

# EARSHOT JAZZ

A Mirror and Focus for the Jazz Community

December 2020 Vol. 36, No. 12

Seattle, Washington



**Overton Berry (1936-2020)**

Photo by Daniel Sheehan

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# Kindness and Gratitude

What a decade! As we come to the final month of this incredible year, we want to thank you all for the encouragement, kindness and support that you've shown us (and each other) through these unparalleled, and mostly difficult times.

December is often a metaphor for one thing ending, so that something else can begin. We wish! Instead, this moment often feels as though we're locked in some kind of limbo, cautiously peering around the corner of each new day; at worst it's a downward spiral, and at best it's, well, not worse. Survival is the new accomplishment.

Like you, the Earshot Jazz organization has faced the challenges, made necessary adjustments, taken a hard look at our core beliefs, and applied our remaining resources to the work in front of us. We've chosen to focus on what we *can* do for this community. We've redoubled our commitment to this monthly magazine, sought new ways to support artists, committed to a series of livestream concerts, and served up a serious jazz festival at its established time. The support you've shown for these programs has been essential. Thank you.

With this December issue of *Earshot Jazz*, we savor the gracious legacy of jazz treasure, Overton Berry, and we remember the best "jazz mom" ever, Helen Marriott; we also unveil a new Earshot program that gives support to individual artists; and we shine a light on some of the individuals working behind the scenes,

out of the glow of the stage lights. The *Earshot Jazz* magazine will enter its 37<sup>th</sup> year next month. We love creating it, and we're grateful that this community appreciates and supports it. Please join us!

As always, we are so grateful to the musical artists, students, and educators who work so hard to ensure a strong future for jazz here in Seattle. This year brought us new opportunities to maintain that important bridge between the brilliant artists of the day, and the public who support performances and recordings. A *DownBeat* magazine festival review ran last year under the headline, "Earshot Serves as Platform for Thriving Seattle Scene." That's the essence of our work, and we need your financial support to continue our growth.

Even in the best of times, concert ticket sales offset only half of our production expenses, and none of the administrative costs. We need your financial support to build on our legacy of service to this community, and to expand our effectiveness in the new environment of video production and streaming. We would love to speak with you about new ideas.



This is such a rich time for jazz; it's a dark paradox that performance opportunities have all but stopped. You can help support the environment for the remarkable artists who are set to make the future of jazz even richer. Please make a donation to Earshot Jazz today.

And, given that evolving challenges are the one thing we can count on these days, I'm making an early New Year's resolution to focus on Kindness and Gratitude going forward. In today's environment, that's going to take some work. I invite you to join me.

Stay safe, healthy, and motivated

—John Gilbreath, Executive Director



## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

# Seattle Jazz Artist Relief Fund

We're excited to announce a new program, administered by Earshot Jazz, that will provide direct financial relief to individual jazz artists most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to the generosity of the Raynier Institute and Foundation, Earshot Jazz will be able to make 50, \$1,000 gifts directly to individual artists in need.

The application process will be simple, and qualifications will center on "working" jazz artists from the greater Seattle metropolitan area who are in dire financial and/or health circumstances. Applications will be qualified based on significant financial hardship as described in narrative and multiple-choice questions, and demonstration of an active career in jazz as detailed in an artist statement, web site, or online presence. We are asking those artists who are currently employed or not facing severe circumstances, such as imminent eviction or hospitalization, or an inability to feed their families, to refrain from applying for this round of support.

Understanding that today's conditions are untenable for many populations, we realize that this fund may be limited in scope. Guidelines and application materials for the Seattle Jazz Artist Relief Fund will be available on [earshot.org](http://earshot.org) by December 1. The application opens December 1 and closes December 15 with the goal to deliver funds by December 31. We are thrilled to introduce this support program, and thank Raynier Institute and Foundation for their generosity and support of the Seattle jazz community.



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## EARSHOT JAZZ

A Mirror and Focus for the Jazz Community

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To ensure the legacy and progression of the art form, *Earshot Jazz* cultivates a vibrant jazz community by engaging audiences, celebrating artists, and supporting arts education.

