

TO LOVE AND BE LOVED IN RETURN...



A Great Night In Harlem – May 14th, 2009 – at the Apollo. Photo by Elmar Lemes.

REPORT: GREAT NIGHT IN HARLEM 2009

Hello Wonderful People,

Thanks to YOU and your big hearts, we managed to raise **1.1 MILLION DOLLARS** on May 14th, 2009 at our 8th annual "A Great Night In Harlem" benefit concert. We cannot thank you enough for coming out and showing up. Despite these tough economic times you packed the house. Thank you for the work we all do together at the Jazz Foundation. We are truly a family.

There were unforgettable moments that night, starting in dark silence with the haunting lone voice of vocalist Francesco Pini singing "Nature Boy" from the balcony of the Apollo, with the cool bass lines of Bob Cranshaw. Next the mesmerizing piano madness of Eric Lewis (aka ELEW)...Alberta Adams, the 92-year-old blues Queen from Detroit taking us home...and who can forget when Dr. Frank Forte (the angel who started our program at Englewood Hospital which has treated 1,000 of our uninsured musicians for free!) took his guitar and joined Bucky Pizzarelli and Gene Bertoncini on stage and held his own! Dr. John surprised us with Deacon John (the breathtaking slide guitarist) as Irma Thomas rocked the house with "You Can Have My Husband But Please Don't Mess With My Man"...then Davell Crawford touched us deeply when he sang "Everything Must Change" as photos of those legends who passed this year faded in and out on screen. Stanley Jordan brought us all closer when he soloed on stage with a sweetness that was almost heart-breaking. Lou Reed surprised us with a screaming guitar version of "Romeo Had Juliette," and finally, Sweet Georgia Brown had the orchestra and both balconies on their feet

dancing, leaving us feeling the way the blues always leaves us feeling...so incredibly happy. Everyone on stage reminded us of why we have to keep the musicians and the music alive. In the world the way it is, we need them to heal us from the everyday worries of "life these days." We need moments to come together and escape the rat race long enough to remember what is important. And as the lyrics to "Nature Boy" say: "The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return." Special thanks to Michael Imperioli who kept the night going with his generous and wonderful MC-ing. And what a surprise to see his fellow Sopranos stand up in the audience and help encourage everyone to make a donation.

There was only one sad note that evening and that was not having our Saint Agnes Varis with us. **Agnes sent a message in her absence that night: She said, "Since I can't be there to stomp and sing with you, I am giving an extra \$100,000 so you have reason to stomp a little louder!"** For those of you



Jarrett Lilien

who have been asking, she is healing from her tough challenges. She knows how much the musicians care and appreciate all she does to make their lives, their homes, their purpose and their legacies possible. Dearest Agnes, so many people have expressed their concern and healing wishes for you. You were missed more than you can know. Our magnificent president, Jarrett Lilien accepted her award for her. **Speaking of Jarrett, he has been working overtime for the Jazz Foundation, tirelessly taking us to the next level by revamping our infrastructure, creating working board**

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THE BEST IS YET TO COME: A MOMENT FROM THE APOLLO

Our concert is known for its creative and rare performances that only happen on the stage of the Apollo at our Great Night In Harlem. This year we were all touched by a special performance by our treasured Board



Geoffrey Menin
& Tammi Brown

Member and event honoree, Geoffrey D. Menin, who surprised us all with his original composition called "The Best Is Yet To Come" written especially for the Jazz Foundation with

special recognition for Wendy Oxenhorn and all her hard work.

Tammi Brown flew in from L.A. to sing. Between her emotion-filled voice and Geoffrey's soulful piano, they brought tears to a moved audience. Tammi is an up and coming jazz vocalist with gospel roots. She has played with and/or recorded with Stanley Jordan, Eric Clapton and Spyro Gyra to name a few. Geoffrey has performed with the likes of Buddy Miles, Stanley Jordan, Odetta, Charlie Daniels and Keith Richards.

In the past 7 years, Geoffrey has never turned down a request from the Jazz Foundation to help a musician in need, and over the years he has worked generously with many of our greatest legends.

