

STRAIGHT AHEAD

STU CALHOON is an icon in Des Moines. John Krantz became aware of Stu sometime in the late '70s and his appreciation for Stu's talents grew tremendously over the years. Stu dedicated his life to making music for well over 60 years, waking up every day with the passion to learn something new in an effort to improve his craft. That is what jazz is all about and that is why John wanted to hear Stu speak about his life. The following conversation took place in Stu's home several weeks prior to his death in the fall of 2009.

Speaking With Stu

by John Krantz

JK: When did you begin playing piano? Or maybe I should say, "Music", since I understand that you also play violin.

SC: I was born in 1928 in Beaver Falls, PA. My father was a violinist and teacher and my mother was a pianist and teacher. "Us kids" were permitted to play the piano from the minute we could reach the keys providing we didn't "drum." My first lessons were on violin but I was a very poor student. I thought the secret was in my father's violin,

so when he was away I would sneak into the music room to play it, but I didn't sound any better on his.

JK: I know there was quite a scene going on in Pittsburgh at the time. What was your first exposure to jazz and when did you get hooked on this music?

SC: When I was four or five, my mother was studying Ravel with a piano professor at Geneva College. I remember being awake early in the morning and hearing her practice

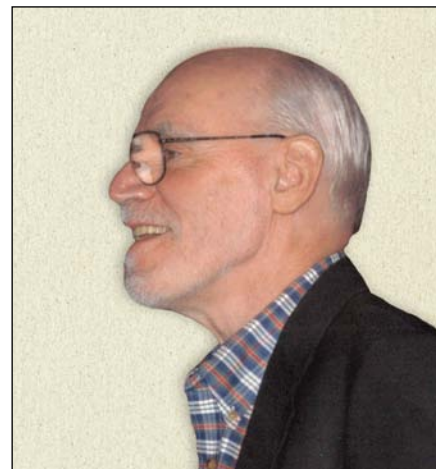
The Mother Goose Suite, with its gorgeous and lush harmony. That was a little taste into the jazz harmonies that were coming, but I was taught that jazz was "a trap" and if you got caught in the mire of jazz, you would come to no good.

JK: So what was your first exposure to jazz?

SC: I knew that there was this music that would come on the radio every night at 6:00 p.m. It was a fast tempo and very lively. I would dance around the room right on cue.

JK: When you started actually playing as a working musician, did you have some musical heroes?

SC: I grew up in New Brighton, PA, which is a city of 30,000, so my heroes were local guys. There was a



piano/trumpet player named Chuck Linn who let me watch him play and ask questions. It wasn't until after the service, when I was waiting for discharge in San Francisco that I heard Dave Brubeck. He would attack the keys and play sort of "out" harmonies.

JK: Was this in the early '50's?

SC: Around 1948 to 1951, probably. I remember in late '48, I met George Grant who was an experienced bass player and wanted to form a band. He hired me and I played with him for several years. We played around Pittsburgh.

JK: If I'm not mistaken, you came to Des Moines, then moved to the West Coast before you returned to settle down here?

SC: In 1953, I answered an ad in *Downbeat Magazine* for the Jack Cole Band, a territory band that

continued on page 5 >

Editor's Solo Spot

This winter has been something, so far. CJC has had some ups and downs due to the weather. But as always, with the help of great volunteers, we have continued to offer a wide range of jazz offerings.

This fall, John Krantz and his committee, Abe Goldstien, Scott Davis and the late Stu Calhoon put a great **Hall of Fame Celebration**. They are already making plans for the 2010 event. A big thank you again to Ron and Clarice Rubek for their continued help at the door, Shelley Leaverton for taking pictures, and Chris Oatts for tending the merchandise stand.

We would also like to thank John Krantz for bringing the film, **CHOPS** to the Levitt Auditorium for our viewers to enjoy. Again, thank Ron and Clarice Rubek, Penny Madsen and our high school student, Chris Oatts for their help in presenting this movie. Chris fulfilled his community service requirement for Johnston High School by volunteering to help at various CJC events. We hope that more students will take the opportunity to help us out.

Daphne Monson took over as chairperson for our very successful **Junior High Fest** and Myron Peterson was gracious enough to allow us to use the beautiful new Urbandale High School band facilities. Thanks to all who helped make the food stand a success, including Jackie Garnett for introducing us to walking tacos and Dave Kelderman, for Hy-Vee's continued support.

