Monty Alexander Headlines a Wealth of Talent at the 2012 Jazz Festival

by John Malin

In just four short years since Monty Alexander the legendary jazz pianist crystallized the first jazz concert supported by Chesapeake Chamber Music, the annual Monty Alexander Jazz Festival has received wide acclaim for its musical depth and exciting innovation. This year the third full Labor Day weekend event provides a jam-packed, full-on program with some of the very best top-tier jazz performers playing in the beautiful, historic, Art Deco Avalon Theatre in Easton, the showplace of the Eastern Shore. This year’s Festival is enhanced with an additional Sunday afternoon concert featuring jazz vocalist Dee Daniels.

In the true spirit of a festival there will be wall to wall jazz throughout the weekend including a foot-tapping brunch on Saturday, September 1st from 11:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. featuring the Conservatory Classic Jazz Band performing live New Orleans Jazz on the Terrace at the Tidewater Inn. The Festival will be heralded in with the exquisite trumpet work of Dominick Farinacci the brilliant young player discovered by Wynton Marsalis at the tender age of 17 and described by Quincy Jones as the “360 degree kid”. Dominick and his quintet will play an eclectic repertoire of musical genres and musical masters at the Avalon Theatre on Friday, August 31st at 8 p.m.

On Saturday, September 1st at 4 p.m. the spectacular vibraphonic skills of Chuck Redd will be leading a salute to Duke Ellington with the accompaniment of the Maryland University Jazz Ensemble. A drummer as well as a vibraphonist, Chuck began his professional career in 1980 at age 21 when he joined the Charlie Byrd Trio. During the successive years he performed alongside numerous other talents, including Dizzy Gillespie, Mel Torme, Tommy Flanagan, and Ray Brown. He is an original recording artist with Stomp, Look & Listen (1997) and All This and Heaven Too (2002) in his wide repertoire. Chuck is well known as a significant musical influence on the Eastern shore and a true friend of Chesapeake Chamber Music and the jazz initiatives.

On Saturday night at 8 p.m. Monty Alexander will lead his Quartet in the signature concert of the Festival at the Avalon Theatre. Monty has toured the globe playing for the last 5 decades and collaborated with such vocalists as Natalie Cole and Bobby McFerrin. Monty’s high octane style keyboard skills, breathless finger work and magnificent power chord structures are a real treat to witness in such an intimate theatre setting. You will feel like you are sitting on the bench next to the maestro. Monty describes his music as “the product of different cultures and different vibrations.” You can be sure that the Avalon will be ringing with good vibrations that Saturday evening!!

On Sunday September 2nd at 2 p.m. jazz enthusiasts will be treated to a closing concert from the magical Dee Daniels and her trio in a salute to Mahalia Jackson the contralto “Queen of Gospel,” who died in 1972. Dee Daniels is a unique female jazz, blues and symphony pops vocalist with an incredible four-octave range who has become a legend in her own time. Dee has several top jazz/blues CD's to her credit including her current top 10 jazz CD Jazzinit. Easton’s Asbury United Methodist Church Celebration Choir will perform with her.

An immense wealth of talent and jazz passion will be fully on view at the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival in Easton over the 2012 Labor Weekend. Don’t miss out on this wonderful event.

Mark Your Calendar for Labor Day weekend, August 31, September 1 and September 2. Better yet, go to www.ChesapeakeJazz.org or call the office at 410-819-0380 and purchase your tickets for the third annual Monty Alexander Jazz Festival now!
Dominick Farinacci Inspires Young Musicians

by Leslie Hamburger  Our childhood memories often include moments inspired by a significant person who leaves a lifelong impression. On August 31st, children of Talbot and Dorchester counties will have the chance to experience just such a moment when jazz trumpeter, Dominick Farinacci, one of NPR’s “Jazz Rising Stars,” makes two special school appearances.

