



# JAZZ NOTES™

THE JOURNAL OF THE JAZZ JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION™

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## Congratulations

The Jazz Journalists Association extends its congratulations to member Francis Davis, who won a 2009 Grammy Award for Best Album Notes, *Miles Davis: Kind of Blue 50th Anniversary Collector's Edition* (Legacy Recordings).

*Planning ahead for a "Jazz Media in Transition" conference.*

## New Blood, New Ideas

DEAR JJA MEMBERS,

**T**HERE ARE SEVERAL personnel changes and big initiatives of our organization to announce:

Jerry D'Souza, for five years the dependable and effective membership secretary of the JJA, has stepped down, and **Brett Delmage**, an Ottawa-based photographer, has stepped up. Brett has experience as a former president and treasurer of "citizens action" and education organizations, has created "new member kits" and welcoming packages for association members, maintained organization databases, created and delivered initiatives for membership growth. Welcome aboard, sir—we anticipate great things from you! And Jerry: Many thanks for your work, which has kept dues coming in and information flowing out to members.

The JJA's 13th annual Jazz Awards<sup>sm</sup> are scheduled now for Tuesday, June 16, 3 to 6 p.m. at the Jazz Standard in New York. At that barbecue party we'll honor accomplishments in 40 categories of jazz music and jazz journalism, and induct a new "A Team" class of activists, advocates, altruists, aiders and abettors of jazz. Nominees for the "A Team"—including but not limited to jazz educators, health care providers, community organizers, philanthropists and others who don't fit any of the categories on the Jazz Awards ballot—should be sent to me ([jazzmandel@earthlink.net](mailto:jazzmandel@earthlink.net)). Chris Kelsey has taken over as chairman of the ballot committee from Ken Dryden—and big thanks go to Ken, especially for hanging in there with the demanding task of tabu-

lating nominations. The JJA is currently seeking sponsors for the Awards; a benefits package for such sponsors is available from me. A website for the Awards will be set up soon as the nominees are in hand. *Jazz Times* magazine has offered to run an advertisement promoting the Awards in its April issue, and the enter-



## President's Report Howard Mandel

tainment for the event will be announced soon, as will ticket prices and reservation information, all coming in the form of a JJA-announce email.

James Hale has created a marketing brochure for **Jazz Matters panels**, which he has introduced to a number of summer '09 jazz fests. His first success is with the Ottawa Jazz Festival, which instituted Jazz Matters enrichment programs last year. JJA members Ashley Kahn and Mark Miller are among those scheduled to speak on jazz of the '50s, Blue Note Records and modern jazz pianism, on June 29 and

*continued on next page* >>

30. Watch jazzhouse.org for details as further engagements are secured, and contact James (jehale@rogers.com) if a festival, conference or convention in your area seems a likely candidate for hosting Jazz Matters, sooner or later.

Speaking of conferences, the JJA has applied to the National Endowment for the Arts for funding of a major jazz journalism conference, so far titled "Jazz Media in Transition," tentatively planned for January 7 through 10, 2010 at Jazz at Lincoln Center. The NEA's own Jazz Masters events are solidly scheduled at JALC

on January 11 and 12, and the Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) Conference is being held in New York January 8 through 12, so if our efforts concretize, there will be synergy with those activities. Fundraising for a conference of the size we envision requires a lot of energy and follow-through, and the results of grants applications won't be known for months. Again, details will be spelled out at the JJA website as soon as they are available. But pencil those dates in your calendar—we hope to hold panels, present papers, hear keynote speakers and devise action points on how music and arts journalism can engage more directly and productively with the digital landscape and media reform movements.

Finally, we continue to consult on update and redesign of **jazzhouse.org**, though I do have some progress to report on that front.

Given the current economic climate as well as the challenges to old-line print media posed by digital journalism, I'll guess that JJA members are feeling pinched and stressed. It's a hard time for everyone, hopes raised by President Obama notwithstanding, and as your professional organization, the JJA has some responsibility to suggest new strategies to survive in our always difficult, often

marginalized work. There is as much need and desire for informed reportage, analysis and dissemination of jazz and related arts and industries as ever. We trust that resourceful, adaptable, accomplished jazz journalists will survive and maybe even thrive. If you've got bright ideas on how to do so, please don't keep them to yourself, but share them with the rest of the membership. Let's use the bonds of collegiality and fellowship inherent in JJA membership for the greater good of our culture and ourselves. That's what jazz musicians have always done, and who better to look to as models? Hang in there, folks—be cool and keep swinging.

PRESIDENT HOWARD



**"Jazz Media in Transition" is tentatively scheduled for January 7-10, 2010.**

## New Members

**KRIN GABBARD**, author, lives in New York.

**CICILY JANUS** writes for *Rocky Mountain Jazz* and lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**JEFF KEITH**, student member, lives in Seattle, Washington.

**LAURA KATHLEEN MASSEY**, student member, lives in Syracuse, New York.

**RALPH MIRIELLO** writes for *jazz.com* and lives in Stamford, Connecticut.

**GINO MORATTI** is with Artist Management Group in Woodhaven, New York.

**JARRITT SHEEL**, student member, lives in Orlando, Florida.



# JAZZ NOTES

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE  
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### Editor

David R. Adler

### Associate Editor

James Hale

### Art Director

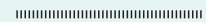
Forrest Dylan Bryant

### Editorial Consultants

Howard Mandel

W. Royal Stokes

David Franklin



### Editorial Correspondence

David R. Adler  
260 Riverside Dr. #2G  
New York, NY 10025

(646) 539-8622  
david@adlermusic.com



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## JAZZ JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION

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c/o Village Postal  
151 1st Avenue  
New York, NY 10003  
hman@jazzhouse.org

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*President & Executive Director*

David Adler  
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### MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Brett Delmage  
389 Holland Avenue  
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 0Y9  
Canada  
(613) 729-0323  
brett@jazzseen.ca

### TREASURER

Eugene Marlow, Ph.D.  
235 Adams St.  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
(212) 802-6653  
nmprinc@aol.com

The Jazz Journalists Association (JJA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, promoting the interests of writers, photographers, broadcasters and new media professionals covering jazz. The JJA supports the creation and dissemination of accurate, balanced, ethical and informative journalism on all of jazz's genres; the growth, development and education of the jazz audience and the dissemination of information pertaining to jazz to the general public, by providing forums for the discussion of jazz-related issues and events, fostering the development of journalistic and presentation skills among new journalists and the continuing development of such skills in journalists already engaged in the field.