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## NOTES



### In Memoriam: Helen Marriott

It is with great fondness that we remember Helen Marriott who passed away recently on the evening of November 4<sup>th</sup>. Many in the community will remember Helen Marriott as a staunch supporter of the arts, along with her husband David Marriott, Sr. (who passed away in 2018). She and her husband worked tirelessly with Centrum Port Townsend, especially in bringing a gracious hospitality to the annual Jazz Pt. Townsend festival. Helen Marriott's extraordinary work in establishing a whole new level of fundraising for the Garfield High School jazz program ultimately played an integral part in broadening opportunities for jazz in all Seattle area school programs. Her family includes two of Seattle's favorite jazz musicians—her sons: the trombonist David Marriott Jr., and the trumpeter Thomas Marriott. Helen Marriott is also survived by her daughter Rebecca.

### Tara Peters Leaves Earshot Jazz

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to our colleague Tara Peters who left the employ of Earshot Jazz

in early October. Serving for two and half years, Tara's main role was Programs Manager. As is the case with many small organizations, her work extended to other areas of the organization—her talents were appreciated as co-editor of this magazine and as one of the founders of Earshot's Community Engagement Committee along with many other contributions. We wish her well in her new position as Communications and Engagement Manager at Washington Wild.

### Correction to SassyBlack Profile Article

In the November edition of Earshot Jazz in an article featuring local artist, producer SassyBlack, we misstated that she is a femme artist. We also misquoted the phrases "I grew up anti-racist" and "taking care of marginalized communities." We regret the inaccuracies which have since been removed in the digital version of the magazine.

### TeenTix Art as Activism Workshops

TeenTix's series of free online workshops exploring how art is a powerful tool for activism and the fight for racial



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justice continues into December. Saturday 5, features a course titled Music as Anti-Racist Rebellion with Martin Douglas, a music critic, journalist, and essayist as well as a content producer at KEXP. On Saturday 12, is Film as Awareness with writer, filmmaker, and Executive Director of Northwest Film Forum, Vivian Hua. Each workshop is limited to 15 teens, who must be ages 13–19, and current TeenTix members. For information about registration visit [teentix.org](http://teentix.org)

### 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Snow Globe Concert Benefiting Northwest Harvest

Sunday, December 20, 7:30pm

The 6th Annual Snow Globe benefiting Northwest Harvest is going virtual and will be hosted from singer, songwriter Kristin Chambers' home in Ballard, airing via Live Concert Stream. In recent years, The Royal Room has hosted the show but in light of new restrictions on gathering and COVID-19 safety concerns, a different plan was implemented. Over the years, Snow Globe has raised over 20,000 meals for the homeless and food insecure. This year the goal is to raise more than ever due to unprecedented hardship in our community. The show will feature some fantastic jazz artists, including The Mack Grout Trio, Sundae & Mr.

Goessel, Birch Pereira & Jenny Littlefield, Kristin Chambers, and more.... all coming together to warm up your holiday homes with music in the spirit of giving. Leading up to the event, donations are being accepted directly at Kristin's website: [kristinchambers.com](http://kristinchambers.com).

### STG's Winter 2020 Digital Season

STG is offering a new, all-digital series with both free and ticketed events for their Winter Season. Featuring national as well as international artists, the series will include a diverse lineup of music, dance, and holiday performances. Shows include The Hip Hop Nutcracker, Mames Babegenush, the Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra Septet with Wynton Marsalis, and Scott Silven "The Journey" among others. For details see [stgpresents.org/season](http://stgpresents.org/season)

### City Creates New Public Development Authority

For the first time in 38 years, the City Of Seattle is creating a new public development authority (PDA), aimed at preserving the city's cultural spaces, building community wealth, and investing in communities of color. The new PDA, known as the Cultural Space Agency has filed an application for a charter with the City's Clerk's office and the public has until December

8 to provide feedback. The PDA will effectively be a real estate development company that can purchase and manage property for cultural spaces. They aim to center racial equity and fight cultural and economic displacement, and plan to partner with local cultural organizations and small businesses. For details about this new initiative visit [artbeat.seattle.gov](http://artbeat.seattle.gov)

### 2021 Biamp PDX Jazz Festival—a Hybrid Series

Tickets for the 2021 Biamp PDX Jazz Festival will go on sale Friday December 4. Produced in Portland, Oregon, the festival will run from February 18–27. The festival will include both streamed performances and live performances, with venue capacity strictly limited. The Festival kicks off on February 18 with a free web stream of the Opening Night Celebration featuring Pink Martini Cabaret with China Forbes and Thomas Lauderdale. Other artists included in the lineup are Cyrus Nabipoor, Judith Hill, Harold López Nussa, the Marcus Shelby Quartet, and Wayne Horvitz' The Royal We among others. PDX members will benefit from a free virtual all access pass. Limited \$5 per show tickets are available for non-members. Visit [pdx-jazz.com](http://pdx-jazz.com) for more details.