CJC would like to thank Chris Crandell and Phil DeLong for all the work they put into organizing what is now called the **CJC Jack Oatts Jazz Honor Bands** this year. Unfortunately, due to bad weather, the event had to be cancelled.

As always, we could not offer our **student jams** on the first Sunday of the month without the support of Java Joe's, Abe Goldstien, and our house band: Sam Salomone, Rob Messer and David Altemeier.

Bob Start is doing an incredible job as director of the **CJC Adult Big Band**. The band is really swinging.

We have a terrific web presence as John Krantz continues to maintain our website www.dmcommunityjazzcenter.org and Rod Leaverton is managing our **CJC Facebook** page.

We welcome Nadine Calhoon and Kay Williams to the CJC executive board. Your insight will be invaluable as the CJC moves into the next decade. CJC is so blessed to have this incredible mixture of "seasoned" veterans and people with fresh ideas working for the organization. Thank you all.

Joel Poppen, editor

SINGERS' SUMMIT

What happens when you combine six of the area's finest singers with the CJC Big Band? Singers' Summit! It all came together on Sunday, January 17 at Java Joe's. What an afternoon of music it was — blues, standards, swing — all performed with precision and exuberance. Remember, you can catch the CJC Big Band FREE every third Sunday of the month from 2 to 4 p.m. at Java Joe's.



Kay Williams



Gary Jackson



Fred Gazzo



Karlene Huscher



Elisha Pride



Rod Lumbard

DUTCH JAZZ COMES TO THE CASPE TERRACE

ERIC VLOEIMANS FUGIMUNDI • MARCH 2

“Seriously unpretentious, fun, beautiful, profound and just plain good.”

That’s how *All About Jazz* describes the music of Eric Vloeimans, and that is exactly what you can expect when Eric and his trio, Fugimundi, take to the Bucksbaum Stage at The Caspe Terrace in Waukee, on March 2, at 7:30 p.m.

As with previous Jazz at The Caspe Terrace performances, do not expect your “run of the mill” jazz concert. For starters, Eric’s current trio, Fugimundi, features an unusual instrumentation — Eric on trumpet, Anton Goudsmit on guitar and Harmen Fraanje on piano.

Who is Eric Vloeimans?

Eric started his trumpet playing career as a 12-year-old in Holland. He quickly gained attention, as an honors student at the Rotterdam Conservatory, then at the New School in New York City. Eric is now regarded as one of Europe’s most arresting and talented performers. Eric is a rare musician who’s mastered the complete range of the trumpet, from energy laden high notes to the soft, velvety, almost wooden sounds. Eric’s vivacious and joyful performance resonates for quite a while. **For more about Eric, visit www.ericvloeimans.com.**

What is Fugimundi?

Fugimundi is a unique trio featuring Eric on trumpet, Anton Goudsmit on guitar and Harmen Fraanje on piano.



Eric Vloeimans



Anton Goudsmit



Harmen Fraanje

Each is a monster player in their own right, and as a group they have an approach to improvised jazz all their own. **Watch a 2009 European performance of Fugimundi at www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ny8CVhdhhl.**

What is Caspe Terrace?

Music this unique and intimate requires a performance space of equal stature and Caspe Terrace provides Eric and his musicians with a wonderful venue. This modern, 150-seat performance space is ideally suited for the subtleties of improvised jazz. Caspe Terrace, which serves as the cultural and social center for Des Moines’

Jewish community, is one-quarter mile south off the I-80 Waukee/Booneville exit (#117), just 15 minutes west of Des Moines.

Order Your Tickets Today!

Advance tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for students. (Tickets at the door will be \$25.) Seating is limited. For tickets and details about the concert and a workshop to be scheduled for the afternoon of March 2, contact Abe Goldstien at 279-6452 or abe@trilixgroup.com.

Who else is playing around town? Find out at
dmcommunityjazzcenter.org

STRAIGHT AHEAD

Straight Ahead is published quarterly by the Greater Des Moines Community Jazz Center. We welcome any and all contributions to this newsletter, including book, concert and CD reviews, editorials, concert news and any other information that would be of interest to CJC members. Please send your articles and information to Abe Goldstien, c/o Trilix Marketing Group, 4000 114th St., Urbandale, IA 50322. Materials can also be e-mailed to abe@trilixgroup.com. For information about advertising in *Straight Ahead* or to receive future copies of the publication, contact Phyllis Leaverton at 515-276-0777.

