

CHESAPEAKE MUSIC INTERLUDE

The Monty Alexander Jazz Festival Celebrates 10 Years

Don't miss a swingin' good time!

by Becca Newell

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival returns to Easton this Labor Day weekend, bigger and better than ever!

The energetic, ever-swingin' festival features an exciting lineup, boasting some—if not THE—best jazz musicians in the country, including guitarist/vocalist Allan Harris, pianist Matthew Whitaker, pianist Cyrus Chestnut, and the ever-phenomenal headliner, Monty Alexander. The festival runs Friday, August 30th through Sunday, September 1st, with concerts at the Avalon Theatre in Easton, plus a Sunday morning brunch at Hunter's Tavern in the Tidewater Inn.

Vocalist, guitarist, bandleader, and composer, Allan Harris kicks things off Friday at 8 p.m. with *Nat King Cole at 100*—a fitting tribute, considering the *Miami Herald* referred to Harris as an artist blessed with “the warmth of Tony Bennett, the bite and rhythms sense of Sinatra, and the sly elegance of Nat King Cole.”

“Jazz is a great expression of what we are,” Harris says, adding that he’s also a fan of the freedom within the genre. “Every night when we do a song, we do it differently. We keep the template of what it is, but try to stretch it a little bit.”

Saturday’s program begins with a free community concert, starring jazz guitarists Randy Napoleon and Dan Wilson. Rooted in jazz tradition, Napoleon is widely-known as a forward-thinking musician and one of the most sought-after guitarists in New York. In addition to leading his own trios and other small combos, Napoleon tours with legendary singer/pianist Freddy Cole; guitarist George Benson calls him “sensational.”

From a young age, Wilson knew he wanted to pursue a career in music. Though his style is jazz-focused, it certainly draws influence from a wide variety of genres. He’s been touring nationally and internationally with three-time Grammy nominated jazz organ legend, Joey DeFrancesco. He describes the human connection between the performer and audience that’s created during a live show as “second to none.” The duo’s performance, titled *Guitars, Without Compromise*, begins at 11 a.m.

Matthew Whitaker, who made his debut on the Festival stage last year at the Emerging Artist Showcase, returns—this time around in the Saturday matinee spot!

Blind since birth, Whitaker began performing at the age of three, when his grandfather gave him a small Yamaha keyboard. By 15, he was named a Yamaha Artist, becoming the youngest musician to join this group of notable musicians. Quickly making a name for himself in the jazz world, the now 18-year-old was recently named one of seven rising stars for 2018 by USA Today network’s 201 Magazine. Catch Whitaker in *An Exciting Debut, An Eagerly Awaited Return* at 2 p.m.

The Festival’s eponymous headliner takes the Avalon stage at 8 p.m. for what will undoubtedly be a lively celebration of his 10 years at the helm of the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival. Considered one of the top five jazz pianists ever, Alexander’s musical expression combines elements of the blues, gospel, calypso, and reggae. He’s renowned for his vibrant personality, magnetic charisma, and breathtaking talent. Tickets for *Monty Alexander Celebrates the 10th Anniversary* will sell out—and fast!

Unlike previous Festivals, this year’s Jazz Brunch will be held on a Sunday, which is great news - *continued on page 2*



The Monty Alexander Jazz Festival is partially underwritten by the Maryland State Arts Council and the Talbot County Arts Council. Jazz on the Chesapeake is a program of Chesapeake Music. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit Chesapeakejazz.org or call 410-819-0380.

How fitting it is that for our Tenth Anniversary we are featuring the music of the great Nat King Cole. Nat would have turned 100 this year had he survived the cancer that took him away at age 45.