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# Seattle Loses a Legend: Overton Berry Passes at 84



JOHN GILBREATH PRESENTING OVERTON BERRY WITH THE MAYORAL DECLARATION OF OVERTON BERRY DAY IN 2017.  
PHOTO BY DANIEL SHEEHAN



OVERTON BERRY TRIO: BILL KOTICK, OVERTON BERRY, CHUCK METCALF. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

Seattle lost one of its most historic and beloved musicians on Monday, October 19, when iconic jazz pianist Overton Berry passed at the age of 84. He died peacefully at home after suffering from heart disease for many years.

Berry's career began during the waning years of the legendary Jackson St. scene of the 1950's, and continued through 2020, with a bi-monthly residency at Tula's Jazz Club. Berry was a pianist with a deep connection to the blues, and a penchant for enchanting a room with his ebullient personality, and gentlemanly demeanor. He carried a devoted gallery of longtime fans from his legendary trio residence at the Doubletree Inn in the 1960's, to his time playing with bassist Bruce Phares at Tula's in the 2010's. Always the entertainer, Berry was a commanding presence in a room, and backed it up elegantly with his full, rich sound.

Seattle jazz radio icon Jim Wilke recalls Berry's performances fondly, and was well acquainted with the grace of his humanity.

"I think one of the things about Overton that set him apart was how approachable he was, and how much the audience appreciated him, and how much he appreciated them. He was always happy to talk to people on stage or off," he recalls.

While Berry made his career in Seattle, he performed internationally in Japan, China and Thailand. He was inducted into the Seattle Jazz Hall of Fame by Earshot Jazz in 2011.

Berry performed live prolifically, and his work is well documented on record, including the legendary, *Live at the Doubletree Inn*. The album features his trio with bassist Chuck Metcalf and drummer Bill Kotick, bringing to life a six year run that was a mainstay on the local Seattle jazz scene. His work

can also be heard on such albums as *Eleven is Forever*, *TOBE*, and *Live at Admiral*.

Berry was born in Houston, Texas in 1936, and moved to Seattle after the war and attended Garfield High School. His classmates included Quincy Jones for a short time. After studying classical piano at Cornish College of the Arts, he learned modern popular forms from Louis Wilcox. After brief tenures as a student at Linfield College, Oregon and the University of Washington, Berry dedicated himself to his music.

The arrival of the World's Fair in Seattle in 1962, ignited a fully racially integrated nightlife scene, with Berry leading an integrated band that included a young Larry Coryell at the now legendary House of Entertainment, an after hours coffee house in Pioneer Square. Seattle's music unions had just fully integrated in 1956, and

the fair ushered in a new era not only for the music scene, but for the city at large. Berry was the music director for vocalist Peggy Lee at the fair.

In 1975, Berry hired vocalist Diane Schuur, her first step in developing her international star as a two time Grammy winning jazz vocalist and pianist. Schuur traveled to Phoenix to perform with Berry at the new Doubletree Inn, and over a seven year period, performed with him regularly in Seattle.

"I just loved him so, he was like a father to me. He brought so much into my life. He taught me how to be independent and think for myself. He gave me lessons in stage presence, how to segue from song to song. I'm so grateful to have known Overton, and to perform with him last year at Jazz Alley. He is someone I love and revere, and will absolutely never forget," offers Schuur.

Berry played with bassist Bruce Phares in the late 1970's, and once again in his last two years of performing at Tula's. The two friends were a perfect match musically, and personally. Their warmth and love for each other was communicated clearly to their adoring audience. In October of 2019, they played Jazz Alley, with Schuur sitting in.

"It was magic to share the stage with OB. His engagement with the audience was genuine, real, and who he was in person. He loved every person that sat in an audience, and frankly, he loved every person he ever came in contact with. Every person he made contact with, and anyone who ever had a conversation with him, even just one, walked away touched by a feeling that he cared, he loved, he just simply loved," recalls Phares fondly.

Berry was married to Donna Coleman for 22 years, who passed in 2015. He is survived by his four children—Sean, Mark, Jann, and Paco Berry, as well as five grandchildren.

—Paul Rauch

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# Samantha Boshnack: Working Through Discomfort

Trumpeter and composer Samantha Boshnack had just returned from playing the Winter Jazzfest in New York with her group Seismic Belt, covering the volcanic material from her 2019 release *Live in Santa Monica*. The pandemic was just beginning to close doors when she played the Royal Room with her quintet on March sixth, the venue's penultimate live performance. By the 23rd, governor Jay Inslee had issued a two-week long stay at home order, and the state went on lockdown.