EXPERIENCING CLAUDIO RODITI

Watching trumpeter Claudio Roditi lead four of Iowa's premier sidemen through an afternoon rehearsal prior to an evening performance at Indian Hills Community College (IHCC) last September provided a good look at something not readily apparent at concerts. While the audience at that night's show in Ottumwa saw Roditi's talent's as a player and improviser (and even singer) displayed, most concertgoers could only have a vague idea of Roditi's abilities as a bandleader.

A Brazilian expatriate now residing in New Jersey, Roditi had been brought to IHCC by David Sharp, whom Roditi had met several years earlier while performing with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Sharp has since garnered a reputation as a talented arranger, for which Roditi gave him high praise. "I love his arrangements – simple and so effective."

At his disposal for that afternoon's rehearsal, Roditi had Sharp and three other sidemen regarded as among Iowa's elite players: drummer Dennis McPartland, who teaches at IHCC as well as Kirkwood Community College; bassist Gabriel Espinosa, director of jazz studies at Central College in Pella; and Jason Danielson, an in-demand freelance pianist in orchestra pits and jazz venues around Des Moines.

After some greetings and amiable chit-chat while everyone tuned up, Roditi began rehearsing the ensemble. It immediately became evident that Roditi, a stickler about rhythm, had a very clear idea what he wanted things to sound like. Just a few bars into the first tune, Antonio Carlos Jobim's "A Felicidade," Roditi waved the song to a halt and began a firm explanation of bossa nova subtleties to McPartland.



While Roditi can be a demanding bandleader, he is anything but mean-spirited or arrogant. He made efforts to keep the rehearsal mood light. "This is not malicious," he explained with a smile to McPartland, after several mini-lectures about the proper accents of the samba beat. "It's for the sake of the music," Roditi added, and McPartland nodded agreeably.

After several "before" and "after" versions of each tune, a cumulative effect emerged. While the "before" versions were tasteful and well-rendered, the "after" versions felt palpably authentic. By the time rehearsal was completed, one could see and hear how Roditi, tactfully but authoritatively, had conveyed his ideas and shaped the sound.

Roditi is fond of the term "Gemini Man" to describe his blending of Brazil and the U.S. jazz traditions, and the second tune rehearsed, "Impressions," showed that his focus on authenticity encompasses the spirit and sound of Coltrane, too. After a couple of brief asides to Danielson, the second run-through, somehow, sounded more like something to be expected from someone who has played extensively with McCoy Tyner — as Roditi has. His sensibility has been further refined by two other key influences with whom

he has played, Horace Silver and Tito Puente, themselves products of the Caribbean's dynamic mix of North and South America.

After rehearsal, Roditi hoped aloud that no one had been offended, but no egos were showing any bruise marks. Unsurprisingly for professional educators, his sidemen had treated the rehearsal as a world-class learning opportunity: Roditi has taught master classes and performed with student ensembles around the globe. "Hey, what do I know? I'm just a gringo from Iowa," joked McPartland. "I thought I knew a little about Brazilian music!" mentioning his youthful fondness for Airtó Moreira's classic 1973 album "Fingers." Danielson smiled and nodded in agreement, "It makes you realize how much you don't know."

Recommended listening: *Brazilliance X4*, Claudio Roditi (Resonance 2008); *From Yucatan to Rio*, Gabriel Espinosa (Zoho 2009); *Indian Hills Faculty Jazz Trio*, David Sharp, Dennis McPartland & Steve Charlson (DMcP 2002).

Vic Verney, a freelance writer in West Des Moines, covers the local jazz scene for the Webzine "All About Jazz." Vic's Web site is <http://verney.us>

Speaking With Stu (continued from page 1)

worked out of Des Moines. I played that for about a year and thought that life was too tough for me. We were on the road seven days out of ten in western Illinois, southern Minnesota, eastern Nebraska and Missouri. We were paid \$85 a week, but we had to pay all road expenses.

JK: Is that when you made the decision to head west?

SC: Yes. I thought life would be easier in California, so I headed west, took a day job, got married and had two kids. I was also playing quite a bit too.

JK: What was your West Coast playing experience like?

SC: Oh, it was really great! I played mostly casuals on the weekends. But the people to play with were really good. The first-call Hollywood recording guys would accept a weekend casual because it was a chance to play with different people and to play something different than what was being played in the recording scene. I had some pretty musical bands playing dumb weekend dances.

