

Sarasota Jazzfest Showcases Tradition While Looking Ahead to What's Next

By Sanford Josephson

The Jazz Club of Sarasota is intent on closing the generation gap in jazz by bringing older and younger musicians together on its main stage. This year's Sarasota Jazz Festival, which will be held from March 6-9, is titled "Generations of Jazz," and the idea, according to clarinetist/tenor saxophonist Ken Peplowski, the SJF's music director, "is to respect the tradition of the great musicians and welcome the younger musicians who are keeping it going."



Versatile reedman Ken Peplowski is the SJF's musical director.

There will be four main stage concerts, plus the annual Jazz Trolley & Pub Crawl, and four concurrent afternoon "themed" stages highlighting blues, classic jazz, contemporary jazz, and Latin jazz. The main venue is the Hyatt Regency Hotel at 1000 Boulevard of the Arts in Sarasota.

The festival will be anchored, Peplowski points out, "by a house rhythm section called La Lucha, a trio of younger guys from Florida." Based in Tampa Bay, La Lucha's members are bassist Alejandro Arenas, pianist John O'Leary and drummer Mark Feinman. Their repertoire, as described on the group's website, "is a diverse mixture of Latin inspired rhythms with jazz standards, twisted arrangements of pop songs, and original compositions." The trio's most recent album, *Standards, Not-Standards*, with vocalist Jun, was released in 2015 on Blue Line Music.

The first main stage concert, at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, March 6, will feature

young trumpet player James Suggs with veterans Randy Brecker and Randy Sandke (who recently moved from Pennsylvania to Sarasota). Suggs, who also appeared at Clearwater Beach's Suncoast Jazz Festival last November (*Jersey Jazz*, January 2019), lives in St. Petersburg and teaches in the Jazz Studies department at the University of South

Florida. He has toured with the Glenn Miller Orchestra and the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra and has shared the stage with pianist Dick Hyman, guitarist Kenny Burrell, and composer/orchestra leader Maria Schneider. In 2015, he was awarded the Best of Bay's Critic's Choice award for "Best Jazz Transplant."

On Friday, March 8, Peplowski says, "two things are happening. Houston Person will be playing with clarinetist/saxophonist Aaron Johnson and saxophonist Roxy Coss, and the great vocalist Mary Stallings will perform with young vocalist Charles Turner." In July of last year, when the New York-based Johnson appeared in San Francisco, jazzinthebay.org described him as "a member of a new generation of mainstream jazz musicians that's embracing older styles of jazz and the great American Songbook. At the same time, he's an adventurous multi-instrumentalist who has also immersed himself in the avant-garde." Johnson has appeared with Hyman and Peplowski as well as trombonist Slide Hampton and trumpeter Jon Erik Kellso.

Originally from Seattle, Coss moved east

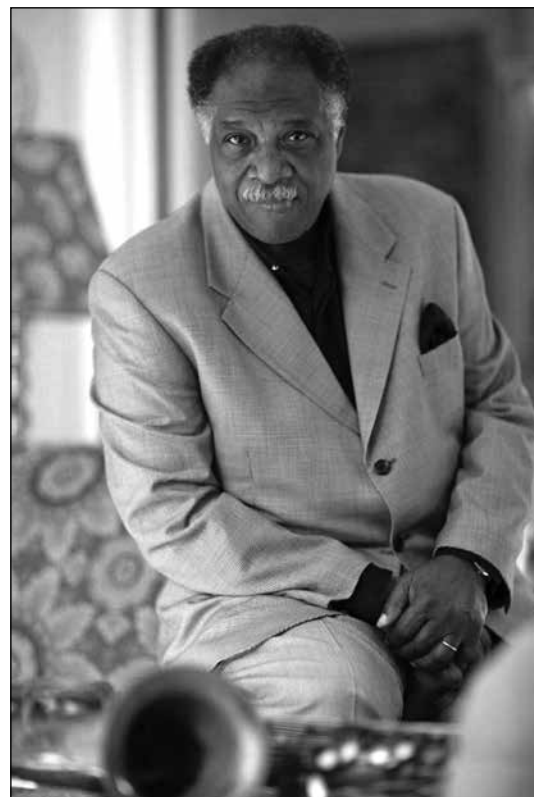


Photo by John Abbott



Saxophonists Houston Person (top photo) and Roxy Coss (below) highlight an all-star multi-generational lineup appearing at the 39th Sarasota Jazz Festival in March.

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to attend William Paterson University in Wayne, NJ, where she graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies/Performance in 2008. She joined the DIVA Jazz Orchestra in 2010 and has performed at the Newport Jazz Festival and at New York clubs such as the Jazz Standard and Smoke.

