



# SARASOTA JAZZ *Sounds*

WINTER 2024

# 2024 JAZZ FESTIVAL





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# Don't miss out! Become a Jazz Club Member today!

The Jazz Club of Sarasota has over **1,000 Members** and is Growing!

#### MEMBER BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Up to \$500+ savings in reduced TICKET prices
- Weekly E blasts of Jazz Events
- Issues of "Sarasota Jazz Sounds" Magazine
- Member Support from JCS Office
- Members can bring one guest to a *Jazz at Two* concert. A specific guest can only be invited to one concert. No repeat guests.
- Opportunities to serve on committees to plan, promote and manage events
- Free Luxury Bus Transportation to and from The Jazz Cruise

Become a Member and **save 20% on Jazz Festival tickets** plus be a part of this special, active community. Help make Jazz an even more vital part of life in Sarasota.

<b>Lifetime</b> <b>\$1000</b> One time payment No annual renewal One discounted ticket for most events Jazz at Two Free	<b>Individual</b> <b>\$75</b> Annual renewal 12 full months One discounted ticket for most events Jazz at Two 25% disc	<b>Musician</b> <b>\$40</b> Annual renewal 12 full months Working musicians One discounted ticket for most events Jazz at Two 25% disc
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From  
**Nik Walker**  
President of the Jazz Club



In an earlier message I expressed my optimism about how well the Sarasota Jazz Club(JCS) operates as a well-oiled machine when putting on one of the 120 varied events we do every year. The JCS had just kicked off our 2023-24 performance season with the 80's jazz great, Spyro Gyra. As soon as the dust had cleared, we immediately shifted into planning and budgeting mode for the Annual Jazz Festival taking place March 17 – 23 2024. The festival provides a portion of our annual operating revenues. Since I've been on the JCS Board of Directors we've staged the festival in three different locations. 2022 saw an outdoor Festival at Benderson Park. 2023 was presented in the Circus Arts Conservatory tent. The 2024 Festival is scheduled for the Sarasota Municipal Auditorium. It is a tribute to the Jazz Club of Sarasota Board of Directors and volunteers to successfully plan and execute the Festival in three different places with different physical characteristics. During this time the Sarasota Jazz Festival has grown into one of the most well-known straight ahead Jazz festivals in the country. We enjoy reciprocal ad programs with jazz clubs as far away as Vail, CO.

Earlier this year we were informed by our landlord that the building that houses our office and storage space was being sold and we would have to vacate at some point in the Spring of 2024. This immediately placed locating a new office and storage space a top priority.

Relocating our base involves designing, implementing, and executing a capital campaign. This is in addition to raising funds through our normal channels such as sponsorships, grants, and outright donations. Our long-term goal is to have our own facility that houses administrative and marketing offices, practice rooms and our very own 170 -200 seat performance facility.

The way forward is a complex set of ideals and actions that all lead to the successful attainment of our primary goal -The preservation and dissemination of America's original art form – JAZZ.

Very truly yours,

Nik Walker, President







**HIGH SCHOOL  
JAZZ  
FESTIVAL**

The annual High School Jazz Band Festival will take place on Saturday, February 3, 2024, at Riverview High Performing Arts Auditorium, beginning at 10:00 am. The event is open to all schools in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte and DeSoto counties. Each participating band will perform 3 selections of their choice. The music covers all big band styles, including swing, funk, Latin and rock. Some bands will include a vocalist as well. Audiences can expect to hear an amazing variety of jazz styles and improvised solos on all instruments. The festival is open and free to the public, so we are enthusiastically inviting any and all to come and enjoy the music. In addition to hearing great jazz, you will be supporting the youth of our community, which is one of the primary missions of the Jazz Club of Sarasota. Attendees may come and go as they please between 10:00 am and the conclusion later in the afternoon.

Each band will receive written evaluations by a board of three experienced adjudicators, including David DeWitt, retired band director from Buffalo, New York, and Owen Bradley, retired band director from North Port High School. Each band will also receive hands-on recommendations and rehearsal at a brief post-performance clinic. Our clinicians will be Pete BarenBregge, former director of the Airmen of Note, and Greg Neilsen, retired band director at Booker Middle School.

The band judged to be best over-all will receive an invitation to perform on March 17<sup>th</sup> for the opening "Jazz in the Park" concert, which kicks off the Club's "Sarasota Jazz Festival" week. All participating bands will receive a cash donation from the Club.