For her, as for many, the following months of isolation and unrest were difficult.

"It was really stressful," she says over the phone, "I'm teaching on Zoom for six hours a day on trumpet, and I don't know where to go."

Splitting her time between composing and teaching for Seattle JazzEd and the Seattle Repertory Orchestra Scholars, Boshnack felt nervous meeting with musicians to play: as a horn player, she couldn't wear a mask, and though she managed some collaborations, didn't like livestreaming much either. In addition, noise from construction seeped into the Central District apartment—where she'd lived for nine years—as developers worked to squeeze another building into her parking lot.

"They paved my backyard with three days' notice. I wasn't happy," she said. Looking around for other options, she

she explains of her "surreal" move from the city, "I'm grateful to be even in the Northwest anymore."

Despite these changes Boshnack continued her work in her new home. She completed a composition for the nonprofit Gabriela Lena Frank Academy, where she had studied with the founder/composer, and mastered her third record with another composer's collective, Alchemy Sound Project. Brought together by the Jazz Composer's institute and kept going "against all odds," the Sound Project will be releasing *Afrika Love* on the Artists Recording Collective (ARC) label, featuring work with Boshnack's mentor, saxophonist and composer Erica Lindsay.

She's also taken on two new projects, a duo for Wayward Music's "Wayward in Limbo," with her partner Chris Credit (featuring improvised and written material), and a project conceived

"before everything got crazy," called "Uncomfortable Subjects," with poets Natasha Marin and Jane Wong. Funded by the Mayor's Office and NonSequitur, "Subjects" has evolved from a desire to work with words to conversations about race, anxiety, and even discomfort itself.

"I didn't realize how uncomfortable we'd all be while working on this, [as] we were all deprived of some of the



SAMANTHA BOSHNAK PHOTO BY KAREN STERLING

found that rent had gone up all over the city; even subsidized housing exceeded her budget. Over the summer she knew "things were going downhill." So, after 17 years in the city, she and her partner decided to move to a mother-in-law apartment in Federal Way, near Tacoma, in a suburb by the water.

"Even in Tacoma, people are getting pushed to Olympia. It's this trickle-down effect that keeps happening,"

comfort we used to have,” she says, noting also how the piece has brought new challenges in working with artists in different mediums.

The project, likely due in big-band form next June, keeps Boshnack busy, in addition to teaching, a constant practice which, though it pays the bills, she’s sure has helped some kids get through recent times. And though she appreciates that families still value music education and educators, she admits that teaching remains mainly a means to her, and not an end.

“A lot of the sustenance as a musician you’re fed by going to see shows, playing with your friends, all those things that you’re not doing [right now],” she says. As others can probably relate, she can’t help but feel like she’s going crazy from isolation.

“It’s hard to feel super inspired, you also feel like things feel so scary for the future.”

Reflecting nervously on an election that follows a year of uncertainty, Boshnack hopes that the public will appreciate the venues that have brought them music, and think on forms of funding that can keep live music living, as it’s the social aspect of music which people need most. Without it, she says, these days would be “seriously hell.” Now, thinking back on gigs she took in Seattle before the pandemic, she recalls the occasional wish to stay home and compose.

“Not that I took things for granted, but I’m so glad for every gig I took now, she says, laughing bittersweetly. “I hope that when we get out of this, there is more appreciation for the arts. Because it’s not like it was easy before this”

—Ian Gwin

*Do you have a story you want to share with the Earshot Jazz magazine readers? We encourage musicians, educators, or anyone who works behind the scenes in the jazz community to reach out to us with your ideas at [editor@earshot.org](mailto:editor@earshot.org)*



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# Behind-the-Scenes at the Earshot Jazz Festival

The Production team of the 2020 All-Digital Earshot Jazz Festival share how their jobs have changed, what Seattle spots they're supporting, artists they want you to know about, and acts of kindness that have brightened their isolation.

Think of this as our staff party on paper. And you're invited. We hope you'll join us in celebrating the collective brilliance required to create something of value for the community. Concerts have always been about the humans: serving to give the artist a stage, to nourish the soul of the listener, to grow opportunities for more to participate, to inspire what is to come.

We look forward to what is to come, and we reflect—with deep gratitude—on the work that has been done.