*Political and personal transformations ahead.*

# Embracing Change

THE OBAMA ERA is underway, and among the other items in the change agenda, the arts stand out as a major force for renewing national purpose and productivity, if we choose to make it so. Dana Gioia has left as chair of the National Endowment for the Arts; Wynton Marsalis and Michael Dorf are among those who've been floated as possible successors. We'll see what the future holds; the rollback of the anti-arts Coburn amendment during recent wrangling over the stimulus package was a good sign. Americans for the Arts (artsusa.org) is a good resource for continued advocacy and the tracking of progress.

In this issue we touch on the vexed issue of health care with Jill McManus's tribute to Dr. Frank Forte, 70, an oncologist (and guitarist) making a difference in memory of Dizzy Gillespie. Also, Michael J. West talks to talent agent (and former drummer) Myles Weinstein, giving insight into the process of grants, commissions, artist residencies and the like, and how these and other professional channels may increase recognition of jazz in the wider culture.

We are in the midst of discussions about how best to bring the JJA into a new manifestation on the web, building on the functionality of jazzhouse.org but repurposing other areas, driving traffic to members' blogs more aggressively and, not least of all, reimagining *Jazz Notes* as something more web-efficient, rather than a quarterly PDF document requiring a download. Exactly how this publication will reach you once the new website launches is still being worked out, but the possibilities, in my view, are exciting. We hope to speed up publication, untangle administrative tasks and give a higher profile to more members of the JJA.

That's just one big change ahead in terms of my JJA involvement. Another is that my wife and I are expecting a daughter in late July. I plan to maintain my organizational and writing activi-

ties, allowing of course for a period of schedule adjustment as I bring an incredible new person into my life.

A final note: In the late '80s I got caught trying to walk out of the Blue Note without paying. I had hoped the \$18 in my pocket was enough, but it wasn't. But that's how badly I needed to see Freddie Hubbard.



Neah Kalina

## From the Editor

**David R. Adler**

It wasn't just Hubbard's ferocity on the trumpet. It was his bands. And at that time I was discovering just what it is that jazz bands do. Hearing Hubbard with Benny Green or Billy Childs on piano, Javon Jackson or Don Braden on tenor, Ronnie Burrage on drums—this was just too hot to handle. I must have heard him at the Blue Note four or five times. I wouldn't be doing the work I do today if not for experiences like those. He remains an inspiration and he'll be missed.



## Corrections

*Jazz Notes* regrets the following errors, which appeared in the Summer 2008 edition (Vol. 19, No. 3):

In the caption to Doug Ramsey's Danny Barker-Al Harewood photo on page 6, the date should have been 1973, not 1971.

In New Members on page 12, Tony Mottola was misidentified as Tommy Mottola.

A conversation with the talent agent and former pro drummer.

# Myles Weinstein: Raising the Jazz Profile

► By Michael J. West

**M**YLES WEINSTEIN RUNS the booking agency Unlimited Myles, Inc., representing such artists as Kenny Barron, Russell Malone, Luciana Souza and two recent recipients of the MacArthur Fellowship: Miguel Zenón and Regina Carter. In the 1990s Weinstein played drums professionally, co-leading the band Jazz Mentality with Chris Potter. The JJA's Michael J. West recently talked with Weinstein by phone about jazz and the grants environment, plus how his experience as a musician has shaped his agency work.



**Michael J. West:** You manage two artists who won MacArthur Fellowships—

**Myles Weinstein:** Right. Right, we're really proud of that.

**West:** Is it a coincidence that you're the agent for both of them?

**Weinstein:** Well, if you're implying that I had something to do with it, I wish I could say I did. But to my knowledge there's no campaigning allowed when it comes to the MacArthur. There are a bunch of names and nominees considered, and when they whittle it down they do interviews with people relevant in that field. With both Regina and Miguel they would call concert presenters and try to get their feedback on the audience, considering that they've presented them. It's a non-biased perspective. [...] The foundation has its own agenda, its own criteria, and makes the decision on its own. In fact it would probably hurt the artists if I submitted them for consideration.

**West:** How do artists get submitted for consideration?

**Weinstein:** That I don't know. I think they may have certain people on the board, or people who are involved with the nominee selection, who are famil-

iar with their given field. It's not just music, it's all disciplines in all fields.

I read a column in *Jazz Times* [K. Leander Williams, "Real Genius?" December 2008] wondering how Miguel could be considered a genius when he's so young and hasn't contributed nearly as much as some of the elder statesmen. And that may all be well and true, but if you look at the award, they don't call it the "genius grant."

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**"I know what it's like to be onstage and perform and tour. I know how musicians can be mistreated sometimes."**

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**West:** Right. That's a nickname.

**Weinstein:** Yeah. Really the criterion is someone whom they feel has the *potential* to contribute greatly to their field. Earlier on I think the focus was a little different, and that's when you had Ornette Coleman winning one, many years ago. But now I think they've changed the focus, not just in music but in other disciplines as well. I think they have this in mind: perhaps a young artist who's contributing something new, or is walking down roads that haven't necessarily been walked down before.