As of press time, we expect bands from Booker, Riverview, Parrish, Braden River, and Pine View High Schools, and several others, as well. We sincerely encourage all of our Jazz Club members and friends to come out and support our youth musicians on February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Riverview HS Center for Performing Arts, 1 Ram Way, Sarasota (intersection of Proctor Road and Lords Ave)**

**JAZZ  
TROLLEY & PUB  
CRAWL**

**March 19, 2024**

**One Ticket Gets You**  
10 Bands • 10 Venues • 5 Trolleys ..... A Great time!

**Downtown SARASOTA**  
**Music 5:30 - 9:30 pm**

**\*Tickets: \$20 JCM / \$25 NM / \$30 day of event**  
\*plus processing fees

**online: [www.sarasotajazzfestival.com](http://www.sarasotajazzfestival.com)**  
Online Sales end at 1 pm day of event.

*Ride the trolley 5:00 - 10:00*

**Joy of  
JAZZ  
2024**

**FREE CONCERTS**  
**GENTENNIAL PARK GAZEBO**  
**VENICE AVE, VENICE, FL**  
**2:00 - 4:00 PM**  
**JAN 14<sup>TH</sup>, FEB 18<sup>TH</sup>, MAR 10<sup>TH</sup>**

*Bring your sunscreen and beach chair!*

Joy of Jazz  
Sponsored by  
**GULF COAST  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**

**Sarasota  
JAZZ  
FESTIVAL**  
Sarasota Municipal Auditorium

*Join Us*

**Featuring**  
DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER  
WYCLIFFE GORDON  
JEFF HAMILTON  
CHUCHO VALDÉS

*plus*  
TERELL STAFFORD  
Music Director  
Grace Kelly  
Valerie Gillespie  
Houston Person

**For Tickets & Information**

**MARCH  
17-23  
2024**

**MEET THE STARS...**

**2024 JAZZ FESTIVAL**





Born in a family of musicians in Quivicán, Havana province, Cuba, on October 9, 1941, Dionisio Jesús "Chucho" Valdés Rodríguez, has distilled elements of the Afro-Cuban music tradition, jazz, classical music, and rock into an organic, deeply personal style.

His first teacher was his father, the pianist, composer, and bandleader Ramón "Bebo" Valdés. By the age of three, Mr. Valdés was already playing on the piano melodies he heard on the radio -- using both hands and on any key. He began taking lessons on piano, theory, and solfege at the age of five. He continued his formal musical education at the Conservatorio Municipal de Música de la Habana, from which he graduated at 14. A year later, Mr. Valdés formed his first jazz trio. In 1959, he debuted professionally with the band Sabor de Cuba. The ensemble, directed by his father, is widely considered one of the great orchestras in modern Cuban music.

Fittingly, Mr. Valdés made his early mark as the founder, pianist, and leading composer and arranger of another landmark ensemble: the small big band Irakere (1973-2005). With its audacious mix of Afro-Cuban ritual music, Cuban dance music, jazz, classical music, and rock, Irakere marked a before and after in Latin jazz. Irakere's self-titled debut recording in the United States won a Grammy as Best Latin Recording in 1979.

While he remained with Irakere until 2005, Mr. Valdés launched a parallel career in 1998 both as a solo performer and a small-group leader. It marked the beginning of an enormously fruitful period.

After leaving Irakere, Mr. Valdés won Grammys for *Juntos Para Siempre* (Calle 54, 2007), the duet recording with his father, Bebo; and, *Chucho's Steps* (Comanche, 2010), which introduced his new group, the Afro-Cuban Messengers.

But such success didn't mean forgetting past achievements. In 2015, Mr. Valdés celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Irakere, his iconic band, with a world tour. *Tribute to Irakere: Live at Marciac* (Jazz Village / Comanche Music), which captured a performance on that tour, won a Grammy for the Best Latin Jazz Album in 2016. He also won a Latin Grammy as Best Latin Jazz album for *Jazz Batá 2*, in which he revisited a revolutionary idea Mr. Valdés first recorded in 1972: a piano jazz trio featuring batá drums.

In 2022, Chucho Valdés won a Grammy and a Latin Grammy for *Mirror Mirror*, an album of duets by pianist and singer Eliane Elias with Mr. Valdés and the great late pianist Chick Corea. Visit <https://chucho-valdes.com/>

**Click to listen to a sample of his music.**



**Winner of seven GRAMMY® and five Latin GRAMMY® Awards, Mr. Valdés, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Latin Academy of Recording Arts & Science last year and was also inducted into the Latin Songwriters Hall of Fame.**

religion known as Santería.

