Celebrating two of jazz' most distinguished octogenarians, the Jazz at Lincoln Center with Wynton Marsalis fêted McCoy Tyner and Charles McPherson at Rose Hall (Apr. 5th). Tyner, seated in the audience, received a standing ovation when introduced by Music Director/alto saxophonist Sherman Irby. The music began with orchestra pianist Dan Nimmer swinging Tyner’s “Inception”, accompanied by the composer’s regular rhythm section of bassist Gerald Cannon and drummer Joe Farnsworth. The full orchestra, with members of the saxophone section doubling on clarinets and flutes, was heard to great effect on Chris Crenshaw’s powerful arrangement of “Man From Tanganyika” and Ted Nash’s beautiful orchestration of “Ballad For Aisha”. Cannon and Farnsworth joined the band for Irby’s soulful tune on “Blues On The Corner” before the first half of the show ended with Victor Goines’ tour de force scoring of “Fly with the Wind”.

The orchestra kicked off the McPherson section of the show slipping into classic big band mode, with Nash’s Ellington-ian arrangement of “Jumping Jacks”, followed by guest usher Papo Vazquez’ pulsating AfroCaribbean outing on “Marionette”. McPherson joined the band for Goines’ arrangement of “Horizons”, and Marsalis Blowing potently. Orchestration of “Nightfall and “7th Dimension” by Marcus Printup and Kenny Rampton, respectively underscored McPherson’s composing talent while closer “Bud Like” showcased his bebopping alto.

-- Russ Musto

“The 2019 Herb Alpert Award in the Arts ceremony and 25th anniversary celebration will take place in New York on May 13th. The $75,000 unrestricted prize will be given to five ‘risk-taking, mid-career artists’. For more information, visit herbalpertawards.org.

The Jazz Gallery’s Annual Gala will take place May 13th and honor Jack Schmitt and piano/keyboardist Eicher (Lifetime Achievement Award), Tyree Evans (Norton contributions to the Arts Award) and Saxton Glover (Tribal Award). For more information, please visit jazzgallery.org.

SEED Artists’ Freedom of Sound annual festival will take place at Monte’s art-magnet middle school May 3rd-4th with a roster of Warren Smith, Andrew Cyrille, Billy Hart, Glen Velez, Susan Ibarra, Cyro Baptista, DO Re Mi, Tony Malaby, Antonio Sanchez, Thaddeus Cooke, Katun Leung/Adam Vitale, Rashid Movin’Valjean, Roopa Mahadevan and others plus a wide array of community activities. For more information, visit seedartists.org.

Saxophonist Wayne Shorter will receive an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree as part of the 2019 Rutgers University commencement ceremony May 23rd.

The 24th annual Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition will take place at Jazz at Lincoln Center May 6th-11th. High school participants are New York Academy (Livingston, NJ) and William H. Hall High School (West Hartford, CT). For more information, visit jazz.allegheny.edu.

Making the Jazz Gumbo: An International Conference on Repertoires that were built into a smoking climax, Stephans’ whipped ride cymbal inspired Liebman to drop in unexpected strains of “Autumn Leaves”. “That’s why we named the band Oblique,” the drummer later explained. “We approach every move from a side angle.”

— John Pietaro

Charles McPherson & Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra @ Rose Hall

“Caribbean Roots of Jazzin’ & Jammin’”, presented by the Bronx Music Heritage Center (Apr. 13th), was a visceral celebration of West Indian heart of jazz. The three-hour presentation opened with duets by percussion master Andrew Cyrille and Bobby Sanabria, Latin drumming icon and Co-Artistic Director of the space. The two sat at opposing drums, but this was no face-off. Pulses locked and both became embedded in the engrossing communal cross-rhythms. Sanabria fired away like a machine gun, but Cyrille was a slower cooker, championing the rolling heartbeat over his entire kit, demonstrating the sheer musicality that has made him a legend. During a lengthy improvisation based on the Cuban traditional “Babalu”, Sanabria took the lead, adding Spanish vocals, playing congas with his left hand as the right danced over cymbells. Cyrille bored through the “clicking, pulsating” between the two, they summoned the war gods. A panel of Wilson Decembre PhD, Lois Wilcken PhD and student to pursue Bachelor of Music degrees at MSM, Masekela’s partners: saxophone Julian Lage, pianist Emmet Cohen has been named the winner of the 2019 American Pianists Awards, receiving a cash prize and two years of career advancement and support valued at over $175,000 and a four-year contract with the Jazz Transition Music Group. For more information, visit americanpianists.org.

Carnegie Hall has announced the musicians for the 2019 NYO JAZZ, a four-week intensive summer program for American jazz instrumentalists (ages 16-19): piano, bass and guitar/voice. Messrs. Cyrille and Sanabria joined in for the tumultuous finale.

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