application, please visit https://www.baltimorejazz.com/bja-member-grants/, and as always, we thank our members, and invite anyone else to join the BJA today!

In the Community

BJA notes with sadness, but also admiration, the passing of two very dedicated bandleaders during the summer. Matt Elky, 76, led the Baltimore County Senior Swing Band and the Never Too Late Band and played sax in the Reisterstown Jazz Ensemble. Trumpeter Jerry Peterson, 85, led the Riverside Big Band, a rehearsal band that recorded three CDs under his nine years of leadership. Elky taught music for 36 years in Baltimore County public schools and headed the Chesapeake Concert Band. Peterson taught music for 40 years in Anne Arundel County public schools.

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- **Germano's Piattini** often offers discounted tickets to specific events for BJA members, announced by email.
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