**West:** Jazz composition has become very grant-driven. Can the processes behind the MacArthur and similar institutional grants give us any insight on how to gain that kind of support? What can jazz musicians and industry professionals learn from this?

**Weinstein:** Well, there are other organizations—it just so happens that

Miguel also won the Guggenheim Fellowship this year. But there are so many different possibilities, and as an agent one thing I do seek out for my artists—somebody like Billy Childs—is commissions, work with orchestras. We just got one for him with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra; he's going to write a violin concerto for Regina, with Leonard Slatkin conducting. So it's not necessarily only foundations like Guggenheim or MacArthur. [...] My point is that I seek out other options for my artists when it's appropriate.

The artists themselves are the ones who normally submit for grants, Chamber Music America being a perfect example. There's also a big conglomerate of presenters across the nation called Music Accord. These are major presenters, like the celebrity series in Boston; the Krannert Center in Urbana, Illinois; UCLA; the Musical Society in Ann Arbor... these are all big players in the performing arts series. Stefon Harris recently benefited from that; he's going to write a piece for the Imani Winds and they're going tour that next season. And that's being funded through Music Accord. Those presenters can choose either to present or not present a piece, but in either case they're still credited as the commissioner or co-commissioner.

Another example of how things happen: Stefon has been an artist in residence with the Fontana Chamber Arts Organization in Kalamazoo, Michigan, for the last four years. When they first booked him, the organization didn't do a lot of jazz. But they brought him in and it worked out great. So Stefon would do outreach with organizations like the Boys & Girls Club in the area, and there's a university there that has a pretty strong jazz education program. [...] And this work led directly to a

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couple of new commissions. [...] So these are all things that just evolved.

In addition to Chamber Music America, there's the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, which includes Pennsylvania, New York, all the way down to Virginia. And through this there are presenters who don't do a lot of jazz, they're in rural areas, and part of their mission is to bring jazz to the community. They have a lot of different grant programs and they're very supportive of jazz.

**West:** *I wonder about your unique perspective as an industry guy and also a musician. How has that shaped your way of working?*

**Weinstein:** Well, I like to think that I was always a musician first, but when I look back maybe that's not the case. I've played since I was in middle school, majored in music and got my Masters at the Manhattan School of Music. My mission there, for a minute, was to be a timpanist with a symphony orchestra, even though I was maintaining this whole jazz thing. [...] I realized that jazz was really my love—but I

wasn't willing to do what you have to do, which is be in people's faces all the time as a musician and go to all the sessions constantly. I'm also very much a family guy, and I didn't like the idea of traveling all the time.

But all along I was doing stuff... that prepared me for the business end of music. I didn't think about it at the time, but eventually I thought, "Well, this is something that I excel at, more so than as a drummer." I still play occasionally and I probably always will, and I hope that someday maybe it'll all come full circle, and maybe in my retirement age I'll be playing all the time again.

[...]

But I do kind of understand the way an artist thinks. I know what it's like to be onstage and perform and tour. I know how musicians can be mistreated sometimes, and I see that it's gotten so much better over the years, particularly with jazz artists. So I think that's an advantage I have, and I think the artists appreciate that. They know they can talk

to me about the music, that I'm not just the guy selling a product.

**West:** *You're being modest about your music career—having co-led a band with Chris Potter, for instance, is not small potatoes!*

**Weinstein:** Well, no, and that was a great experience playing with Chris. But my career took a different path. [...] In New York, where all the major artists are based, the competition is just so great. I love playing, and I hope that Stefon hires me to help him write something for timpani and percussion again. I'd be on that in a second!

I did see it as a double career from around 1990 through 1995, when I was working at Herbert Barrett Management and playing in the Jazz Mentality with Chris, and we did some records and touring and played some of the clubs.... Of course Chris's career did take off, but once I saw this opportunity to develop the jazz division at Barrett, that was that.



## Meet the JJA's New Membership Secretary

► By Brett Delmage

**H**OWARD MANDEL RECENTLY made a pitch for volunteers for a few tasks. Seeing an area where I felt I could actually contribute, I bravely (foolishly?) raised my hand. I am now looking forward to serving as JJA's new membership secretary, continuing the excellent efforts of Jerry D'Souza, who has served us well for 10 years.

I learned membership administration and developed an interest in membership development while serving as a volunteer, president and treasurer of several membership-based advocacy groups. It's this tiny bit of related experience, and an interest in learning more about JJA and the jazz world in general, that prompted me to try to help in this small way.

On the jazz scene, I have been a photographer for more than 12 years, focusing on Canadian musicians and those in Ottawa, Ontario, where I reside. I often think there is a tendency for us to overlook our hometown jazz greats. I have worked as the photographer for the Ottawa International Jazz Festival, and in 2008 started my first projects writing about jazz, as well as taking over editorship of the weekly Ottawa Jazz event newsletter, *Ottawa Jazz Happenings*.

Coincidentally, I was born in the same month, August 1958, as the jazz photograph "A Great Day in Harlem." While I was not able to orchestrate a similar photo of Ottawa jazz musicians on the 50th anniversary, August 2008, I presented a public photographic print exhibit, "Ottawa Jazz Seen," of 15 of our

fine Ottawa musicians to mark that common anniversary.

I am now stumbling through my first, tiny jazz video project, exploring a new medium in which to make fresh, new mistakes.

I look forward to learning from and sharing experiences and knowledge with JJA members — and reminding you to renew your memberships!

Brett Delmage  
389 Holland Avenue  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada K1Y 0Y9  
613-729-0323  
Brett@JazzSeen.ca



Frank Forte is a healing force for jazz musicians.

# Taking Our Medicine

► By Jill McManus

**D**R. FRANCIS FORTE is an oncologist specializing in blood disorders at Englewood Hospital in northern New Jersey. When he happened to treat Dizzy Gillespie for pancreatic cancer in 1993, the two men bonded thanks to a shared passion for jazz (Dr. Forte plays jazz guitar). And thanks to that connection, a little miracle occurred.