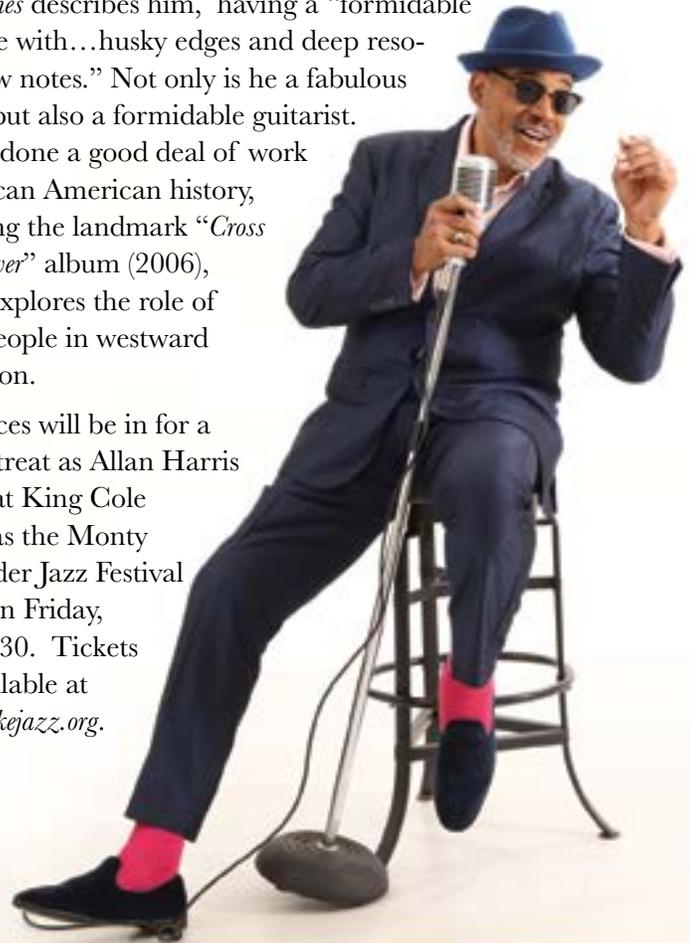
As did so many black musicians, he grew up in the church, and his first big hit “*Straighten Up and Fly Right*” was actually based on one of his father’s sermons. Beginning his musical life at the piano, Nat Cole could hold his own next to the likes of Art Tatum, Earl Hines, and Erroll Garner, but white audiences mostly know him as a singer. Accompanied by his piano

and the sidemen of the Nat King Cole Trio, his lush baritone voice was welcomed into many 1950’s living rooms via the new medium of television. His enduring hits include “Mona Lisa,” “Nature Boy” and “Unforgettable.” A global icon, he is one of Monty’s most important mentors.

It is appropriate to have the marvelous Allan Harris render the tribute to Nat King Cole on Friday Night’s Festival opening. Outside of jazz circles Allan Harris may

not be a household name, but it should be, with, as *The New York Times* describes him, having a “formidable baritone with...husky edges and deep resonant low notes.” Not only is he a fabulous singer, but also a formidable guitarist. He has done a good deal of work on African American history, including the landmark “*Cross That River*” album (2006), which explores the role of black people in westward expansion.

Audiences will be in for a special treat as Allan Harris does Nat King Cole at 100 as the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival opens on Friday, August 30. Tickets are available at chesapeakejazz.org.



The Monty Alexander Jazz Festival Celebrates 10 Years

Continued from p. 1:

for jazz enthusiasts, as that means they won’t have to wait as long between Saturday’s show-stopper, and Sunday’s matinee for live music.

From 10 a.m. to noon, attendees can indulge in impeccably crafted brunch dishes while listening to the musical offerings of Wilson and Napoleon—the jazz guitarists featured at Saturday’s free community concert. Reservations via Hunter’s Tavern are required.

Closing out the weekend is pianist Cyrus Chestnut, performing *Where Gospel Meets Jazz* at 2 p.m. on Sunday, September 1st. Born in Baltimore, his father the organist at his local church, the composer and producer says he’s always believed in the deep connection between jazz and God. His works unabashedly demonstrate this concept, seamlessly blending facets of jazz

with elements of gospel, R&B, and classical genres.