Another significant recent development was the long-awaited reunion with his old friend and co-conspirator in many musical adventures, the extraordinary clarinetist, saxophonist, and composer Paquito D'Rivera who appeared in the 2023 Sarasota Jazz Festival. They have rarely played together for the past 40 years, and since their reunion, they have wasted no time. In January 2022, they recorded an album entitled *I Missed You Too*, and embarked on a tour with their Reunion Sextet that took them to Europe and the United States.

Cuban pianist, composer, and arranger **Chucho Valdés** is the most influential figure in modern Afro-Cuban jazz. In a career spanning more than 60 years, both as a solo artist and bandleader, Mr. Valdés has distilled elements of the Afro-Cuban music tradition, jazz, classical music, rock, and more, into a deeply personal style.

Mr. Valdés celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on October 9, 2021, completing *La Creación* (The Creation), a three-movement suite for a small ensemble, voices, and a big band. The piece, the most ambitious work of his career, tells the history of Creation according to the Regla de Ocha, the Afro-Cuban





# Dee Dee Bridgewater

**Whatever you choose to call her, one thing is clear: Dee Dee Bridgewater's wealth of unique talents and the depths of her cultural knowledge are largely unparalleled in the history of modern music. As the winner of three Grammy Awards, a Tony Award, an AUDELCO Award, an NEA Jazz Masters Award, and several other distinct honors from around the globe, she is unmistakably one of America's most celebrated living performers and one of the greatest vocalists in modern jazz history.**

Over the course of a multifaceted career spanning four decades, Grammy and Tony Award-winning Jazz giant Dee Dee Bridgewater has ascended to the upper echelon of vocalists, putting her unique spin on standards, as well as taking intrepid leaps of faith in re-envisioning jazz classics.

A multi-hyphenate polymath and fearless voyager, explorer, pioneer and keeper of tradition, the three-time Grammy-winner most recently won the Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album for *Eleanora Fagan (1915-1959): To Billie With Love From Dee Dee*. Bridgewater's career has always bridged musical genres. She earned her first professional experience as a member of the legendary Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band, and throughout the 70's she performed with such jazz notables as Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon and Dizzy Gillespie. After a foray into the pop world during the 1980s, she relocated to Paris and began to turn her attention back to Jazz.

Bridgewater began self-producing with her 1993 album *Keeping Tradition* (Polydor/Verve) and created DDB Records in 2006 when she signed with the Universal Music Group as a producer (Bridgewater produces all of her own CDs). Releasing a series of critically-acclaimed CD's, all but one, including her wildly successful double Grammy Award-winning tribute to Ella Fitzgerald, *Dear Ella* - have received Grammy nominations. Bridgewater also pursued a parallel career in musical theater, winning a Tony Award for her role as "Glinda" in *The Wiz* in 1975. Having recently completed a run as the lead role of Billie Holiday in the off-Broadway production of *Lady Day*, her other theatrical credits include *Sophisticated Ladies*, *Black Ballad*, *Carmen*, *Cabaret* and the Off-Broadway and West End Productions of *Lady Day*, for which Bridgewater received the British Laurence Olivier Nomination for Best Actress in a Musical. She also served as the namesake host of the long-running syndicated NPR radio program *JazzSet* with Dee Dee Bridgewater, produced by Becca Puliam for WBGO.

As a Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Bridgewater continues to appeal for international solidarity to finance global grassroots projects in the fight against world hunger. In April 2017, she was the recipient of an NEA Jazz Masters Fellows Award with honors bestowed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In December 2017, Bridgewater was presented with the ASCAP Foundation Champions award acknowledging her charitable contributions.

2020 found Dee Dee hosting the first virtual NEA Jazz Masters Virtual Tribute Concert. Following the success of the event, in 2021, she again hosted the 2021 Jazz Masters Virtual Tribute Concert, this time alongside venerable actor Delroy Lindo. In 2022, Lindo again joined Bridgewater to host the inaugural Jazz Music Awards. In 2023, Bridgewater oversaw the 4<sup>th</sup> year of The Woodshed Network program and can be found touring worldwide with her Dee Dee Bridgewater Big Band, Quartet, and in duo with Grammy-winning pianist Bill Charlap. Visit <https://www.deedeebridgewater.com/>

**Click to listen to a sample of her music.**







**M**usical ambassador and interpreter of America's music, Wycliffe Gordon experiences an impressive career touring the world performing hard-swinging, straight-ahead jazz receiving great acclaim from audiences and critics alike. His unmatched modern mastery of the plunger mute and his exceptional technique and signature sound, has solidified Gordon a place in musical history known as one of the top trombonists of his generation.