Just before he died, Dizzy agreed to allow the hospital to use his name for any purpose it wished—but only if it would provide medical help to jazz musicians less fortunate than himself.

So Dr. Forte thought about what might be done for these artists, many of whom cannot afford insurance. He learned that a loose network of doctors was giving free care to a few musicians, but complained of a lack of hospital support for diagnostic tests, surgeries, inpatient care and follow-up that could really make a difference.

With that in mind, Dr. Forte got Englewood's agreement and in late 1993 spearheaded a new program—the Dizzy Gillespie Cancer Center and the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund—to offer free care to jazz musicians. He screens patients himself and steers them appropriately to the hospital's 50 participating doctors. Over the past 15 years, the program has provided some \$5 million to treat more than a thousand jazz musicians with serious ailments, in addition to providing dental work and other routine needs.

Says Douglas A. Duchak, CEO of Englewood Hospital, "The program has grown in popularity and it's because of Dr. Forte's status in the jazz community. He's an extraordinarily compassionate and sympathetic person when it comes to treating jazz musicians. More and more physicians have been drawn into the program out of respect for him for helping these individuals, and people

have rallied around the program, his brainchild."

According to Dr. Forte, "You don't have to be broke to get treatment. You can

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**"When you meet Dr. Forte, it's like talking to an old friend."  
— Bertha Hope**

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have a little insurance. After all, you are on your creative journey, everyone's cheating you, there are a lot of frustrations. When illness comes and you find that there's a group of doctors, mostly white, who could help you, you're naturally suspicious—thinking there must be some kind of testing or experiments going on. These are the thoughts we've been able to break through because we know the patients' fellow musicians. Some of them, like Howard Johnson, Danny Mixon and Rudy Walker, are

happy to talk about their treatment here and are our best advertisements."

Drummer Rudy Walker was the first to receive major surgery under the program back in 1994: a hip replacement that relieved him of lifelong pain. He is still receiving follow-up care. "It was a godsend," he says. "No more pain! Your life changes. I love Dr. Forte, who set up my treatment, and trust him immensely."

Pianist Bertha Hope, who had maxillary facial reconstruction after a car accident in 2001, says: "When you meet Dr. Forte, it's like talking to an old friend. You know the doctors at Englewood are going to be very, very caring. And they did a wonderful job."

Inspired by his dedication, two longtime friends of Dr. Forte's, fellow guitarists Gene Bertocini and Roni Ben-Hur, have recorded a duo CD called *Jazz Therapy Vol. 1, Smile*, a pro bono project to benefit the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund (available at [motema.com](http://motema.com)).

Dr. Forte, whose father was a general practitioner, studied at Albert Einstein

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If you are a jazz musician lacking funds for medical treatment, contact Wendy Oxenhorn at the Jazz Foundation of America, which screens applicants for the program and offers other assistance (212-245-5800), or online at [www.jazzfoundation.org](http://www.jazzfoundation.org).

To make a tax-deductible contribution to the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund, contact the Englewood Hospital and Medical Center Foundation (201-894-3725), or send your check to EHMC Foundation, 350 Engle Street, Englewood, NJ 07631, and indicate that you'd like it to go to the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund.

Dr. Forte can be reached for questions at [doc40@mac.com](mailto:doc40@mac.com).

For those who live near Englewood Hospital, there are free jazz concerts in the lobby most weekdays from noon to 2 p.m., with such musicians as Roni Ben-Hur, Roz Corral, Barry Harris, Calvin Hill, Howard Johnson, Ronald Naspo, Jimmy Owens, Jack Wilkins, Leroy Williams, Santi Debriano, Richard Wyands and others.

College of Medicine and did his residency at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, along with research at the Rockefeller Institute. He has worked at Englewood since 1972. Despite his hectic schedule, he writes poetry (one poem, “Hands that Hurt,” was for a guitarist with arthritis), and helps his granddaughter with her poems for school. He also composes jazz tunes “that don’t need much rehearsal” and plays them at his weekly Tuesday night gig at Griffin’s, in Cresskill, New Jersey, where he appears from 7 until 9 p.m. His pay goes to the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund.

Dr. Forte, usually pronounced “forty” by his patients and friends, will be 71 in October. He lives in Tenafly, New Jer-

sey, with his wife Marie and four dogs, and has three grown sons. He and his wife contribute articles and photos to *Jazz Guitar* magazine, which he credits with getting him back into playing. He doesn’t plan to retire anytime soon, but he’s working to bring some of the newer, younger doctors into the Gillespie memorial fold. “The program lives in the hearts and minds of people who are happy to do this work,” he says, “and being part of it has improved my musicianship and my feelings for people.”

Regarding the prospects for health care reform, Dr. Forte opines that “the system has been run on selfishness,” although he’s hopeful about change. “If everyone has the attitude President

Obama is trying to foster, and we have guidelines that are effective and not wasteful, it may happen. But it will take time. The drug companies, the researchers and so on are finding ways to catalogue diseases that make treatment easier, but things need to be better balanced in favor of the patient.”

For New York area jazz musicians in need, Dizzy’s dream has become reality, and the world is already improving with Dr. Frank Forte and his colleagues on the case.



*Jill McManus is a jazz pianist and writer living in New York.*



## Bud Shank, 1926–2009

Photographs by Juan-Carlos Hernandez

**“BUD, LIKE MILES DAVIS, HAD THIS ABILITY TO CREATE SPACE FOR YOU TO BE WHO YOU WERE. HE WAS VERY GENEROUS.”**

**—GARY PEACOCK**



Some personal memories of a drum master.