HALYNN BLANCHARD (SHE/HER)  
PRODUCTION MANAGER  
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PHOTO COURTESY OF H. BLANCHARD  
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## DESCRIBE YOUR SCOPE OF WORK FOR THE EARSHOT JAZZ FESTIVAL

HB: Managed logistics and livestreaming, and hired our talented production team, whose expertise made the transition to digital concerts possible!

JM: Helped with post production for all prerecorded events this year, as well as directing live events from Town Hall Seattle's forum space.

MC: Videographer for Earshot Jazz Festival shows filmed at Langston Hughes

MP: Mixed shows at Langston Hughes

BR: Production side for the Royal Room video streams

## WHAT LOCAL SPOT(S) HAVE YOU BEEN SUPPORTING?

HB: Top Banana for produce, Raiz for the Chilaquile burrito, Thai Thaidu for mushroom larb, and Beats & Bohos for \$1 records... I scored on 'Brazil' by the Ritchie Family. Sessions in Place concerts and Vera Project classes have been awesome during the pandemic.

JM: Ghost Note, Ayutthaya, Union Coffee, Boon Boona, Carmelo's Tacos

MC: Langston Hughes

MP: I try to hit the farmers market every Sunday and buy local produce, for a while there in the beginning Jenny Durkan had shut them down but a renegade band of farmers still came to Ballard for weeks and sold their wares anyway. I try and pick small indie spots to get takeout once in a while.

BR: I don't really go out. Loretta's and Star Brass I suppose. I eat a lot and have found out about this thing called delivery and I use it, a little too much, to eat my way around South Seattle. Check out Eat Time, they have been pretty spot on.

## IS THERE AN ARTIST'S WORK YOU WANT MORE PEOPLE TO KNOW ABOUT?

HB: Laura Mvula, Gal Costa and Madison Cunningham! Also, Seattle's own Tiffany Wilson for vocals, and RAE (bassist Abbey Blackwell, guitarist Ronan Delisle and drummer Evan Woodle)

JM: Nubya Garcia. The London Jazz scene right now is incredible right now.

MC: MujaleAXP for instagram and all social media. "[I hope] to further grow a business that inspires innovation, development, and a creative way of thinking that positively impacts people." –Mujale, [outsidethinc.com](https://www.outsidethinc.com)

MP: Tomo Nakayama released a record "Melonday" right when the pandemic started, and I've danced my ass off alone in the apartment many times. I love his music, and that record is amazing.

BR: First off, Carly Rae Jepsen and Orville Peck. Anything and everything. Outside of that, I would currently say Lustmord and Young Marble Giants (Though they isn't no band no mo') ... Email me and I'll give you my tunez of the week.

## HAVE ANY WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT OR ACTS OF SERVICE STUCK WITH YOU THIS YEAR?

HB: I keep catching instances of the community coming together when someone asks for what they need. I'd like to believe the success of crowdsourcing has been one indicator of some collective growth. I'd also like to think the two rabbits I live with are participating in acts of service when they do the zoomies in the background of my zoom calls.

JM: Defund the Police

MC: I love working with Earshot.

MP: I live alone and by mid-April of this year I was really struggling to keep it together. My friends have come through for me in profound ways... Annie Ford was hired to suddenly appear at my doorstep and play a private mini-concert for me. Two other friends came and tended my garden and kept it looking beautiful. Others dropped off homemade gifts, and drawings their kids had made. It's been a beautiful year for community, despite the isolation.

BR: The fact we all are dealing with this shit of a year gives me some odd sense of comfort. Maybe the idea that I'm not in it alone.

## HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED YOUR WORK?

HB: The work and my spending – and sometimes my brain – has all had to slow way down. I'm one of the lucky ones who's had work this season thanks to Earshot's admirable dedication to continue to present arts opportunities. I'm feeling both parts of the growing pains. The work has changed big time; any music right now feels enriching, but I'm also deeply reminded of what we're missing and how so many peoples' worlds are upside down. I can't wait to have humans in a room again to hear music together.

JM: I went from doing videography for livestreams at venues to using at-home software for remote livestreams almost exclusively. Working from home has its pros and cons, for sure, but that's the biggest stress (other than the fear of impending climate collapse).

MC: It has totally changed the way I work. Physical events are now online.

MP: Venue closure due to Covid-19 has eliminated nearly all of my live sound work, as well as my work with Seattle Public Schools and recording individual artists.

BR: Like all of us in this gig economy, I lost all my gigs in about a week's time. I have to say, I love not interacting with customers and getting to focus more on the lighting design and sound. Got to find some good in the bad.