Last year, Jazz Journalists Association named him 2022 "Trombonist of the Year" for the record-breaking 15<sup>th</sup> time, and he's topped Downbeat Critics Poll for "Best Trombone" for an unprecedented six times (2020, 2018, 2016, 2014, 2013 & 2012). Recent awards include the "Louie Award", the International Trombone Award and the Satchmo Award, among others. He can be heard on hundreds of recordings, soundtracks, live DVD's and documentaries, and has an extensive catalog of original compositions that span the various timbres of jazz and chamber music. His arrangement of the theme song to NPR's "All Things Considered" is heard daily across the globe.

In addition to a successful solo career, Gordon tours regularly leading the International All Stars performing at festivals and performing arts centers worldwide. Gordon is also one of America's most persuasive and committed music educators and is highly sought after as a clinician and guest speaker.

Wycliffe Gordon is a Yamaha Performing Artist and has his own line of Wycliffe Gordon Pro Signature Mouthpieces by Pickett Brass. Visit [www.wycliffegordon.com](http://www.wycliffegordon.com).

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**Click to listen to a sample of his music.**





# Steve Kovalcheck

Guitarist/composer/educator Steve has a diverse musical background. Hailing from Nashville, Tennessee, Kovalcheck grew up in a rich musical environment. While his roots are in hard rock, he became interested in jazz in his late teens, and has gone on to work with well known artists including Jeff Hamilton, Joey DeFrancesco, Terrell Stafford, Grammy Award winner Howard Levy, Jeff Coffin, Pat Bianchi, Lewis Nash, Danny Gottlieb, Adam Nussbaum, Chris Potter, Nicholas Payton, and Ingrid Jensen, to name a few. Outside of the jazz world, Kovalcheck has worked with artists and producers including Robinella and the C.C. String Band, Carrie Rodriguez, Tommy Sims, Charles "Wigg" Walker, Russ Titelman, Don Williams, and many others. While Kovalcheck's main focus has been on jazz guitar and jazz education, he maintains an active involvement in rock, blues, funk, country, and bluegrass styles on the guitar. Visit <https://www.kovalcheckmusic.com/>.



Jeff Hamilton



# Akiko Tsuruga

Raised in Osaka, Japan, this talented musician began studying the organ at the age of three, at the famed Yamaha Music School. After discovering her passion for jazz very early on in her musical journey, Akiko launched her career immediately after graduating from the Osaka College of Music.

She's "Sweet and Funky," she's "Cute and Bad".  
A Composer. A Performer extraordinaire.  
The legendary Dr. Lonnie Smith describes her this way: "Akiko's playing is like watching a flower blooming, a bird spreading her wings in the music world. Akiko is here to stay."

Akiko has ten albums as a leader to her credit both the U.S. and Japan. Her debut album in the U.S., "Sweet and Funky", was selected as a "Best album of 2007" in DOWNBEAT Magazine. Her albums have constantly placed in the top ten on the National Radio Jazz Chart. Akiko also received the "Swing Journal Rising Star Award" (Japan) in 2010, Hot House Magazine (NYC) Best Organist' in 2017, and the DOWNBEAT Magazine Critics Poll 2020 Rising Star Organ. Visit <https://www.akikojazz.com/>.

# Jeff Hamilton

Born in Richmond, Indiana, Jeff grew up listening to his parent's big band records and at the age of eight began playing drums along with Oscar Peterson records. He attended Indiana University and later studied with John Von Ohlen. Jeff was influenced by Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Mel Lewis, "Philly" Joe Jones and Shelly Manne.

In 1974, he got his first big break playing with the New Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. He then joined Lionel Hampton's Band until 1975 when he, along with bassist John Clayton, became members of the Monty Alexander Trio. He attained a childhood goal in 1977 when he joined Woody Herman and the Thundering Herd, with whom he made several recordings. In 1978, he was offered the position vacated by Shelly Manne in the L.A.4 with Ray Brown, Bud Shank and Laurindo Almeida. He recorded six records with the L.A.4, some of which featured his own arrangements and compositions. From 1983 to 1987, Jeff performed with Ella Fitzgerald, the Count Basie Orchestra,

Rosemary Clooney and Monty Alexander. Jeff began his association with the Ray Brown Trio in 1988 and left in March 1995 to concentrate on his own trio. From 1999-2001, the Clayton/Hamilton Jazz Orchestra was named the in-residence ensemble for the Hollywood Bowl Jazz series. The Los Angeles Jazz Society named Jeff and his musical partner, John Clayton, musicians of the year for 2006.