# Louie Bellson, 1924–2009

► By W. Royal Stokes

**L**OUIE BELLSON, WHO began on the drums at the age of three, pioneered the double bass drum setup at 15. At 17 he won the Gene Krupa drumming contest, a competition that had attracted 40,000 participants.

By the mid-1950s, Louie had already performed and recorded with Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Harry James and Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic. He would go on to perform with greats including Jimmy Dorsey, Lionel Hampton, Oscar Peterson, Dizzy Gillespie, Count Basie, Woody Herman, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Tony Bennett, Mel Torme, Joe Williams and his first wife, Pearl Bailey, who died in 1990. In the 1960s Louie formed his own big band and combo and remained at their helms until his death on February 14 in Los Angeles.

As jazz critic for *The Washington Post* in the 1970s and '80s, I reviewed Louie in performance in the DC area at several venues, including the Kennedy Center. I caught him there again much later with Benny Goodman, who was then in his final year of life.

I didn't meet Louie until the mid-1980s. Pete Christlieb of the Tonight Show Band was to be featured guest at the 1985 U.S. Navy Band Eighth International Saxophone Symposium, taking place in late January at the Tawes Theater on the University of Maryland campus. Pete called me from L.A. asking where in DC he could get an evening gig for the weekend. "I'll bring Louie Bellson with me," he added. I could hardly believe what I heard.

Pete repeated, "Louie Bellson," explaining, "We're old friends and we play together often." I suggested he try the One Step Down, 10 blocks from

the White House. In addition to Louie, Pete added Steve Novosel on bass and Reuben Brown on piano. I wrote a preview piece for the *Post* (published January 23). I was also sent by the *Post* to review on Friday and I arrived sev-

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"I was at the  
bandstand end of the  
bar, hanging over it,  
almost in  
Bellson's face."

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eral numbers into the first set. Patrons were already lining up in the cold for the next show. I forced my way through the crowd muttering "*Washington Post*" and made it in. I then had to excuse my way through a small throng just inside. There wasn't an empty seat in the house; standees were three deep at the bar. I ended up at the bandstand end of the bar, hanging over it, almost in Bellson's face. He looked up at me, smiled and went into a boiling minute-long solo.

On my way out, anxious to get to a payphone to call in my 200-word review, I introduced myself to Louie. He grabbed my hand and said, "Royal, Pearl and I are very grateful for the nice things you've written about us. Thank you so much." I was dumbfounded, not expecting him to have a clue as to my identity.

I caught up with Louie several more times over the years. In 1990 at the North Sea Jazz Festival, my then seven-year-old son Neale and I chatted with

him in the breakfast room of the Bel Air Hotel. That's a nice memory for Neale, now in his mid-20s and drumming with bands in Baltimore and, for the past two years, San Francisco.

I also caught Louie a decade ago with his combo at the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre in Rockville, Maryland. Our final contact was a year ago via his wife and manager Francine Bellson, who responded to my email requesting a review copy of Louie and Clark Terry's new CD, *Louie & Clark Expedition 2*. She emailed me in reply, "How thrilled Louie was to receive your memo; he just bubbled over telling me about the good times you all had in those memorable days."

Bellson's career history is nothing short of incredible. He played the White House four times, was granted four honorary doctorates, received the prestigious NEA Jazz Masters Award in 1994 and the American Drummers Achievement Award from Zildjian in 1998. A six-time Grammy Award nominee, he performed on more than 200 albums, composed and/or arranged more than a thousand tunes and published a dozen books on drums and percussion. Duke Ellington once said that Louie Bellson was "not only the world's greatest drummer, but also the world's greatest musician!"

For more detailed information on Louie Bellson you can find a profile in my *Living the Jazz Life: Conversations with Forty Musicians about Their Careers in Jazz* (Oxford University Press, 2000). There were excellent obituaries in *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, by our esteemed Nate Chinen and Don Heckman, respectively.

*Requiescat in pacem, Louie.*





Remembering a champion of traditional jazz.

# In Memoriam: Leslie C. Johnson

► By Thomas Jacobsen

**L**ESLIE CAROLE (LINDSTROM) Johnson, editor and publisher of *The Mississippi Rag*, passed away in Minneapolis on January 17 after a lengthy battle with a rare form of cancer. She was 67.

“The Rag,” as it was known to many, was considered “The Voice of Traditional Jazz and Ragtime.” Johnson founded it in 1973; she served as its publisher and editor for all 35 years of its existence. For 33 years, the periodical appeared monthly in tabloid form. Beginning in January 2007, it was converted to an online publication ([mississippirag.com](http://mississippirag.com)) and remained so through its final issue in December 2008.

*The Mississippi Rag* was read throughout the world. Its subscribers came from all 50 states and some 26 countries, and they included, according to Johnson, “top musicians, writers, researchers and critics in the traditional jazz and ragtime world.” Its roster of contributing writers and photographers included many well-known names in the field.

Unlike some of us who were regular contributors to *The Rag*, Leslie never missed a deadline. Indeed, her commit-

ment to the publication was entirely a labor of love, right to the end. She had been fighting cancer with a variety of treatments for the last three and a half years of her life. As she neared the end, her goal and that of her small but dedicated staff became the completion of the 35 years of publication. Her success in that respect was truly heroic.

Leslie Johnson will be missed by all who knew and worked with her as well as by the thousands of devoted *Rag* readers around the world. Survivors include her husband, Will Shapira; children Tony and Renee; stepchildren Eve and Stephen; and sisters Debra and Jody. Memorials may be sent to:

N. C. Little Hospice  
7019 Lynmar Lane  
Edina, MN 55435

Humphrey Cancer Center  
3300 Oakdale Avenue North  
Robbinsdale, MN 55422

New Orleans Musicians' Clinic  
2820 Napoleon Avenue, Suite 890  
New Orleans, LA 70115



[www.mississippirag.com](http://www.mississippirag.com)

TO THE EDITOR,

As you know, my dear wife, Leslie Carole Johnson, founder/publisher/editor of *The Mississippi Rag: The Voice of Traditional Jazz and Ragtime*™ died January 17 after a three-and-a-half-year battle with a rare and aggressive form of cancer. I want to thank you and the JJA for honoring her lifetime achievement at your meeting in conjunction with the IAJE in New York in January 2007. It meant a lot to Leslie (and her entire family) to be recognized by her peers. Her death came just a few days after she completed 35 years of print and online publishing.