JK: How long were you out there?

SC: Fourteen years.

JK: What brought you back to Iowa?

SC: I stayed in California for 14 years, but I became ill, lost my job and my marriage ended. I went back to Pennsylvania and stayed with my parents briefly but that obviously can't work for very long. The more that I thought about a place to be, the more I thought about Des Moines. And in February 1970 I moved back here.

JK: Who did you first start playing with when you returned?

SC: I played in lots of combos that were working for guys like Don Hoy, Ralph Zarnow and Jack Cole. Eventually, I started booking bands and taking gigs that I could get as a leader.

JK: You recently recorded a new CD with Susie Miget and Pete Simonson. Tell us about that experience?

SC: That was pretty neat, but it was also a lot of work to take care of the details. I licensed all the material including my original piece.

JK: I have heard you play a beautiful song that you wrote for your wife, Nadine. Would you like to comment on composing?

SC: I have one piece that I actively sat down to write and it was an all out effort. I am very proud of that piece. It's called Miss Cue, a nod to Susie Miget. I recorded it in the mid 90's with Rod Leaverton on guitar, Pete Simonson on drums, Forest Stewart on bass and Don Jaques on sax.

JK: Are there any moments that you consider musical highlights of your career?

SC: It may sound strange, but the performance of the German Requiem with the ISU choir the year that I studied there was definitely a milestone. It's one of the great pieces of music in the world.

JK: You have always been thinking ahead and making plans for new things. What would you like to be able to accomplish?

SC: (Laughs) Well, I've made some sort of half-way attempt at a jazz musical. My favorite piece of music is the opera Wozzeck, a very modern work by Alban Berg, but I know it would take a lot of study and a lot of work to even come close to that kind of project.

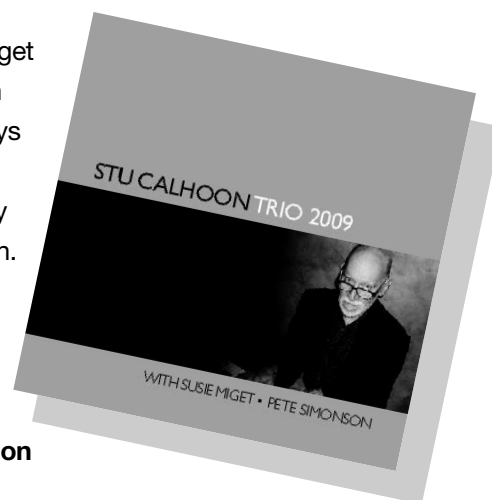
JK: It is a commendable goal. Ultimately, what will your legacy be?

SC: I've had a part in advancing the way jazz and pop jazz is played, and I'm going to keep on doing it!

NOW AVAILABLE

With long time friends Susie Miget on bass and Pete Simonson on drums, pianist Stu Calhoon plays a set of standards (plus one original tune) in a style uniquely his own. With love. With warmth. With a deep appreciation for the music and composers that shaped his musical life.

**To order your copy,,
visit cdbaby.com/cd/stucalhoon**



THANKS

Memorial Contributions

- Nadine Calhoon
- The Bobby Dawson family —
Robert E. Dawson, Roberta Dawson
Perry, Mary Jo Clay and Roxanna
Lankford

Special Donations

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Paige and Tim Sanders

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- Stan Moffitt
- Barb Nish
- Janna Steed
- Charles Timberlake
- Dave & Kay Williams

Schools

- Boone High School

A Tip Of The Hat To Music Reviewer Michael Swanger

Local music critic Michael Swanger, whose reviews appear in CityView, has written some terrific articles about jazz in the Des Moines community. He recently had an article published in the Iowa History Journal about the early jazz days in our city and our Jazz Hall of Fame. You can order a copy by visiting iowahistoryjournal@gmail.com.

Meet CJC Program Chairs: We Couldn't Do It Without 'Em!

The efforts of the Community Jazz Center of Greater Des Moines could not succeed without the hard work of our various program chairs and volunteers. From coordinating jam sessions, to organizing jazz competitions, honoring the past to providing opportunities for older musicians to perform, the volunteers pictured below make CJC what it is today — a valuable resource for Des Moines' jazz community, young and old, musicians and fans, educators and students.