In addition to his many recordings with Ray Brown, Jeff has been on nearly 200 recordings with artists such as Natalie Cole, Diana Krall, Milt Jackson, Rosemary Clooney, Barbara Streisand, Mel Torme, John Pizzarelli, Benny Carter, Lalo Schifrin, George Shearing, Dr. John, Clark Terry, Gene Harris, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Scott Hamilton, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Keely Smith, Bill Holman, Herb Ellis, Barney Kessel and Mark Murphy. Jeff is a frequent guest of the WDR Big Band in Cologne, Germany. He also appeared in Natalie Cole's Great Performances PBS special, *Unforgettable* and an Oscar Peterson documentary, *Life In The Key Of Oscar*. Visit <https://hamiltonjazz.com/>.

Jeff has received rave reviews for his dynamic drumming. David Badham of Jazz Journal International stated in his review of the Clayton/Hamilton Jazz Orchestra's release, *Heart and Soul* (Capri): "This is one of the finest modern big band issues I've heard... This is undoubtedly due to Jeff Hamilton, a most driving and technically accomplished drummer."





**A**ccclaimed trumpet player **Terrell Stafford** is once again the musical director of the 2024 Sarasota Jazz Festival. Recognized as an incredibly gifted and versatile player, he combines a deep love of melody with his own brand of spirited and adventurous lyricism. Stafford's exceptionally expressive and well defined musical talent allows him to dance in and around the rich trumpet tradition of his predecessors while making his own inroads.

Since the mid-1990's, Stafford has performed with groups such as Benny Golson's Sextet, McCoy Tyner's Sextet, Kenny Barron Quintet, Frank Wess Quintet, Jimmy Heath Quintet and Big Band, Jon Faddis Jazz Orchestra, Carnegie Hall Jazz Band and Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Alumni Band. Stafford with the Hamilton-Clayton Jazz Orchestra, performed on Diana Krall's GRAMMY nominated *From this Moment On* (2006). John Clayton invited Stafford to perform with the Clayton Brothers Quintet and Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. Stafford is a member of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and they were awarded a GRAMMY in 2009 for Best Large Ensemble, *Live at the Village Vanguard*. Stafford can be heard on over 130 albums including his own, *BrotherLee Love*, Celebrating Lee Morgan, which received a 47<sup>th</sup> Annual NAACP Image Award nomination. The album *Between Two Worlds* released on September 8, 2023, is a musical odyssey that details an intimate map charting the terrain of Terrell Stafford's emotional and intellectual reflections.

Stafford is the Director of Jazz Studies and Chair of Instrumental Studies at Temple University, founder and band leader of the Terrell Stafford Quintet, and Managing and Artistic Director of the Jazz Orchestra of Philadelphia (JOP). Stafford is renowned in the jazz world as an educator, performer and leader and has received countless award nominations and accolades.

Terrell Stafford was born in Miami and raised in Chicago, Illinois and Silver Spring, Maryland. He received a Bachelor of Science in Music Education from the University of Maryland in 1988 and a Masters of Music from Rutgers University in 1993. Visit [terellstafford.com](http://terellstafford.com)

**Click to listen to a sample of his music.**

Terrell Stafford, acclaimed trumpet player based in New York, has been hailed as "one of the great players of our time, a fabulous trumpet player" by piano legend McCoy Tyner.





# Grace Kelly



Photo courtesy of Pasha Riger

An unequivocal musical prodigy, singer-saxophonist-songwriter-composer and band leader **Grace Kelly** has rocked the jazz world with sold-out concerts, 14 acclaimed albums and a resume that includes performing at the Hollywood Bowl as well as being part of the house band for "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" - all before reaching her mid-twenties. As of Oct 2022 she has become the youngest member of the Board of Trustees of Berklee College of Music.

**Kelly's** early career featured performances at Barack Obama's 2009 inauguration at age 16 and at age 14 as a soloist with the Boston Pops playing an original composition arranged for the legendary orchestra; she has since then played over 1000 shows as bandleader in 35 countries. Touted for her scorching saxophone stylings and purring vocals, Kelly has performed and recorded with renowned artists including Lin Manuel-Miranda, Dave Brubeck, Lee Konitz, Phil Woods, Huey Lewis, Harry Connick Jr., Gloria Estefan, Questlove, and Wynton Marsalis.

Kelly was named the winner of "Song of the Year" for her single "Feels Like Home" in the 2018 John Lennon Songwriting Contest, and has been named nine times consecutively in the Annual Downbeat Magazines Critics Poll "Rising Star Alto Saxophone" from the age of 17 in 2009 and winning the poll in 2017 (Youngest ever named to Downbeat critics poll in 2009.). She has also won multiple ASCAP Composer Awards, Boston Music Awards, and International Songwriting Awards. For more visit <https://www.gracekellymusic.com/>

Click to listen to a sample of her music.