Weekend passes for the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival, as well as single show tickets, are on sale now at chesapeakejazz.org.



Over the last decade, the Festival has grown from a modest venture—comprising two performances by saxophonist Grace Kelly on its opening night, with Alexander the following evening—to a three-day jazz extravaganza, featuring outstanding, first-class talent from across the nation. “The response has been exceedingly enthusiastic,” says Festival Producer, Al Sikes.

Not only has the amount of shows increased, but the audience continues to grow. An unwavering optimist, Sikes admits with a hearty laugh that he imagined bringing great jazz to the area would excite the community. Still, he’s been pleasantly surprised with the Festival’s success. “I’m just delighted at where we are.”



Cyrus Chestnut

by Joñ Malin

In 2006, *Time* magazine described Cyrus Chestnut as the best jazz pianist of his generation. Chestnut was born in Baltimore in 1963, the son of a church pianist, and a church choir director. He started learning piano at the age of seven, and by the age of nine he was studying classical music at the Peabody Institute. In 1985, he earned a degree in jazz composition and arranging from Boston's Berklee College of Music and was awarded the Eubie Blake Fellowship (1982), the Quincy Jones Scholarship (1983), and the Oscar Peterson Scholarship (1984).

From 1986 to 1993 Chestnut was a touring pianist for many iconic musicians including Wynton Marsalis and the Betty Carter Trio, who Chestnut has said was the single biggest influence on his own approach to music.

In 1993 he began an incredible recording career, signing with Atlantic records and producing the highly acclaimed album "Revelation." Since then he has been the lead musician on some thirty-four albums. His latest album "Kaleidoscope," with Eric Wheeler on bass and Chris Beck on drums, was released on HighNote records in April 2018.



Chestnut continually tours with his trio, playing at musical events around the world. His leadership and prowess as a soloist has also led him to be a first call for the piano chair in many big bands, including the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band, and the Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra.

His style is incredibly esoteric, from classic, to gospel, to blues, to jazz. His wonderfully creative treatise of Erik Satie's "Gymnopédie" on the Kaleidoscope album is typical of his technical keyboard brilliance and his compositional genius. He is a great piano player of our times, and one not to miss.

Guitars Without Compromise

by Marty Sikes

Everyone is invited to our free community concert at 11 a.m. at the Avalon Theatre on Saturday, August 31. Last year we introduced our Emerging Artist Showcase concert series with a performance by pianist Matthew Whitaker. By popular demand, he will be headlining the 2:00 concert this same day.

You won't want to miss this year's free concert entitled "Guitars Without Compromise," where we will showcase two young jazz guitarists, Randy Napoleon and Dan Wilson. Playing with them will be Chuck Redd on vibes and drums and Tommy Cecil on bass. Randy Napoleon is known as a forward-thinking musician with a passion for jazz tradition. He has toured with singer and pianist Freddy Cole and leads his own bands. *Detroit Free Press* critic Mark Stryker says Napoleon "plays with a gentle, purring tone that makes you lean in close to hear its range of colors and articulations. Dan Wilson has been touring nationally and internationally with three-time Grammy nominated jazz organ legend, Joey DeFrancesco, and can be heard on DeFrancesco's 2017 Grammy-nominated *Project Freedom*.

During a visit, Monty told me, "both Randy and Dan have joined me on the bandstand at different times, providing me with much musical enjoyment." He continued, "Randy uses his fingers and Dan uses a guitar



pick, making for a different sound from each artist – each player totally unique from the other. They are two greatly gifted artists, whose mutual regard and respect for each other's music (and person) will surely bring about a cohesive and fantastic happening for jazz fans – especially fans of the guitar."

We are able to offer our "free" Emerging Artist Showcase concert thanks to the generous support of the Artistic Insights Fund. And we are excited that Randy and Dan will also be performing during our annual jazz brunch at The Tidewater Inn, Sunday, September 1 starting at 10 A.M.

Looking forward to seeing you at 11 on August 31, for what will be another fun morning of exceptional jazz! As Monty told me, "Their concert will be a joyous collaboration."