Sincerely,

WILL SHAPIRA,  
Minneapolis

## The Mississippi Rag®



### THE JAZZ AWARDS<sup>SM</sup> ARE COMING!

The 13th Annual JJA Jazz Awards will be presented on Tuesday, June 16, 2009 from 3–6 p.m. at the Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St., New York. Visit [jazzhouse.org](http://jazzhouse.org) for full details.

# News of Members

**DAVID R. ADLER** is writing regularly on jazz for *Time Out New York*. He has also resumed his role as a New York @ Night columnist for *All About Jazz-New York*. On December 12, 2008, he conducted a live pre-concert interview with Jason Moran at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He also moderated a panel on improvisation (December 18) featuring Moran, Pauline Oliveros, Jason Kao Hwang and Kiranavali Vidyasankar, under the auspices of the Philadelphia Music Project. In May he will conduct an oral history interview with bassist/composer Ben Allison for the New York Public Library.

**PAUL BLAIR**, Editor of *Hot House*, who's just completed liner notes for two new Criss Cross discs (Luis Perdomo, David Kikoski) and one for SteepleChase (Jed Levy), will resume his jazz-focused walking tours of Harlem in April. Meanwhile, he is opposed to the establishment of a federal Department of Arts & Culture for the same reason he's against the establishment of a U.S. government Department of Religion.

**PATRICK HINELY** had a clean sweep: all eight photos in the booklet for *Yesterdays*, the Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/Jack DeJohnette trio's latest album on ECM, are his. ECM also set a new record (so to speak) for longest time lag between the shooting of a Hinely photograph and the use of it: 34 years, for a picture of the late Collin Walcott adorning the last page of the booklet for *The Codona Trilogy*.

**FRAN KAUFMAN'S** photo exhibition, "Stolen Moments," was on view at the Newark, New Jersey gallery of WBGO-FM from December 8, 2008 through January 30, 2009. A photo from the show—a full-size portrait of Cyrus Chestnut—appeared on the NPR website in conjunction with Cyrus's appearance on "Jazz Set" with Dee Dee Bridgewater in January. As official photographer on the Jazz Cruise, Fran

traveled to the Caribbean in November with, among others, Wycliffe Gordon, the Heath Brothers, Ben Riley's Monk Legacy Project, Andy Bey and many other jazz greats. After the cruise she produced a 24-page softcover photo book for the producers, who sent it to nearly 2000 passengers as a Christmas holiday gift. Fran also recently went onboard the Playboy Jazz Cruise to photograph greats including Herbie Hancock, Dianne Reeves, James Moody and Marcus Miller.

**ROZANNE LEVINE**, photographer/clarinetist/composer, has her photo titled "Charlie Parker Place" on the cover and in the booklet of The Nu Band's forthcoming CD from Porter Records. The CD, *Lower East Side Blues*, will be released in late April/May 2009 and features Mark Whitecage, Roy Campbell, Jr., Joe Fonda and Lou Grassi.

**EUGENE MARLOW**, JJA Treasurer, will teach a course entitled "Jazz, Journalism and Democracy" during the fall 2009 semester at Baruch College (City University of New York). Gene is a full-time professor at Baruch (in his 21st year), where he has been teaching a variety of courses in media and culture. This new course is based in large part on Kabir Sehgal's book *Jazzocracy*. Any jazz journalist interested in being a guest speaker should contact him at 646-312-3924 or nmprinc@aol.com. In addition, Gene announces the release of his fifth album, *A Bouquet of Classical and Jazzy Love Songs*, a compilation drawn from three previous albums, available from cdbaby.com or directly at meienterprises@aol.com.

**BILL MINOR** continues to serve as a "tribal elder" for the Monterey Jazz Festival, providing information on its history for UK producer Vince Hunt's nine-part BBC radio documentary "Pacific Coast Sound"; info on Dave Brubeck's 1962 "The Real Ambassadors" performance; and accounts of Monterey appearances

by Dizzy Gillespie, Willie Smith and Jimmy Hamilton (now posted by the Charleston Jazz Initiative). Bill has also released a spoken word/original music CD called *Mortality Suite* and performed (on piano, and reading) at a CD release party at Wave Street Studios in Cannery Row with Heath Proskin (bass), Richard Mayer (flute) and actor Taelen Thomas (the full performance is available at: <http://livenetworks.tv/?p=149>). Bill also read at Capitola Book Café (with poet Roz Spafford) and on radio station KUSP's "The Poetry Show." He served as emcee for a March 2 evening of spirituals featuring soprano Norma Mayer and flutist Richard Mayer at Wave Street Studios.

**FRANK SCHINDELBECK** founded a jazz label in 2008 called fixcel records. The first release was *Schwoine* by the Ditzner Loemsh Duo. The guideline for future releases is: creative music with a free attitude. See [fixcel-records.com](http://fixcel-records.com) for more information.

**MITCHELL SEIDEL** has been named to the board of directors of the New Jersey Jazz Society.

**CHARLES SUHOR** reviewed Samuel Charters's *A Trumpet Around the Corner: The Story of New Orleans Jazz* in the January 2009 issue of *American Book Review*, and two CD reissues—*Leon Prima/Sharkey Bonano: Live in Concert, 1948 & 1949* and *Sharkey and His Kings of Dixieland*—in the December 2008 *IAJRC Journal* (International Association of Jazz Record Collectors).