Joel Poppen
Straight Ahead



John Krantz
Hall Of Fame



Bob Start
CJC Big Band



Abe Goldstien
Jams /Hall of Fame



Chris Crandall
Jack Oatts Honor Band



Rob Messer
House Trio/Jams



Dave Altmeier
House Trio/Jams



Sam Salomone
House Trio/Jams



Scott Davis
Hall of Fame



Daphne Monson
Junior High Fest



Of course, a big thanks to Java Joe's for hosting our monthly jam sessions and the CJC Big Band.

JAZZ UP YOUR SUNDAYS AT JAVA JOE'S

JAM SESSION: FIRST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH, 2 TO 4 P.M.

CJC BIG BAND: THIRD SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH, 2 TO 4 P.M.

Notes & Tones

From UNI:

Matt Wilson Quartet Headlines Sinfonian Dimensions In Jazz Program

The Beta Nu chapter of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia fraternity presents its annual Sinfonian Dimensions in Jazz concerts February 19 and 20 at 7:15 p.m. in Bengtson Auditorium, Russell Hall, University of Northern Iowa. The featured performer is the Matt Wilson Quartet with UNI's own Jazz Band One directed by Chris Merz. Rounding out the program is the Jazz Panthers big band, directed by Bob Washut. Tickets are \$10 (\$5 for students), and are available at the door.

From Robert Parker: Keep Up The Good Work!

Former area musician, Robert Parker, found CJC on the Internet and sent us the following note: I stumbled upon your organization when searching for the address of the old Urban Lounge because I was wondering what was there now. I have fond memories of playing with the Midwest Express, playing behind Joanne Jackson and Witches Brew. Keep up the good work encouraging young players. I enjoyed the article about the night life on Center Street in the last issue. I have remained active in music since leaving Des Moines in 1979, currently performing two days a week at Nordstroms in La Jolla, CA, private solo and trio events and recording sessions (I am listed under name Parker Blue, Jackson Blue and Robert Parker). This year I intend to produce a piano single CD. Keep up the good work!

From Abe Goldstien: Introducing Georgians To Jazz

I had the honor of writing the introduction for one of the first jazz books to be published in the Republic of Georgia. The author, Kahka Tolordava, conducted a series of very insightful interviews with jazz musicians who recently visited the former Soviet state. Among the musicians featured in the book are Gary Burton, Chick Corea, Marcus Miller and Billy Cobham. I hope to publish excerpts from these interviews in future issues of

Straight Ahead. Kahka and I became immediate friends several years ago, when he came to Iowa to learn more about the advertising industry. We quickly realized we shared a passion for jazz and have remained dear friends since that time.

From Civic Music Association: 2010-11 Season Kicks Off With Jazz

Bassist Esperanza Spalding, will kick off the 2010-11 season of Civic Music Association (CMA) on September 18 at Drake University's Sheslow Auditorium. CMA has more great jazz performances for the rest of their 2010-11 season as well — bassist Dave Holland on January 22, 2011 and trombonist Wycliffe Gordon on April 8, 2011. For more information, visit civictimusic.org.

From Metro Arts: 2010 Jazz In July Update

Metro Arts Alliance announced today that Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino will be the presenting sponsor of its Jazz in July series. "As central Iowa's largest entertainment facility and a longtime supporter of the arts, we knew that teaming up with Jazz In July and providing financial support for this very popular citywide cultural event was going to be a win-win for everyone," said Gary Palmer, Prairie Meadows' President and CEO.

Jazz artist Roxi Copland, who also serves on the Jazz in July Planning Committee, says: "Thanks to Prairie Meadows and our other great sponsors, Metro Arts can proudly continue its long tradition of celebrating jazz in Iowa. I'm convinced that the 2010 season of Jazz in July will be the best yet, thanks to a stellar lineup of artists and the addition of the Prairie Meadows' kick-off event featuring an international jazz act."

Each year, Metro Arts Jazz in July creates bigger neighborhood gatherings with more food, more artists, and more activities for a complete concert experience. In 2009, the series showcased 132 musicians and 20 visual artists and brought 15,325 people to 21 concerts across the metro.

For more information about Jazz In July and other Metro Arts programming, visit metroarts.org.

Community Jazz Center
2921 Patricia Drive
Urbandale, Iowa 50322-6863

CJC Membership Form

School [\$35] Patron [\$30] Adult [\$20] Student [\$10]

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Fax Number _____ Email _____

Volunteer Interests/Skills _____

Date: _____

Return to: CJC Membership Chair, 2921 Patricia Drive, Urbandale, Iowa 50322-6863