When Dominick Farinacci was an 11 year old he wanted to play the drums, following in his uncle’s footsteps. However, his 6th grade band director said he needed more trumpet players and asked if Dominick would be interested. He agreed and started to play the trumpet. Unlike many kids, Dominick loved to practice. For him, the trumpet “felt natural,” unlike sports, which he had tried, and resulted in what he jokingly called “a disaster.”

Jazz was not part of the soundtrack of Dominick’s childhood in Cleveland. He was listening to most pop music of the day. When his private lesson teacher gave him a recording of Louis Armstrong, he found himself “trying to play along with the recordings” and attempting to emulate his style. “Knowing nothing about jazz music, there was something in it that really connected with me – perhaps part of it was the challenge of trying to get as good as the trumpet players I was listening to.” There began a tireless journey of constant practice and listening.

At 17 Dominick opened for Wynton Marsalis and his band at the Tri-C Jazz Festival in Cleveland. Marsalis was so impressed by the gifted young musician that he invited him backstage and ended up taking a genuine interest in his progress, later inviting him to perform on PBS at Lincoln Center. Dominick remembers that Marsalis was “so gracious. He would call me on the phone to make sure I was practicing.” It was the mentorship and caring Marsalis showed that inspired Dominick years later to create a music outreach program for the Tommy Lipuma Center for Creative Arts at Tri-C (a community college) in Cleveland in March 2011.

Dominick said he “taps into the great community of musicians of my generation who inspire and challenge me” for his outreach program. He feels that “great musicians have the ability to connect with people of all backgrounds – both on a musical and personal level. Jazz music has all of the qualities of a family – respect, working together, care, etc... and it’s about bringing the music to our audience in this way.” The program is designed to reach a broad range of students with varied musical abilities and is currently found in many schools in the Cleveland area. In its first year, over 3,000 students have participated in the program.

By bringing in established musicians to his outreach program, Dominick hopes to create an atmosphere where music becomes part of the everyday life experience for kids. On August 31st, Chesapeake Chamber Music’s YouthReach Program will present a version of this outreach program at schools in Talbot and Dorchester counties, giving students an opportunity to interact with and be inspired by Dominick Farinacci.

The Last of a Dying Breed?

by Robert B. Amdur  Where do Eastern Shore and some Western Shore jazz lovers go to hear this wonderful music on the radio? Well, we’re lucky, because on 91.3 FM is a strong signal beaming out jazz – one of the few remaining radio stations that continues to broadcast this kind of music. There are plenty of radio stations broadcasting rock and roll and all its permutations. Even classical music is usually available at a local public radio station. But if you want to hear jazz, your options are limited, except here on the Shore, where we can hear WESM 91.3FM broadcasting jazz on a regular schedule.

WESM 91.3 FM, backed by almost 50,000 watts of power, is one of the few remaining radio stations in the country that still features jazz, R&B and music from around the world. And what’s remarkable is that it’s hidden away at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne, MD, but has a reach that covers almost the entire Eastern Shore including Virginia and southern Delaware. The signal crosses the bay to cover most of Southern Maryland and portions of Virginia’s Northern Neck. It is truly a jazz lover’s regional resource.

WESM has been very generous in its support of the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival. They advertise in the Festival program, participate in ticket give-aways and have conducted interviews with Jazz Festival performers. It’s the only station in this area that offers a unique balance of mainstream jazz, blues, world, gospel, and other musical genres, as well as local and NPR national and international news coverage.

So, if you like jazz, or just want to broaden your horizons to hear music you won’t get in most major cities, set your tuner to 91.3FM . You’ll be in for a treat.

Chesapeake Chamber Music’s mission is to enrich the musical life of the Chesapeake region by delighting today’s audiences and developing tomorrow’s.
**Becoming Unzipped with Jazz and Gospel Vocalist Dee Daniels**

by Amy Blades Steward

Dee Daniels never set out to become a jazz singer, but over the years as her music evolved and as the threads in the tapestry of her life were woven, her four octave vocal range took her to a natural destination—jazz and gospel music. According to Dee, jazz music has allowed her the freedom to express herself and to tell the stories of her life.