In his review of her 2018 Posi-Tone album, *The Future is Female*, allaboutjazz.com's Paul Rauch wrote that her "unique and personal sound [is] steeped in the tradition of the post-bop masters that have preceded her, such as Joe Henderson and Charlie Rouse." *DownBeat*'s Michael J. West described the album as "hard-hitting post-bop... a benchmark in Coss' burgeoning career."

In 2014, Turner was the first place winner in the first annual Duke Ellington Vocal Competition in New York City, hosted by Mercedes Ellington. He has performed in several NYC jazz clubs including Birdland, Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, and Ginny's Supper Club. A native of Los Angeles, Turner studied under vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater while he was a student at the

Berklee College of Music in Boston.

On Saturday afternoon, March 9, pianist Shelly Berg, who is dean of the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, will lead a performance by the UM Big Band.

"A bunch of performers will be guesting with the band," Peplowski says, "including Roxy, Houston, Randy Sandke, Mary Stallings, and the great bassist John Lamb, a veteran of Duke Ellington's band."

On Saturday night, "Dick Hyman, Bill Charlap, and I will do some things together. Bill and I consider ourselves protégés of Dick. And, we'll also have Houston and Randy Sandke perform again."

Hyman, a long-time resident of nearby Venice, was honored at the 2017 SJF in celebration of his 90th birthday.



Tampa Bay-based La Lucha is the house rhythm section for the Sarasota Jazz Festival.

The themed performances, Peplowski points out, "will utilize local performers. We're kind of combining a jazz festival with a jazz party. We're trying to encourage people to get the whole package and stay at the hotel."

Fortickets and special hotel and VIP packages, visit www.sarasotajazzfestival.org. Sponsors include: Sarasota Scene, YourObserver.com, Arbors Records, The Harold & Evelyn R. Davis Memorial Foundation, The Jazz Cruise and Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax Revenues.



NJJS's "Generations of Jazz" Will Help Springfield Library Celebrate Black History Month

The New Jersey Jazz Society's jazz history program called "Generations of Jazz" is making a return visit to the Springfield Free Public Library, 66 Mountain Avenue, Springfield, NJ on Sunday, Feb.10 at 2 PM. Admission is free.

The program will focus on the musicians and venues of the Harlem Renaissance as part of the library's celebration of Black History Month. The program's narration is shared by members of a group that has a wealth of experience in the jazz world.

Keyboardist Radam Schwartz has appeared with such legends as tenor saxophonists Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and David "Fathead" Newman. He was director of the Jazz Institute of New Jersey for 15 years and is currently on the teaching staff of Jazz House Kids in Montclair.

Vocalist Carrie Jackson has performed at such venues as the New

Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), New York City's Iridium jazz club and Shanghai Jazz and Trumpets in New Jersey. *Cadence Magazine* called her "a rich-voiced blues, ballads, and jazz standards singer who knows how to put a song across."

Also sharing the narration will be saxophonist Gene Ghee, a former member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers who also worked as a for Stevie Wonder and was a music educator in East Orange.

Bassist Takashi Otsuka studied under vibraphonist Gary Burton at the Berklee College of Music and has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Boys Choir of Harlem, and the Latin Jazz Orchestra.

Drummer Errold Lanier, Jr. studied jazz performance at William Paterson University and has appeared at such venues as Trumpets and the Cornelia Street Cafe in Greenwich Village.

The New Jersey Jazz Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the performance, promotion, and preservation of jazz. The Generations of Jazz program is presented in collaboration with the Wells Fargo Bank and Investors Bank Foundations and the Rea Charitable Trust.





GENERATIONS of JAZZ

Sarasota JAZZ Festival

**7 days
48 Events
110+ Musicians
Hyatt Regency Hotel
March 3-9**

Main Stage Concerts

Featuring

KEN PEPOWSKI

Music Director

with

Alejandro Arenas

Shelly Berg

Randy Brecker

Bill Charlap

Roxy Coss

Mark Feinman

Dick Hyman

Aaron Johnson

John Lamb

John O'Leary

Houston Person

Randy Sandke

Mary Stallings

James Suggs

Charles Turner

U of Miami Big Band

4 New "Themed" Afternoon Stages

BLUES

Selwyn Birchwood
Betty Fox
Lauren Mitchell

LATIN

Thomas Carabasi
Joe Delaney
Frankie Pineiro

CONTEMPORARY

Marlon Boone
Jeremy Carter
Hiram Hazley

CLASSIC

Gene Bertoncini
Katt Hefner
Allan Vache'

PLUS.....A Workshop Production

"Lil & Louis" an original play by Jo Morello

For tickets and information visit:

<https://www.sarasotajazzfestival.org>