# Valerie Gillespie

**Valerie Gillespie** is an adjunct faculty member at The University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida Southern College in Lakeland, and Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, FL. She earned her BFA from Carnegie Mellon with a major in Classical Saxophone and her MM in Jazz Saxophone from the University of South Florida.

Valerie has played with national icons including Chick Corea, Bobby McFerrin, Rosemary Clooney, George Burns, Ben Vereen, Natalie Cole, Joan Rivers, Diana Ross, Ray Charles, John Faddis, Steve Allen, Anthony Newly, Dionne Warwick, Michael Feinstein, and many more. Valerie has traveled with the Xavier Cugat Orchestra throughout the United States and Japan, and performs regularly with Chuck Owen and the Jazz Surge.

Additionally, she leads her own jazz group and has produced numerous CDs in which she plays all the saxophones, flutes, and clarinet, and sings as well. Her most recent jazz CD is entitled "Lush Life" which includes music by Chick Corea and Billy Strayhorn. She is also frequently the featured soloist with The Florida Orchestra and has performed at many jazz festivals including *The Suncoast Jazz Classic* and *The Clearwater Jazz Holiday*. Gillespie is performing in the festival with her **Ladies in Jazz Band**. For more visit <https://valeriegillespie.com/>.



# Houston Person



Photo courtesy of Gene Martin

With his robust sound and swinging style, tenor saxophonist **Houston Person** has kept the hard bop and organ-soaked soul-jazz traditions alive. Emerging from organist Johnny "Hammond" Smith's group, Person established his reputation as one of the Big Boss tenors in the Gene Ammons style with albums like 1968's *Blue Odyssey*, 1969's *Goodness!*, and 1970's *Person to Person!* He further embraced a funky, soulful vibe in the '70s with albums like 1972's *Broken Windows*, *Empty Hallways* and 1976's *Stolen Sweets*.

From the '80s onward, he balanced his love of groove-based R&B with more hard-swinging acoustic sessions, joining contemporaries like Ron Carter and Teddy Edwards, as well as younger players like Joey DeFrancesco and Christian McBride. He recorded extensively with singer Etta Jones and has remained a torchbearer for the big tenor sound, releasing warmly attenuated standards and soul-jazz dates like 2015's *Something Personal* and 2021's *Live in Paris*. Bio courtesy of Matt Collar.



# *A Note from John Pizzarelli*

## Sarasota 1980

My father, jazz guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and I had finished our first album of guitar duets in the spring of 1980.

I remember him telling me we were going to go to Sarasota where there was a man named Hal Davis who was starting a jazz society. I never really heard anything my father said after, "we're going to Sarasota" - I just knew we had a gig not knowing what was in store for me.