## WHAT NEW SKILLS HAVE YOU BEEN TRYING TO LEARN OR HAVE ACQUIRED THIS YEAR?

HB: It'd be great if I came out of this year with understanding more spanish. I was told to start working through the short stories of Juan José Arreola and I definitely recommend them! I'm also trying to learn to go to bed before 4am. You'd think this would be the year for it.

JM: Motion graphics, specifically in After Effects.

MC: Better video production.

MP: I have been trying to learn how to stay connected with my loved ones without being able to directly be with them. I've never been a big presence on social media, and tend to shy away from many aspects of digital culture... so it's been challenging to try and find the beauty in remote happy hours or watching livestream concerts alone on my laptop at the kitchen table. It's not easy, but I'm definitely more skilled at that now than I was earlier this year.

BR: Just trying to get myself back into video and visual art. Also working on my plant obsession. I have about 80 indoor plants as of this writing. My goal is to break 100 (Rumor has it, John cage had 400 in his NY apartment, and if he can do it I can do it.)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

# The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Concert of Duke Ellington's Sacred Music

Saturday, December 26  
7:00pm

*Streamed on Saturday, December 26, 7:00pm, and available on demand through January 2.*

Earshot Jazz and the Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra team up to bring you a very special digital presentation of the annual Concert of Sacred Music by Duke Ellington.

In response to current health and safety restrictions, this year's program will be streamed to your home for viewing on December 26, at 7:00pm, and will also be available "on demand" through January 2. Admission will be on a "pay as you can" basis, from \$10 to \$25.

This year's production of the beloved Ellington work, the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual concert, will include archival video footage from previous favorite Seattle concerts, as well as some new footage of soloists, duos and trios filmed especially for this year's presentation. SRJO co-director, Michael Brockman will speak with Earshot's John Gilbreath about the history and importance of this work.

The presentations feature the 17-piece Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra (SRJO), co-directed by Michael Brockman and Clarence Acox, along with the Northwest Chamber Chorus under the direction of Mark Klopper. Also featured are guest vocal soloists Nichol Veneé Eskridge and Dr. Stephen Newby, as well as the crowd-pleasing tap dancer, Alex Dugdale.

Ellington's extraordinary Sacred Music opus, which combines gospel, swing, and classical styles broke convention in the best of ways in 1965, and was followed by two, slightly different concerts in 1968 and 1973. As a child, Ellington had attended Methodist and

ton's last major works testified to his vision for the world, to say out in the open, as he put it, "what I have been saying to myself on my knees."

The Seattle concerts were begun by Lara Morrison in 1989, who produced the concerts at her own financial risk at the University Christian Church, with Earshot Jazz providing assistance. The original concerts featured a big band that included Michael Brockman and Clarence Acox, soloists including pianist Marc Seales and saxophonist Don Lanphere, and the Total Experience Gospel Choir. Morrison brought a community together behind the enormity of Ellington's music. She entrusted the stewardship of the sacred concerts to Earshot Jazz in 1993; also providing the impetus for the formation of SRJO under Acox and Brockman in 1994.

That same year, Earshot succeeded in raising enough money to purchase scores previously rented by Morrison from the Ellington Estate (which happened to contain notes and adjustments made by Brockman, one of the foremost Ellington scholars in the country). Throughout the years, this grassroots event has become a special Holiday meeting point for the community and legendary Seattle musicians such as Floyd Standifer, Don Lanphere, Bill Ramsey, Hadley Caliman, Ed Lee, and many others.

Thanks to the passion of Seattle's performers and the grace of its listeners, Ellington's message rings out clearly to us today.



NICHOL VENEÉ ESKRIDGE PHOTO BY JIM LEVITT

Baptist ministries. Performed less often than his earlier works, Ellington's Sacred Music presents a challenge of scale and time for musicians and audiences: each concert is truly an event, and the Seattle concerts are the longest running series in the world.

Built upon material from his earlier jazz suites that depicted his family upbringing and childhood in the Black church, the sacred concerts reflect Ellington's meditations on the struggle for freedom, justice, and forgiveness during the Civil Rights era. Their dissonances and harmonies joined sacred and secular values, drawing thousands of listeners during their first performances. Elling-



## Bad News Botanists *Indignation* Self-released

For now, forget about the bad news, and let's talk about some good news: Seattle sextet Bad News Botanists' new album, *Indignation* opens its buds this month. Following their 2017 Earshot NW recording of the year nominated release, *Venomous Nightshade*, saxophonist Frank Vitolo, trombonist Colin Pulkrabek, guitarist Andy

Short, keyboardist Rob Homan bassist Marina Christopher, and drummer Chris Patin follow the beat of the funky drummer for a set of snappy fusion breakdowns and fine-tuned funk tunes. Vocalist, Aura Payne (from soul revival band, The Highsteppers) joins the band on this album.

