

## "Keeping Jazz Alive"



Jan '22

## JJS JAZZ NOTES



Happy belated New Year to one and all. It seems like in a flash, we transitioned from 2021 to 2022. The last time we communicated, we were preparing for our Annual Wayne Barlow Scholarship Gala, and now it

is in our rearview mirror. In December, we had the pleasure of gathering in person at the DoubleTree Hotel to recognize our two scholarship recipients, Ethan Halligan, and Antonio Ripoll Vergara, while we listened and danced to the sounds of the Elisha Parris Band.

While this event was a success, I would be remiss if I did not give a shout-out to those who made this dream a reality. At the door, Terrie McSween, Iris Hines, Casandra Edwards, and Rainy Williams greeted our guests and made sure they received a copy of our Journal. A special thanks goes out to Stan Skinner for coordinating our cocktail hour music and Scholarship recipients' musical presentation. As the doors opened, Lynn Riley, Yvette Cooper, Darrin Bauford, Nick Williams, Kevin Kelly, Conrad Folk, Paul Young and Al Smith escorted our guests to their tables. Once seated, Flora Peterson officially kicked-off our event with a heartfelt prayer. Ava Simmons, one of our three MCs of the evening, welcomed our guests and acknowledged our Founder, Na'im Rashid, and Paula Barlow, the wife of our co-founder, Wayne Barlow. Throughout the night, Dianne Smith led our raffle team, consisting of Blondell Sisco, Cynthia Latham, Debra Brown, Millie Small, Liz Bertty, Al Spencer, Deborah Melvin, Mike Hodges,

and Roselind Folk, who circled the room to make sure that everyone who wanted a raffle ticket, got one.

As MC Shahid Siddiqui took the helm at the podium, Kevin Kelly captured the festivities of the day and broadcasted our event, live on social media. I have said many times, "Teamwork Makes the Dream Work" and this event was a prime example of "Teamwork" in action. Please join me in saluting some of the Super Stars of JJS... **THANK YOU Team!!!** If I missed anyone who may have been a part of our team, Please Forgive Me. If brought to my attention, I promise to give them a special shout-out at our next meeting.

Due to the continuing threats posed by Enemy #1 – COVID-19 and its various strands, we were forced to have our 1<sup>st</sup> Monthly Meeting of 2022 via Zoom. As soon as it is safe to venture out and congregate again, we will. We have been advised by member David Sanders that the doors of our meeting space at NAS-JAX will be open and ready to receive us once again. Thank You, Dave.

Our organization consists of many Committees, and an effective Committee requires committed leadership. At our last monthly meeting we asked for volunteers to join and help lead some of our Committees. I am happy to say that several people have responded to our call. Please join me in welcoming Flora Peterson who has agreed to chair our Membership Committee. This committee is a cornerstone of our organization, and we applaud Flora for stepping up to serve. Another cornerstone is the Wayne Barlow Scholarship Committee. This committee is responsible for setting the stage to recognize our annual scholarship recipients. Please join me in welcoming Theresa Warren, an experienced event planner, who has agreed to lead the charge in making our next event, which will be held on October 8<sup>th</sup> at the University of North Florida, a memorable one. You will be hearing more about this event, at our next Membership Meeting... please hold the date.

There is still a need to expand our committees and there is plenty of space for volunteers. If you are interested in serving in any capacity, please contact our Secretary, Rainy Williams, at [jacksonvillejazzsociety@gmail.com](mailto:jacksonvillejazzsociety@gmail.com), or me, at [jj.s.president@gmail.com](mailto:jj.s.president@gmail.com), we would love to hear from you.