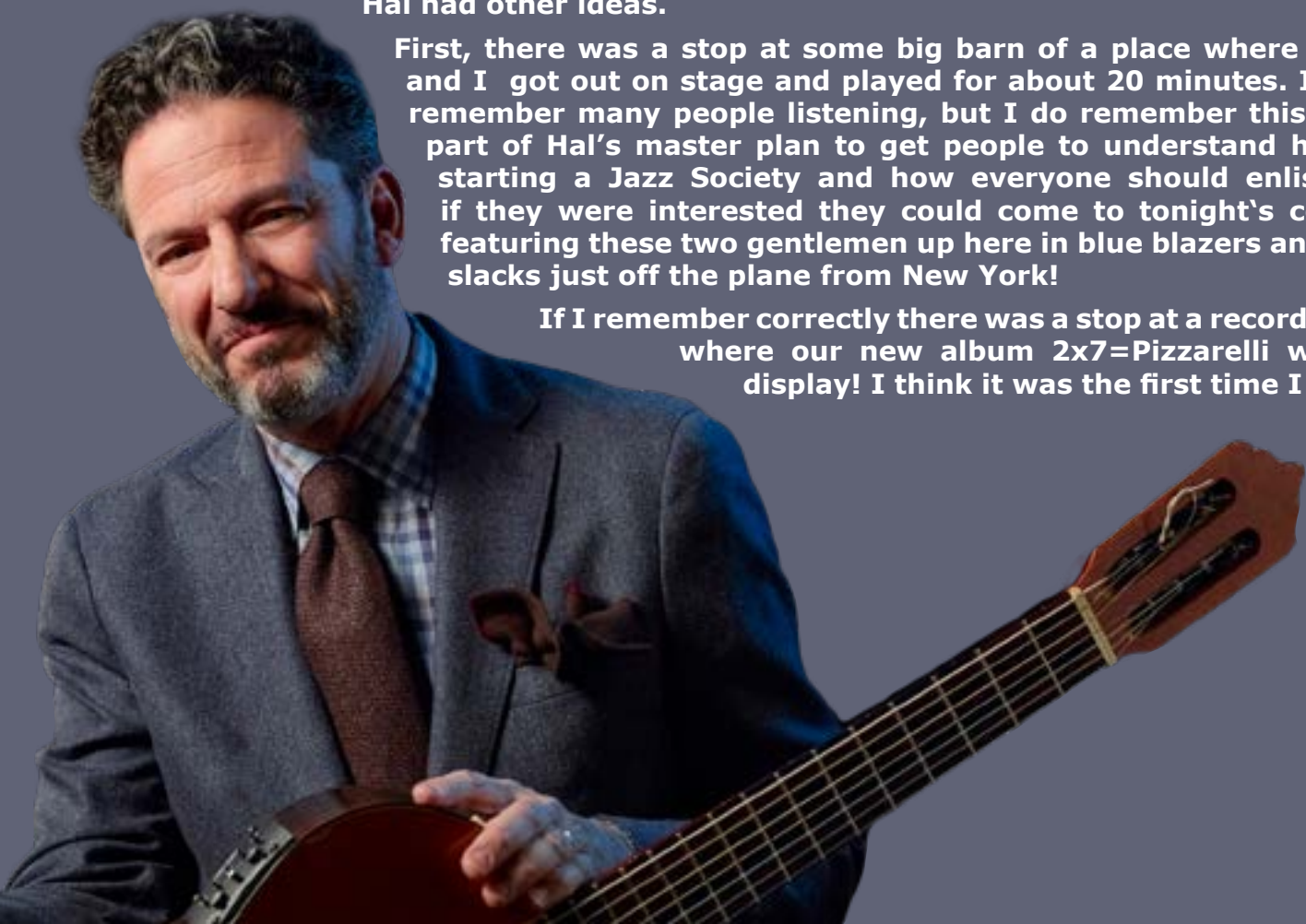
I recall arriving at the Sarasota airport, which was a few trailer homes linked together, and being met by Hal and his wife, Evelyn. Hal looked remarkably to me, like Jacob Javits, the former senator from New York.

I also recall my father's classical guitar being crushed up around the neck area and it was the only time I had to hold him back from fisticuffs with the agent from Eastern Airlines. Luckily for us, Bob Benedetto, my father's guitar maker would be at the concert that night and take the guitar home with him and repair it like new!

I figured Hal and Evelyn would snatch Bucky and I up and take us to the hotel where we would sleep for a while and get ready for that evening's concert, but Hal had other ideas.

First, there was a stop at some big barn of a place where Bucky and I got out on stage and played for about 20 minutes. I don't remember many people listening, but I do remember this being part of Hal's master plan to get people to understand he was starting a Jazz Society and how everyone should enlist and if they were interested they could come to tonight's concert featuring these two gentlemen up here in blue blazers and gray slacks just off the plane from New York!

If I remember correctly there was a stop at a record store, where our new album *2x7=Pizzarelli* was on display! I think it was the first time I saw it



Hal Davis

in a store. We were there, announcements were made that "Bucky Pizzarelli and his son, John are here to sign records" if you buy them. We may have sold two or three albums - but it certainly was fun.

Then I remember returning to Hal's place where we were staying for the night. It was a delightful lunch that Evelyn had set up for us. It was there that I got to talk to Hal and understand where he was coming from and all that he had already done in the promotion and publicity business. It was quite a story, especially Hal accompanying Benny Goodman on his trips to Asia, Brussels and Russia between 1956 and 1962.

It was during that lunch that Hal played his father's dance band album. I remember how proud he was of it. The display of all his albums was unique to me too. It's hard to exactly describe it, but the record covers were used as artwork. They weren't hidden underneath the hi-fi and I found this fascinating. It wasn't just the display of

the albums that was interesting, it was also the albums themselves, current guitarist Pat Metheny, upcoming saxophonist Scott Robinson, the King, Benny Goodman, and soundtracks to shows all next to each other.

I quickly began to realize that this was a man who was not just going to show favorites to what the music people would want to hear. He was going to stretch the envelope to bring new and upcoming jazz musicians and music to his community as only he could.