Another Spectacular Chamber Music Festival



A Brief Chat with Catherine Cho, New CCMF Co-Artistic Director

by Susan Clifford



“When we drive down from New York City,” Catherine Cho muses, “one of my favorite moments is crossing into Maryland, rolling down my windows, and anticipating my warm reception from friends I have developed over 21 seasons with the Chesapeake Chamber Music Festival.” She continues, “I am honored to be chosen new Co-Artistic Director and look forward to working with Marcy Rosen, protecting the essence of the Festival and support its continual growth and the development of its reach via energized programming and connections with the community.”

One of her thoughts is to create a Young People’s Concert, where young artists from some of the top conservatories in the world come to the Eastern Shore to play for students and young musicians in a free concert. “These fine young artists with international careers can share their artistry and experiences with local students and budding musicians to ignite their passion for

music and sharing, and lend support for their dreams.”

She remarks that she is very interested in the fact that, next season, we are celebrating Beethoven’s 250th birthday, thus “you may hear some of his masterpieces at the Festival!”

Catherine replaces the outgoing Lawrie Bloom and lives in Brooklyn, NY with her devoted husband, Todd Phillips, and son Brandon. She is the step mom of three, Lia, Eliza, and Jason. When she is away from her teaching and performances, you may find Catherine making soup in her crockpot, baking, practicing yoga, catching up with the New York Times, or creating crafts with her family



Remarks from the President

Thank you one and all for making a smashing success of the Chesapeake Chamber Music Festival 34, June 2019. It was easy to feel the enthusiasm in the air from our audience, our musicians, and our volunteers. We opened the Festival with Beethoven and Dvořák at Christ Church, Easton with the unbeatable

combination of Cathy Cho, violin, Marcy Rosen, cello and Robert McDonald, piano. A high point of the event was the introduction of Marcy Rosen as holder of the new Ella and Michael Bracy Cello Chair.

This is a year of changes and firsts at the Chamber Music Festival. Lawrie Bloom, Founding Artistic Director, stepped down amid congratulations, memories and thanks. Cathy Cho has stepped up as our newest Co-Artistic Director, full of energy and imagination. All eyes on an exciting future!



After hearing many requests we held a concert in Cambridge at Christ Church. Musicians and volunteers collaborated to produce a major success, well attended with selections ranging from Mozart to Gershwin.

Trio St. Bernard as returning Gold Medal winners from our 2018 Chesapeake Chamber Music Competition raised the rafters with their electric performance of Bartók and Dvořák selections.

June Han, harpist sought by orchestras around the world, was this year’s surprise treasure. She won acclaim for her performances, particularly with flutist Tara Helen O’Connor and violist Daniel Phillips. Dr. Han won the hearts of our audience with her warmth and impromptu lessons in harp design and workings.

To our enthusiastic audience, donors and volunteers, nothing happens without your participation. Live music performances are wonderfully in the moment. It’s the effort of many. We are so very grateful to our splendid musicians and to all the people who support and enjoy their performances.

Courtesy Lane



Namesake

by Al Sikes

The exuberance is still a vivid recollection. Joyfulness really! My wife and I were at the Jazz Standard in Manhattan listening to Monty Alexander for the first time. My recollection, it was 2001, who knew what was to come.

And then there was that first concert in Easton, 2009. It was the first time in my life I had shared with hundreds of persons from my hometown a jazz artist I had so thoroughly enjoyed. Bliss.

Monty and I then met in New York and in a booth at the Greek restaurant, Molyvos, the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival was conceived. And now we are in the tenth year. Whew!

Monty Alexander is gifted, and not just in music. He has the gift of entertainment. He is, of course, a consummate musician but has a love affair with his audiences. He is quite direct, "I want to bring joy".