Geoffrey, from the bottom of our hearts and on behalf of all of the musicians, we salute you for your continued dedication and your tireless efforts.

**REPORT: GREAT NIGHT IN HARLEM 2009
(CONTINUED)**

committees, as well as actively pursuing our Players' Residence dream. We are grateful for all he is doing with time he doesn't have. We are so lucky to have him with us all these years.

These great legends have already worked all their lives, paid their dues night after night, and received so little in return for giving so much. They are the artists who paved the way for the musicians of today and it is because of their talent and



Lou Reed

dedication to their craft that we have over 70 years of amazing American music. With your help we can save them from eviction and homelessness by paying rents when they are ill or too old to work, or when tragedy strikes.

As more clubs close down and festivals lose sponsorship, many more musicians will be in serious crisis. But thanks to Saint Agnes and people like YOU, we will make sure that musicians in crisis will be gotten through their darkest hours, the same way their music got us through ours. In the past 9 years, we have never lost anyone to eviction or homelessness who came to us before they were evicted, and we'd like to be able to say that for another 9 years!

Please join us in our "\$20 for 20 Years" campaign. If only everyone who receives this newsletter gave \$20 and got 3 friends to donate \$20, we'd have \$500,000 toward our Emergency Housing Fund to insure that everyone who comes to us in crisis will be saved from eviction and homelessness. (See info on back page of this newsletter to participate.)

This year's Great Night In Harlem was truly "life-giving", as many of you said. It was a very full experience that brought us together for such a beautiful purpose: To celebrate the glorious people who make this music by having them make it for an audience of the very people who make it possible for them to get help when crisis strikes. It's a win-win event.

Thank you – each and every one of you. Without you, this event would never happen. To those who bought tickets or tables, we love you dearly and appreciate all you give, through good times and bad. We are family and together we are saving jazz and blues, one musician at a time.

We hope to see you soon and until then we wish that your life be as sweet as Stanley Jordan's sound and that love overwhelm you like Lou Reed's electric guitar.

Yours in service,

Wendy

Wendy Oxenhorn, Executive Director,
Jazz Foundation of America

NEW YORK TIMES FEATURE ON TERENCE CONLEY

Those of you who were at our last Apollo concert remember the very touching moment when the Conley Family came out on stage to give testimony to the life-saving work of the Jazz Foundation. Three days later, on May 17th, the New York Times featured a piece called "A Long Road Back, but Not a Lonely One" about their story.

Terence Conley, former pianist for the Count Basie Orchestra, had taken a job as a FedEx driver last year to earn some extra money and keep food on the table for his family, since decent-paying jazz gigs had been disappearing even before the recession. On Sept. 29th, 2008, the day before he was to interview for a job teaching piano at Lincoln Center, he was driving his FedEx truck in midtown Manhattan when he crashed into the back of a bus that he says had stopped abruptly. He sustained major head injuries and was in a coma for more than a month while doctors were trying to reduce swelling and stop the bleeding on his brain.

The doctors didn't know if or when he was going to wake up and were saying that, either way, he would eventually be sent to a nursing home. But Mrs. Conley insisted her husband be sent to Mount Sinai Hospital so he could receive therapy. Her request was granted and in the following months he made incredible progress. He left the hospital on Jan. 13th and went home to his small apartment in Prospect-Lefferts Gardens, Brooklyn, with his wife and children: Brandon, 16, Joralysa, 11, and Christopher, 7. A few weeks later, he began feeling well enough to sit and play at his own piano.

Thanks to our Jarrett Lilien Emergency Housing Fund, which Saint Agnes saved with a donation of \$150,000, JFA has been able to help

the Conleys pay roughly \$9,000 in rent and utilities all these months since September '08. On April 19th, we threw Terence a welcome-back party that brought together many of the musicians he had performed with at jazz clubs in New York over the past 20 years, including pianist Barry Harris and saxophonist Branford Marsalis. JFA has also come up with a plan to get Terence back to performing through our Agnes Varis Jazz In The Schools program as a dignified way of



Terence Conley and family on stage at the Apollo

helping him pay his bills.