I remember our concert being, I believe, in the orchestra building and it was jammed. It was also during that concert that I saw the back of the neck of my father's guitar and it had been cracked too during travel, but would last through the concert. This was the time before carbon fiber cases would protect guitars from baggage handlers at airports. Bob Benedetto would have another guitar to take home with him that night.

But, Bucky was not so upset at that point about that or anything else. We were so thrilled with the evening that we had in Sarasota and the music that we got to play there. It turned out to be a great start for a jazz society that has lasted now 40 years.

I'll never forget Hal and Evelyn's hospitality and Hal's drive to get this idea of his going.

I was inspired by his vision and how he intended to see it through.



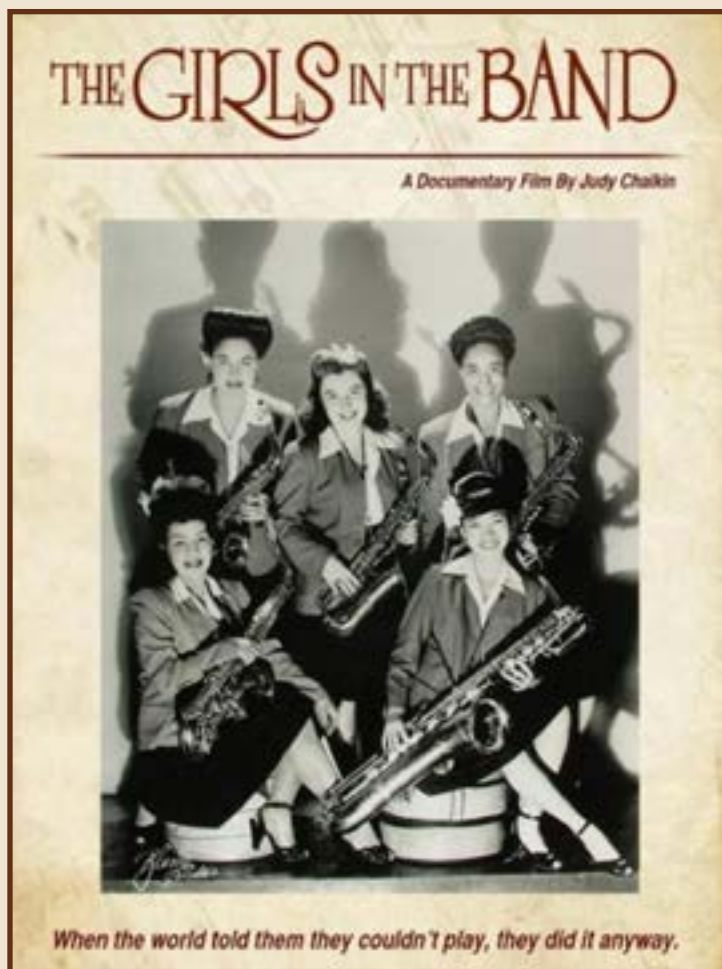
Bucky Pizzarelli



# Sarasota Jazz Festival

Presents

## THE GIRLS IN THE BAND



March is *Women's History Month* and the Jazz Club traces the history of the early women musicians in jazz with this award winning documentary *The Girls in the Band*, introduction and commentary by Valerie Gillespie. Ms. Gillespie is also performing in the festival with her **Ladies in Jazz Band**.

In the world of jazz, women have long been marginalized as singers or piano players. Little has ever been documented about the enormously talented female trumpet players, saxophonist and drummers who struggled for recognition but were cut off from any meaningful employment by men who didn't want women on their bandstands. This film traces the history of the all-girl bands and the struggles of the handful who broke through the male bastions, and brings us into the present day, where brilliantly gifted young women are going toe-to-toe with the finest jazz musicians of their day.

They wiggled, they jiggled, they wore low cut gowns and short shorts, they kowtowed to the club owners and smiled at the customers...and they did it all, just to play the music they loved. **THE GIRLS IN THE BAND** tells the poignant, untold stories of female jazz and big band instrumentalists and their fascinating, groundbreaking journeys from the late 30's to the present day. These incredibly talented women endured sexism, racism and diminished opportunities for decades,

yet continued to persevere, inspire and elevate their talents in a field that seldom welcomed them. Today, there is a new breed of gifted young women taking their rightful place in the world of jazz, which can no longer deny their talents.

Filled with interviews, timely photos and film clips, this movie is a wonderful trip through time, and a reminder that while we've come a "Long way baby", a woman's journey towards full acceptance as an equal member of the human race is far from over.

**The Girls in the Band will be featured on Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 9:00 am in Burns Court Cinema, Sarasota.**

**For tickets click**