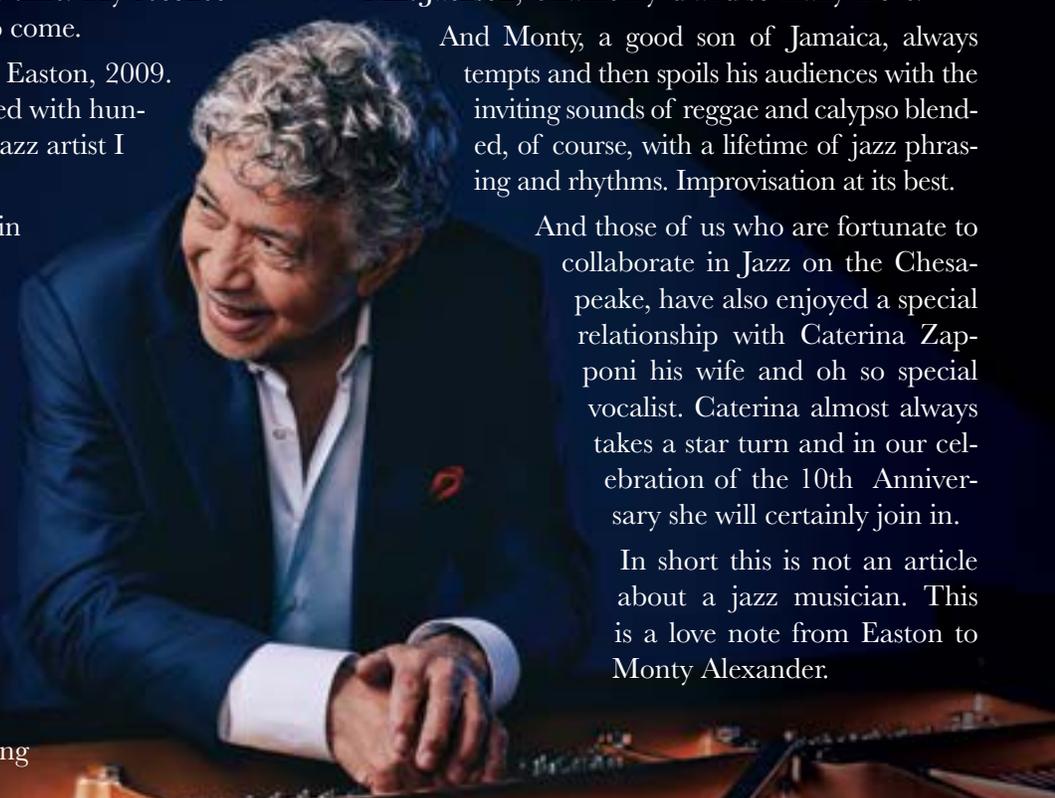
Monty's melodies trace a remarkable life. This year's theme: A Life In Music. There were remarkable influences; he speaks of Louis Armstrong and Nat King

Cole. And he loves to tell stories of the times with Frank Sinatra and Dizzy Gillespie and the gigs with Ray Brown, Milt Jackson, Charlie Byrd and so many more.

And Monty, a good son of Jamaica, always tempts and then spoils his audiences with the inviting sounds of reggae and calypso blended, of course, with a lifetime of jazz phrasing and rhythms. Improvisation at its best.

And those of us who are fortunate to collaborate in Jazz on the Chesapeake, have also enjoyed a special relationship with Caterina Zapponi his wife and oh so special vocalist. Caterina almost always takes a star turn and in our celebration of the 10th Anniversary she will certainly join in.

In short this is not an article about a jazz musician. This is a love note from Easton to Monty Alexander.



Some of the performers from the first 10 years of The Monty Alexander Jazz Festival



The Monty Alexander Quartet at the Avalon in 2009



Monty with our volunteers



Grace Kelly



Chuck Redd



Dee Daniels



Dominick Farrinacci



Caterina Zapponi



Ted Rosenthal



Piano Prodigy Returns to the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival

by Becca Newell

Eighteen-year-old pianist Matthew Whitaker is rapidly making a name for himself in the jazz world. And for good reason, as anyone who caught the Emerging Artist Showcase at last year's Monty Alexander Jazz Festival can attest. After a show-stopping performance (more on that below!), there was no question about inviting back this piano prodigy. Whitaker returns to the Festival—now celebrating its 10th year—on Saturday, August 31st at 2 p.m. at the Avalon Theatre in Easton.