On the day of the New York Times interview, which took place here at the Jazz Foundation just a week before the Great Night In Harlem, Conley played "Ruby, My Dear" which his wife said is "one of the hardest to play in all of jazz." It has been a slow journey in returning to his old self, but isn't it amazing that he is still able to tackle the difficult chords of that jazz tune?

We send healing thoughts to Terence, his amazing wife, and brilliant children who they have home-schooled together all these years and who have now been called upon to pull together and pull Daddy through. They are in our prayers each day.

SWEET GEORGIA BROWN TAKES MONTREUX BY STORM

Our very own Sweet Georgia Brown had the opportunity of a lifetime when she was invited to play the Montreux Jazz Festival and make her international debut at the age of 62. Just six years ago, she lost her apartment due to a fire in the building and had nowhere to go with her disabled granddaughter and was forced to sleep in Penn Station. When the Jazz Foundation found out, they got her housing immediately, and Executive Director Wendy Oxenhorn made it her mission to showcase Georgia in New York to producer Quincy



Jones and Montreux Jazz Festival founder Claude Nobs.

Georgia has been singing and dancing since the age of three and won Amateur Night at the Apollo at age 15. After decades of paying dues in the music business, Georgia was finally featured at Montreux, the most prestigious festival in Europe, this summer. This amazing real deal Harlem blues queen won the night's first standing ovation and stole the thunder from headliner B.B. King!!!! Georgia says, "I never thought in a million years I would be singing with BB King. This is a dream come true for me."

And the rest is history-in-the-making... She has just been asked to headline in Italy this summer at a festival in Rome that will dedicate a week to the Jazz Foundation!

We're so proud of you, Georgia!

THE WORKS OF "SAINT" AGNES VARIS

Here are just a few of the wonders made possible thanks to the generosity of our very own "Saint" Agnes Varis, Vice-Chairwoman of the Jazz Foundation...

Agnes Varis Jazz & Blues In The Schools Program

The Agnes Varis Jazz & Blues in the Schools program creates performance opportunities for elder masters of jazz and blues for whom the phone hardly rings anymore, yet who still have so much to give. Hardworking, self-sufficient musicians who used to play six nights a week now have little or no options, due to age, illness and lack of work. These opportunities give them a dignified way to pay their own rent. Venues include inner city public schools,



Agnes Varis and Wendy Oxenhorn

childrens' hospitals, and nursing homes who host these free performances. Since Hurricane Katrina, the program has created over 9,000 performance opportunities around the country. Approximately 350 musicians in need are performing in 14 states, and this program has introduced live jazz and blues to over 40,000 public school children. Kids end up dancing and

asking for autographs and musicians get the appreciation they deserve and feel needed again in the world.

Jazz In The Schools Goes To Rock Camp

Our beloved Beverly "Guitar" Watkins, age 70, who thrilled us at the Apollo when she played her electric guitar behind her head, came back to NYC this summer through our Jazz In The Schools program and made a special appearance at the Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls. Her electrifying lunchtime performance blew the minds of 90 young girls, ages 8 to 18, who had come together for a week-long summer camp where they learn to play instruments, form bands, write songs and generally rock out. The girls hung on her every word at the Q&A session afterward and when she sat in as special guest in the "History of Women Who Rock" and "Women In Music Business Panel" workshops. It was thrilling to watch a living legend passing on her legacy to young musicians-in-the-making and to see Agnes' Jazz in the Schools program in action, exposing younger generations to jazz and blues music and history.

Players' Residence In The Making

Building a residence for elderly musicians has been a long-term dream for the Jazz Foundation. Now, thanks again to the generosity of Agnes Varis and the efforts of our newly founded Housing Committee, we are coming closer to turning it into a reality. We are currently working with two organizations that specialize in affordable housing to create two residences, one in Harlem and one in Brooklyn. These apartments would create a community that would allow them to have a sense of family and watch over each other, instead of remaining isolated and alone in dilapidated 5 floor walk-ups. Stay tuned for developments as things unfold.