The Botanists' particular patch of the Seattle funk and fusion scene thrives with varieties of 90's rock, contemporary groove / R&B, and of course, the fecund seedbed of the late seventies. Special selections include a tribute to Mark Sandman, named after his influential and criminally underrated group Morphine, and a somewhat introspective cover of Kenny Garrett's "Happy People." On the latter, Homan gives a towering saw-wave synthesizer solo over a headbanging rhythm, flowing into a particularly Sandman-esque melody. Pulkrabek's exuberant solo on the former kicks off after a sly, harmonically inventive solo by Christopher.

The horn section nails the popping and soaring parts of the groups well-

wound melodies, with Vitolo throwing off a scathing solo on processed tenor on the album's opener, bringing in elements of liberation music and digital synthesis to the driving groove. Homan also adds a layer of science fiction suspense to the genre's usual palette of Hammond B3 swirls and glowing Fender Rhode clouds, adding a phasing drift to the ostinato figure for the closer, "An Optional Ending."

It's from the ground floor of the groove that the rest of rhythm elevates, and as Christopher locks in with Short's muted snap, Patin nails the drums at the foundation. Listen for his snare flurries on "Optional Ending," the crescendo of breaks during the solos of "Air Quality Index," and the lickety-split boom clap of "Duck a la Funk" for reference. Though their song titles speak to the present political moment, the Botanists drum up their respective strengths with a technique that's far from new, building their narrative from the collective.

—Ian Gwin



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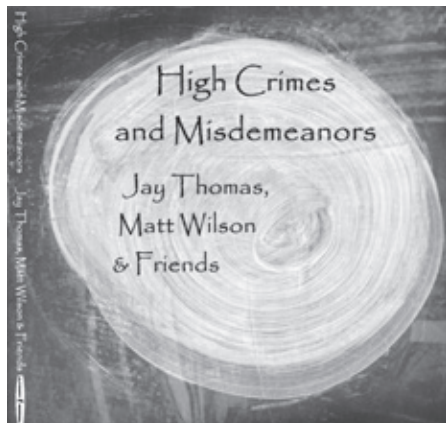
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## Jay Thomas, Matt Wilson and Friends

### *High Crimes and Misdemeanors* McVouty Records

Seattle jazz icon Jay Thomas seems to be in legacy mode. For fifty years, the veteran trumpeter/saxophonist has been at the forefront of the jazz scene in Seattle, along the way gaining international acclaim. His ability to play both trumpet and saxophone with virtuosity is rare indeed, perhaps only equaled by the late in jazz history.

This summer, Thomas released *Up-side*, a superb Jim Wilke recording of a quartet performance from 1997. With his new release, *High Crimes and Misdemeanors*, Thomas teams up with drummer Matt Wilson, and an all-star cast, for a loose blowing session recorded in the summer of 2019. The recording features a number of bright lights on the Seattle scene, notably bassist Michael Glynn, pianist John Hansen, and guitarist Milo Peterson. Trombonist Dan Marcus holds down the front line with Thomas.

Thomas offers two originals, most notably “Big George”, a bluesy homage to George Coleman. Thomas and Peterson find their way through the

melody, with Thomas carrying the weight on tenor. The two kick off the solos brilliantly, followed by Hansen’s well articulated voicings and Wilson’s lively drum and cymbal work.

That pattern takes the listener from tune to tune, with stunning melody embellished by artful melodic improvisation. Ellington’s elegant “Low Key Lightly,” features Marcus and Thomas bringing the rich melody to life, with Thomas’ alto solo reworking the melody with equal elegance. Thelonious Monk’s “Bright Mississippi,” seems to fall back to its contrafact roots in “Sweet Georgia Brown,” with Marcus holding down the bottom end on tuba. Thomas takes on Fats Navarro’s “Nostalgia,” with unshakeable cool on trumpet, weaving in and out of the melody with Peterson’s sparkling single note lines. Throughout each tune, Wilson pushes the band with his brilliant and always playful work on drums.