Many things are in the works, and you can expect a personal telephone call, an email, or a text message from one of our various committee members inviting you to share your time and expertise to help make our 2022 activities memorable. As soon as it is safe to gather in groups again, we will. For now, please stay safe and I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

*Michael Bertly*  
President

## Education Committee

### "Jazz On Point" with **Stan Skinner**



**DeAndre Lettsome**

The time to step out in front has arrived for saxophonist DeAndre Lettsome. The Jacksonville, Florida native arrives at the spotlight with singular style and dulcet tone on his eponymous debut album that highlights a new voice with meaningful intent. Having spent years as the go-to sideman for several North Florida ensembles, DeAndre is poised to make his home at center stage.

The young composer leaned into the saxophone at an early age when his elementary school music teacher saw promise. The eight-year-old Lettsome was offered the choice between the flute and the

alto sax. His love affair with the alto sax has been continuous and ever evolving.

DeAndre attended the storied Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in his native Jacksonville. From there, he completed his undergraduate degree at Jacksonville University and studied alongside John Ricci. His Master's Degree was completed at the University of North Florida under the guidance of Todd Delguidice.

In 2017, DeAndre was selected for the highly competitive Betty Carter Jazz Ahead residency in Washington, D.C., which led to performing alongside Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra, the Marcus Printup Quintet, and the O'Jays.

DeAndre is a member of the Urban Intellectuals, John Lumpkin and the Covenant, and The Chris Thomas Band. He is a founding member of the Let's Ride Brass Band and has served as Assistant Professor and Assistant Band Director at the well-respected HBCU, Edward Waters College.

With his debut, DeAndre finds comfort as a bandleader and as an artist. He offers a unique voice to the world through his music at this point in his journey. "This is me pushing myself beyond what I feel is my comfort zone of being in the background of other people's projects, hustles, and dreams. It's my way of finding myself as an artist."

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**Scott Aaron** – Top row in sun glasses  
**Stan Skinner** – Bottom right holding Ft. Bragg sign

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*Below is an article from JAZZIZ*

## The Man, The Myth, The Legend

Jazz, obviously, did not originate from one single personality, yet Buddy Bolden seems to have been accepted as the first legend of jazz. Indeed, in his *Encyclopedia of Jazz*, Leonard Feather writes: "Since his career predated the making of commercial records, there is nothing of him but legend." That legend was first told via the recollections of New Orleans-style music pioneers, such as King Oliver and Bunk Johnson, who mentored Louis Armstrong and played in Bolden's bands during the late 1800s.

Charles "Buddy" Bolden, an African-American bandleader called "the first man of jazz" by historian Donald M Marquis, was a Cornet player and bandleader.

He is reportedly the first to "rag the blues" for dancing and thus credited as the founder of "jass," later to be called jazz, he was the first player to pursue an improvisational style.

Charles "Buddy" Bolden's history has always been tenuous. To the casual music listener of today, his name may mean nothing.

According to Marquis, in his book, "In Search of Buddy Bolden," Bolden was born on Sept. 6, 1877 in New Orleans, just over a decade after the end of the Civil War and shortly after the federal government pulled the plug on Reconstruction, setting the stage for the Jim Crow era.

Much is unknown about his life, however, and it has been difficult for jazz historians to separate myth from reality. Many of the Bolden legends comes from oral accounts passed down decades after his death. Given the shortage of primary-source documents and other reliable evidence, preposterous myths and ridiculous exaggerations about the jazz pioneer had spread and entered the public consciousness.

One such story has Bolden ascending a hot-air balloon at Lincoln Park and parachuting back to earth, playing his cornet during the descent.