Beverly "Guitar" Watkins at Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Richard Parsons

of a Players' Residence and to support us in so many ways.



William Douglass

appreciate both you, Dick, Jarrett and Agnes and all the board members who have made the miracles possible.

RALPH LAUREN PARTNERSHIP

Doctors from the Ralph Lauren Center for Cancer Care and Prevention were invited to this year's Apollo event and were so inspired by the Englewood Hospital partnership that they reached out to us about a new partnership which enables the Jazz Foundation's musician clients to receive various types of cancer screening - for free. And if there is a positive finding, the doctors will work with the patient and establish a protocol of care. The Center, made possible by a generous gift from the Polo Ralph Lauren Corporation, is a partnership between Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and North General Hospital. Located in East Harlem, New York, the Center features a warm, caring environment where guests can count on personalized attention and free care!

JAZZ @ WHOLE FOODS

In late August, a new Whole Foods opened on 97th Street and Columbus Avenue, a corner steeped in jazz heritage. In honor of its former resident, Mikell's Jazz Club, Whole Foods began hosting a free Jazz Legends Series every Friday from 6:00 to 8:00pm. JFA provides the legends, including musicians who used to gig at Mikell's. So far, performers have included the Danny Mixon Trio, Joey "Hot Lips" Morant, Cecil Morgan Blues Band, Bill Saxton, and Edy Martinez. Upcoming performers include Sugar Hill Quartet on 10/23 and Sterling Sax on 10/30. (Please note: There will be no performances in November or December but schedule will resume in January.) The event has also featured Sugar Hill Beer tastings and the Harlem Historical Society sharing stories from Mikell's. Special thanks to Celeste Beatty of Harlem Brewing Company for helping make this partnership possible.

ON ASKING FOR ASSISTANCE...

There are so many musicians whose circumstances become so grave that they have no choice but to ask for help. It's never easy for them to do this but faced with homelessness, illness, or the need to keep a roof over their head, they find themselves making the call.

We have a very hard task in trying to make this process easier. We must tread lightly with someone's pride and not let them slip through our fingers and fall deeper into worsening situations. It is not uncommon for us to hear that someone had a serious illness, was unable to make their gigs, and is now 2 months behind in rent and about to be evicted. We say, "Why didn't you call us?" They say, "Because I figured you have someone worse off than me who needs the money more..." Or we often hear "I've always paid my own way. I never had to ask for money. It's so hard at this stage of the game to have nowhere to turn. I'm so embarrassed but I'm so grateful.

How do we get someone to be open to help when they are too proud to

even call? We call them! Then we tell them about our own difficult times when we had to ask for help, and we remind them all their fellow musicians are experiencing the same thing and to prove it, we let them know we had 1,600 cases this year and everyone who let us help them is feeling secure again. We tell them: "Now when you hear that one of your musician friends is having a hard time, you can say, 'Call the Jazz Foundation.'" (That's how we have grown from 35 musicians a year to helping hundreds across the country.) The circle closes as each case becomes part of our community and part of the process of helping others.

So we wanted to take this moment to remind you that YOU are the ones helping us help THEM! Without you, we would lose them to homelessness, eviction, hunger, sickness and, in many cases, even dying alone never knowing that someone cared. Thank you all for what you make possible each day. You are always in our thoughts and are appreciated more than you will ever know.

— Alisa Halfkin, JFA Case Worker

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Join the Jazz Foundation in our "\$20 for 20" Fundraising Campaign

The Jazz Foundation is celebrating 20 years of "saving jazz and blues, one musician at a time." Please make your contribution of \$20 (or any multiple of \$20 you can afford!) payable to: **Jazz Foundation of America 322 West 48th St., 6th Floor, New York, NY 10036 (Tel: 212-245-3999) or donate online at www.jazzfoundation.org**. If everyone who receives this newsletter gives just \$20 and gets 3 friends to donate \$20, we'll have enough to keep our Emergency Housing Fund going for another year and insure that everyone who comes to us in crisis will be saved from eviction and homelessness.

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