The rhythm section work on this recording is to be especially noted, with Peterson and Hansen working hand in hand with Wilson to create bountiful space for this all out, session style recording. Glynn is seamless on bass, and offers deft solo work of his own. Bassist Chuck Deardorf guests for Clifford Jordan’s “Bo Till,” and Dan Dean contributes on electric bass on the finale, “Is It True?”

—Paul Rauch

Got a new album you’d like us to review? Contact [editor@earshot.org](mailto:editor@earshot.org) for consideration.

Behind-the-Scenes  
from page 12

## WHAT PROJECT(S) IS NEXT FOR YOU?

HB: I’m trying to get past some hurdles playing the piano. I may be experiencing the ultimate silver lining to musicians not touring: I get to start virtual lessons with one of my favorite living musicians and humans... Gerald Clayton!

JM: I’m still helping a lot with Town Hall Seattle’s Livestreams. Currently applying for projects at The Vera Project— fingers crossed!

MC: More video projects!

MP: It’s a slow time, but I’m grateful for every brush with art and creativity that I get. The Earshot Jazz shows I mixed were amazing, and I always left feeling refreshed and like I had a shot in the arm of human interaction and beauty. I’m starting to get little recording/mixing projects as well. I have a podcast called Grief/Relief that I haven’t started production on this season, but I’m hoping to get on my feet and back at producing more episodes soon.

BR: Me and a few friends are making the appalling awful decision to try and start a Streaming Venue on Twitch out of my garage— LWS-RecCenter. We aim to focus on the weird stuff that has a harder time during this pandemic. You know, the experimental, punkheavy, and odd. Anyone who played house shows or dive bars, and yes, even the Chapel, give us a look?

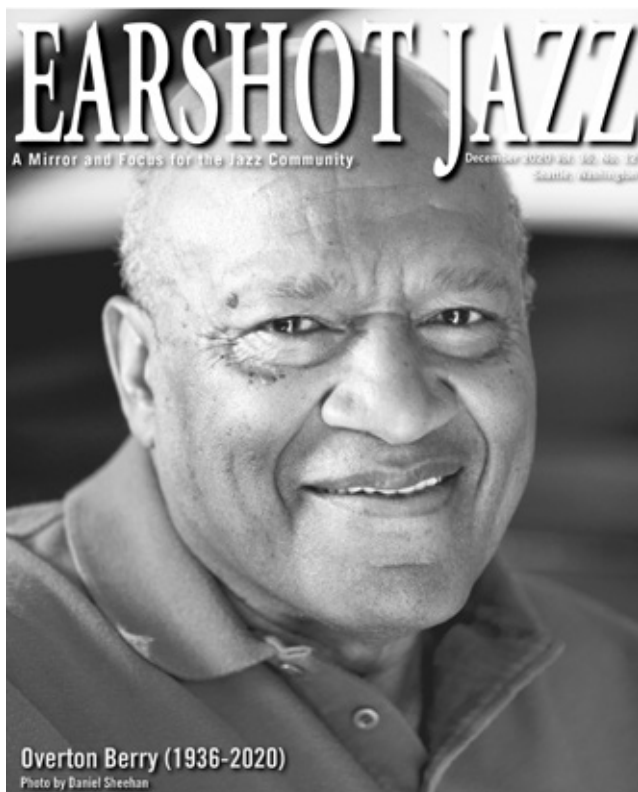
## ANY FINAL THOUGHTS?

HB: Thank you... to each performer who put their reservations on the shelf and let us see you.

MC: Halynn Blanchard is awesome.

MP: ...Thank you for supporting artists and keeping the music alive!

BR: ...MORE DRAG IN JAZZ!”



OVERTON BERRY PHOTO BY DANIEL SHEEHAN

## IN THIS ISSUE...

Letter from the Director:  
Kindness and Gratitude \_\_\_\_\_ 3

Special announcement:  
Seattle Jazz Artist Relief Fund \_\_\_\_\_ 4

Notes \_\_\_\_\_ 5

In Memoriam: Seattle Loses a Legend;  
Overton Berry Passes at 84 \_\_\_\_\_ 7

Catching Up With Samantha Boshnack:  
Working Through Discomfort \_\_\_\_\_ 9

Behind-the-Scenes at the  
Earshot Jazz Festival \_\_\_\_\_ 11

Preview: The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Concert of Duke  
Ellington's Sacred Music \_\_\_\_\_ 13

For the Record: Bad News Botanists \_\_\_\_\_ 14

For the Record: Jay Thomas,  
Matt Wilson and Friends \_\_\_\_\_ 15

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