"Here in South Florida, we're somewhat spoiled when it comes to Latin music. As the Gateway to the Americas, our region has long attracted musicians from Latin America and the Caribbean, from the mambo craze of the 1940s and '50s to the Latin-pop explosion spearheaded by Gloria Estefan and the Miami Sound Machine in the '80s. Artists such as Tito Puente and Celia Cruz found adoring audiences here, the latter of whom, following her death in 2003, had her body brought to Miami for a public viewing before she was buried in New York City. Quite naturally, due to our proximity to the island 90 miles due south, Cubans — many of them forced into exile by the Castro regime — have contributed enormously to the cultural tapestry of our area. Hard-won triumphs are woven into the stories of South Florida-based Cuban pianists Chucho Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba, both of

whom are profiled in this issue. Valdés' father, pioneering Cuban jazz pianist Bebo Valdés, lived in exile in Sweden for decades, leaving behind a family and a home he loved dearly. Nearly 20 years would pass before he had the opportunity to reunite with Chucho, when the younger Valdés' band Irakere performed in New York. Their moving reunion is chronicled in a chapter from an unpublished memoir written by Chucho Valdés with former JAZZIZ editor Fernando González. González also spoke to the maestro, who recently turned 80, about a new work he was about to premiere at the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami and other cities around the world. Rubalcaba's journey was equally fraught. In Cuba, jazz was all but forbidden, deemed the music of the "enemy" (i.e., the United States). And yet, Rubalcaba's talents would not be denied, as he caught the ears of American jazz giants Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Haden, who endeavored to bring him to the U.S. despite political blowback from both countries. The pianist finally managed to wrangle a work visa and exhilarated audiences in the States, even as Cuban exiles protested outside his concerts in the early '90s. Eventually, the furor died down and Rubalcaba, a Grammy winner and critical favorite, put down roots in South Florida, raising three kids in suburban Coral Springs. In this issue's Traditions column, Rubalcaba talks about reuniting with longtime friends and champions, Ron Carter and Jack DeJohnette, with whom he recently released a trio album. Since its inception, jazz has embraced what Jelly Roll Morton called "the Spanish tinge," which was particularly pronounced in New Orleans. A favorite son of the Crescent City, Wynton Marsalis has long realized the importance of Latin music in the fabric of jazz, and he leans on bassist Carlos Henriquez to make sure the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra plays it correctly. Henriquez, also profiled in this issue, shows love for his Nuyorican upbringing on his recent album, *The South Bronx Story*. And, expanding our reach into South America, Peruvian vocal legend Susana Baca discusses the cultural and political passions fueling her latest recording, *Palabras Urgentes*. A multifarious mural comprising many cultures and colors, jazz is difficult to imagine without the signature contributions of Spanish-speaking peoples. Nor would we want to."

## **"Extensions of Congo Square"** **Na'im Rashid**



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**"Jazz's Lost Star"**

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We, the Jacksonville Jazz Society, annually host our Wayne Barlow Scholarship Fundraiser Event, to celebrate our awardees and memorialize our late co-founder Wayne Barlow. His vision along with co-founder Na'im Rashid, is the mission and motivation that contributes to the future and continuance of Jazz in Jacksonville and the World. December 4, 2021 we had a spectacular event at the Double Tree Hotel with more than 300 people in attendance. The room was full of Lovers of Jazz, Jazz Musicians, and Jazz enthusiasts.

We thank the Wayne Barlow Family, who still maintains communication and support for our organization and annually attends this festive event. Mrs. Barlow is an active member and staunch supporter ensuring Wayne's dream is continued. This year JJS commemorated the event with a complimentary Journal that many describe as a mini phone book but more importantly promotes our members, supporters and many entrepreneurs.

A great shout out to our featured artist and bandleader, Elisha Atlas Parris, a Grammy-nominated, Jacksonville-based keyboardist and composer. He and the Band were great!



And again, congratulations to our Scholarship Awardees: Trombonist Ethan Halligan, a Freshman at UNF and Saxophonist Antonio Vergara, a Junior at UNF. We look forward to their future success and know we played a part in their Jazz Artist climb. Congratulations!



Thank you to the Board Members and Committees: Sponsorship and Fundraising, Membership, Communications, Education and Wayne Barlow Scholarship teams.

And a special thanks to you, our members, supporters and friends, for your tireless support in the success of this and all events. Together, we continue the JJS motto...**"Keeping Jazz Alive!"**