**JOHN TUMPAK** made a presentation on January 26 titled "The Life and Music of Cab Calloway" to the Ebell of Los Angeles, an educational and philanthropic organization founded in 1894. The event took place at the Wilshire Ebell Theater.



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# Book Reviews

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## The Jazz Ear: Conversations Over Music

By Ben Ratliff

*Times Books, New York, 2008;*  
225 pages; \$25.00 hardcover

► Review by John Litweiler

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**T**he *Jazz Ear* is an enjoyable collection of Ben Ratliff's "Listening With" interviews for *The New York Times*. He's a brave soul for publishing it. Obviously he's competing not only with the latest jazz mags and all their interviews, but also with a wealth of in-print and out-of-print books sold cheap over the web. Emphasis on cheap, in the 2009 economy.

A bigger disadvantage for Ratliff is that we're in an era when few major jazz figures are left. Even important minor bop-era figures are disappearing—just this January we lost David "Fathead" Newman, Hank Crawford and Leroy Cooper, all from early Ray Charles sax sections. So whom does a jazz scribe write about? Compare Whitney Balliett's old *American Musicians*, the gold standard for interview collections. While his dozens of subjects were grizzled swing and bop veterans by the time he grilled them, only one or two were past their 60s. By contrast, Ratliff has more catholic musical interests, yet of his 15 subjects, eight were 74 or older by the time he got to them.

Interviewers want to know, as Ben Ratliff says, what jazz artists value in music, art, life. He believes that listening to music together with artists is a direct way to answer those questions: "Listening with someone else is an intimate act, because music reveals itself by degrees." So he asked his subjects to do a reverse blindfold test: Please pick some recordings that you value to play for me and we'll talk about them. The musicians took his request to heart and chose music that told stories about themselves. Six of them played classical music for him and two selected rock tracks. Bebo Valdés and Guillermo Klein talked about Cuban and Argentine music history. To their everlasting credit, drummers Roy Haynes and Paul Motian chose Baby Dodds tracks and pointed out different aspects of Dodds's profound concepts of "playing for the benefit of the band" (and Haynes has good stories to tell, too).

The major artists in this book are Ornette Coleman and Sonny Rollins. Coleman picks a cantor, shape-note singers, a Kyrgyzstani singer and Charlie Parker. His comments are in characteristically original terms, leading Ratliff to say, "He loves exposing you to his cast of mind," but if he thinks you're dissecting it or applying "Western logic" to it, "he holds you

at bay with a charming tautology." Makes you wonder, is that tautology a defense? As for Rollins, he fondly recalls his youth with Fats Waller and Coleman Hawkins songs, then responds to Parker's freedom, Lester Young's storytelling and Billie Holiday: "She would cuss with everybody, but inside she was soft as a kitten." Rollins's thoughtfulness, warmth and honesty are illuminating.

By contrast, the troubled Andrew Hill chapter came late in Hill's life, when he was struggling with lung cancer. Ratliff rightly emphasizes the influence of something Charlie Parker said on Hill: "I look on melody as rhythm." Somehow, though, as they listen to Earl Hines's dazzling multi-rhythms, he misses the reflection of Hines in Hill's own way of forming solos. Bob Brookmeyer, struggling with lymphoma, recalls the pain of his Kansas City boyhood and the saving power of jazz, tells tales about Bill Harris, whom Brookmeyer idolized, and insists that composers should dominate big-band works. More than Brookmeyer, another composer-arranger, Maria Schneider, speaks of the pains of creating music. I was especially taken by her story about teaching crows to talk, since I once failed to do that.

Pat Metheny, once a prize teenage Berklee student, gripes about jazz education and wants jazz to remain a folk music. Branford Marsalis decries the state of jazz today. Both were hepped up for Ratliff, full of opinions, at length, an interviewer's dream: Just turn on the recorder and get out of the way. Joshua Redman offers very perceptive analyses of Rollins and Coltrane pieces. Wayne Shorter seems to speak from the depth of hard experience when he says, "For me to be aware of something that has great value, I change my life." And there are interviews with Diane Reeves and then 87-year-old Hank Jones.

Is Ratliff right? Does his approach yield more intimate revelations from artists? Or, assuming the interviewee isn't merely peddling a new album, are ample time, shared good will and the interviewer's breadth of knowledge at least as revealing? Depends on the interviewers and subjects. Ratliff's style, his way of conveying information along with conversation, mostly goes down smoothly as a milkshake. I disagree with some of his critical ideas, and he makes a couple of "gotcha" mistakes (for one, Roach plays in six, not four, throughout Monk's *Carolina Moon*), but they are not seriously jarring, and *The Jazz Ear* is mostly free of an unpleasant, lofty distance that separates Ratliff from artists and audiences in some of his *Times* reviews. Mostly meaty interviews, as I say — I'll surely be coming back to this one.

■ ■ ■

### Moved? New email address? New affiliation?

Please be sure to notify the JJA's membership secretary,  
Brett Delmage, at [brett@jazzseen.ca](mailto:brett@jazzseen.ca)



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## Sounding Salsa: Performing Latin Music in New York City

By Christopher Washburne

Temple University Press, Philadelphia;  
254 pp.; \$26.95 paperback

► Review by Chris Kelsey

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**I**N A CHAPTER from *Jazz: The American Theme Song*, James Lincoln Collier goes postal on jazz critics, laying at their feet the sorry state of jazz scholarship circa 1993, the year of the book's publication. Collier's beef had to do with what he saw as the disproportionate influence the most prominent jazz journalists held over serious discourse on the music. He seemed to

say that a takeover by the academy was in order, lest jazz history be written by uneducated hacks.