Blind since birth, Whitaker was introduced to the piano at the age of three, when his grandfather gave him a small Yamaha keyboard. "I've always had a love for music," he says. "I first heard jazz in the car with my dad. I was about seven years old. Ever since then, it's been my favorite genre."

By 15, Whitaker was named a Yamaha Artist, becoming the youngest member to join this group of notable musicians. He's received awards and accolades from competitions and festivals across the country, including a stunning 2016 performance on Showtime at the Apollo that deservedly took home the grand prize. He performed an impressive tribute to one of his personal inspirations, Stevie Wonder, earning the young musician comparisons to the legend himself.

Last year, he was named one of seven rising stars for 2018 by USA Today network's *201 Magazine*.

It's no exaggeration to say that concertgoers were in awe of Whitaker's musical finesse and ingenuity during his premier Emerging Artist Showcase performance on the Festival stage. At one point, he had two keyboards on either side of him and played them both at the same time! "The crowd went wild," says Concert Promoter Lisa Ghezzi, who was fortunate enough to catch a glimpse

of the Emerging Artist Showcase. "It was magic." Not only was Ghezzi impressed by Whitaker's burgeoning talent, but his demeanor was equally impressive, particularly for such a young and accomplished musician. "He was so gracious," she adds. "Just a lovely person."

Unsurprisingly, one of Whitaker's dream collaborators is the Festival's eponymous headliner, Monty Alexander. "I love his style and how he combines different elements of music," he says. "It's really cool to listen to." Like Alexander, Whitaker takes inspiration from other genres—think gospel, R&B, country, and funk—and works them into not only his own compositions, but into standard and contemporary classics, too. "[It's] what jazz really is all about—making it you," he says.

Catch Matthew Whitaker at 2 p.m., Saturday, August 31st, at the Avalon Theatre in Easton. Tickets are \$45 for reserved and \$25 for balcony. For more information about MAJF, visit Chesapeakejazz.org.



CREDIT GOES TO



We would like to keep you informed of the latest events in our growing series of year round programs. To help us reach you, please sign up on the website at www.ChesapeakeMusic.org.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

February 2020 - Jazz on the Chesapeake
Valentine's Day concert

April 2020 - Chesapeake Chamber Music
Competition

May 2020 - Jazz on the Chesapeake evening concert

June 2020 - Chesapeake Chamber Music Festival

September 2020 - Monty Alexander Jazz Festival

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Writers: William Edgar John Malin Marty Sikes Becca Newell Al Sikes
Photography: Chris Drukner Joe Martinez: Jazz at Lincoln Center John Osler
Editor: Susan Clifford **Proof readers:** Marty Sikes Susan Koh
Design: Tim Young, Eclectic Graphics

Jazz on the Chesapeake presents

THE MONTY **10 YEARS** ALEXANDER

JAZZ FESTIVAL

AUGUST 30-SEPTEMBER 1
Avalon Theatre • Easton, MD



SCHEDULE

Friday, August 30, 8:00 PM:
Nat King Cole at 100 with Allan Harris

Saturday, August 31, 11:00 AM
Free Community Concert:
Guitars Without Compromise
with Randy Napoleon and Dan Wilson

Saturday, August 31, 2:00 PM:
An Eagerly Awaited Return with Matthew Whitaker

Saturday, August 31, 8:00 PM:
Monty Alexander Celebrates the 10th Anniversary

Sunday, September 1, 10 AM to Noon:
Jazz Brunch, Tidewater Inn, Reservations needed.

Sunday, September 1, 2:00 PM:
Where Gospel Meets Jazz with Cyrus Chestnut

Tickets are available at chesapeakejazz.org