One is reminded of Collier's argument upon reading *Sounding Salsa: Performing Latin Music in New York City*. The book is about jazz only in a peripheral sense — author Christopher Washburne is a very fine and respected jazz trombonist, and some of the musicians who appear in his book have jazz reputations. Yet one can say this book is exactly what Collier asked for, a well-researched and assiduously documented work of history, written by an ethnomusicologist with impeccable academic credentials. As such, it's also exceedingly dull, which brings to mind a factor perhaps not considered by Collier: Much scholarly writing is essentially unreadable.

That's not to say *Sounding Salsa* is without merit. The publisher claims it to be the first "ethnographic journey into the New York salsa scene of the 1990s," which automatically makes it an object of some import. In fact, it would be hard to imagine a person better qualified on the subject. An Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology at Columbia Uni-

versity, and Director of Columbia's Louis Armstrong Jazz Performance Program, Washburne is also a veteran of the New York salsa scene. He's worked as a sideman with such leading lights as Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri and Ray Barretto, along with many others (Hector Lavoe, for example) whose names are known mostly to salsa fans. His standing as a professional *salsero* gives him access to information denied other researchers. And he takes advantage, gleaning enough material to tell a fascinating tale. That it reads as less than fascinating owes to the telling.

Salsa is a hybrid, a mix of Caribbean influences that came together primarily in New York's barrio. The book's six chapters each examine a different area of the music and the culture surrounding it, from the practical aspects of performing and recording salsa, to the nitty-gritty details of the performers' personal and professional lives. Washburne also assays gender roles and addresses the effects of drugs and urban violence on the music. Finally, he analyzes musical structure and form. Throughout, he attempts to place the music in a historical context, focusing on the '90s, the decade during which he gained the bulk of his personal experience with the music.

"I have written this book from the perspective of musicians," Washburne says in the introduction, and indeed, the book's strength lies in the way he relates the conditions under which salsa musicians live and work. His status as an Anglo working in a predominantly Latino music allows Washburne to maintain a certain distance from his subject without losing a sense of immediacy gained through years of hands-on experience. In any case, the stories of gunfights, wanton drug use, constant frustration and hardship—while not gracefully written—are often as enlightening as they are harrowing.

Equally affecting are Washburne's accounts of the petty irritations (short pay, shoddy treatment by club owners, lousy rehearsal and performance conditions) that can combine to make a musician's life so infuriating. The book's most illu-

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LEFT: Dan Brubeck at the Clearwater Jazz Holiday, Clearwater, Florida, October 2008. Photograph by Dr. Jazz. ABOVE: Benny Powell (left), Billy Harper (rear) and TK Blue at a JFA fundraiser in New York, 2008. Photograph by Enid Farber.



minating passages center on the musicians' own observations and comments, made directly to Washburne and salted liberally throughout the text. Such intimate reflections would only have been revealed to someone who'd earned their deepest trust and respect—another musician, for instance.

As easily as he relates to his fellow musicians, however, Washburne is clearly not writing for them, but for academic posterity. "Much of this work stems from my dissertation research," he states in the introduction, which one might take to mean that somewhere, somehow, there's an even drier version of this material. *Sounding Salsa* commits every sin common to "scholarly" writing, from a preponderance of academese to a plethora of barely relevant and often intrusive citations, all writ-

ten with a literary flair one would expect from Merriam-Webster.

Most frustrating is Washburne's disinclination to make even the most self-evident observation on his own authority. Instead, he consistently uses a quote (or two, or three) taken from another source. For instance, in a passage from chapter two, he quotes Jorge Duany: "Popular music is one of the main symbolic resources through which Caribbean people define, assert, and promote their cultural identity." Really? On a related note, I hear that the Earth revolves around the sun. Unnecessary quotes like these make the book seem as if it were written by committee.

It would be easy to let Washburne off the hook by saying he's only doing what's expected of him. True, in terms of research he seems to have done a

good job. And as anyone who's been to graduate school knows, this style of writing is self-perpetuating, handed down by professor to student from time immemorial.

Yet even if you limit yourself to the realm of jazz studies, there are many recent examples that combine first-rate scholarship with an ability to write well (we've come along way since Collier's kvetchings). On my bookshelf is Scott DeVeaux's *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History*, a splendid example. In terms of subject matter, *Sounding Salsa* has all the ingredients for similar excellence. Washburne's inability or unwillingness to transcend the banal opacity of academic writing results in it being something much less.



## Deaths in late 2008.

# R.I.P.

» Compiled by W. Royal Stokes and Ken Franckling

### ODETTA • EARTHA KITT • FREDDIE HUBBARD

Trumpeter and bandleader Freddie Hubbard; trumpeter, bandleader and singer Tommy Sampson

Trombonist Warren Brown

Saxophonists Joe Romano, Mike Terry, Bob Green, Monty Waters, Ray Ellis

Clarinetist Derek Moore

Pianists Lawrence Wheatley, Yusuf Salim, John Osnes, Kenn Cox; pianist, composer, broadcaster and jazz festival co-founder Geo Voumard; pianists and singers Page Cavanaugh, Buddy Charles

Bassist, composer and educator Mel Graves

Guitarists George Russell, Davy Graham, Augusto Mancinelli; guitarist and club owner Jimmy Gourley; guitarist and composer Nico Rojas

Violinist and record producer Gayle Dixon

Drummer, percussionist and educator Omar Clay; drummer and percussionist Jozef Dodo Šošoka

Percussionists Salah Ragab, Walter "Tata" Gross

Singers Lita Roza, Anca Parghel, Frances Lynne; singers and actresses Mae Mercer, Eartha Kitt; blues and folk singer, guitarist and social activist Odetta Holmes

Composer and electronic instruments inventor Michel Waisvisz

Gospel performer Ulysses Slaughter

Jazz society founder and president Harold Gray




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151 First Avenue  
New York, NY 10003