Born in Berkley, CA, Dee was raised singing gospel music in church where her stepfather was a Baptist minister. She got her bachelor's degree in art education and taught high school art for a year before realizing her true calling was music. While gospel music had a powerful influence over her life, it wasn’t part of her beginnings as a performer. Instead, she began in the genre of rock ‘n roll, finding out quickly that it “wasn’t her thing.” Since she had a talent for playing the piano and singing, she quickly got into pop music.

She recalls, “I was changing my repertoire all the time and toying with the melody while singing pop music. I didn’t realize what I was doing was improvisation. When the media started calling me a jazz singer, I realized that I should feel honored because jazz was the real deal.”

Plunging into the jazz world, Dee began listening to instrumental jazz, including Grover Washington, Freddy Hubbard, Aretha Franklin and Lou Rawls. Her vocal style evolved through the R & B era and then was polished during a five-year stay in The Netherlands and Belgium from 1982 to 1987. It was during this time that she performed and recorded with some jazz greats, including Johnny Griffin, Ed Thigpen, Toots Thielemans, as well as legendary jazz pianist Monty Alexander.

Dee comments, “I met bassist and composer John Clayton while in Europe and he played on my first jazz recording. John then introduced me to his trio, which included Monty Alexander and drummer Jeff Hamilton.”

Monty Alexander invited Dee to participate in this year’s Monty Alexander Jazz Festival in Easton, where she will perform a tribute to Mahalia Jackson on Sunday, September 2, at 2 p.m. at the Historic Avalon Theatre. She is thrilled to be joined during the performance by Easton’s own Asbury United Methodist Church Celebration Choir. Dee states, “This tribute is an opportunity to get back to my roots. I listened to Mahalia Jackson as a young child through church and even got to hear her perform live in Oakland, CA. I was mesmerized.”

Dee concludes, “I am there to absorb and to give back to my audiences. I tell folks I have a zipper from the top of my head to my toes. When I unzip, there is a cavern of bright light, love light, that swirls out of me. During my performances, it is my hope that everyone listening will unzip too, and share their light of love.”

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**Jazz Notes by Al Sikes**

Frequently it begins with the composer’s melody and syncopation. And then the variations begin. The featured player becomes composer and then his sidemen are invited to join improvisationally and the ensemble composes. And so it goes with hints of melody or melodies escaping only the drum solos.

Errol Garner, an iconic jazz pianist, when asked if he read music said, “Not enough to hurt my playing”. Classical pianists have long lamented that jazz pianists can play their music, but they can’t return the favor (Andre Previn notwithstanding). Re-creation is radically different and exacting. A jazz pianist, however, can pick up the melody from say Rachmaninoff and then create his own variations but would, of course, leave the Rachmaninoff lover exasperated.

Monty Alexander, when asked about rehearsing, responded: “I don’t... rehearse much as that would put the noose around it.” He went on to say, “My music is alive—it is here and now.” And, I should add, Monty composes originals as well.

Monty’s sources are numerous. James Hall a jazz trombonist, who reviewed Monty’s first concert at The Avalon in 2009, noted “that Alexander expresses himself in a mixture of languages, ranging from blues, bebop and stride piano to the reggae tradition of his native Jamaica.”

I would simply say that Monty Alexander is the most entertaining expressionist on the planet. One more note, The Avalon Theatre provides wonderfully preserved acoustics and approaches the intimacy of a jazz club. The gifted performers we bring to the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival deserve nothing less.
Pianist Lydia Brown holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music, Yale University and The Juilliard School. She is currently an assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera and a member of the vocal program of the Marlboro Music Festival. Lydia’s performance schedule takes her to the great performance halls in the United States and abroad. I caught up with Lydia at the Marlboro Music Festival.

**DB:** How did you learn of the Chesapeake Chamber Music Festival?

**LB:** Marcy Rosen, whom I’ve known for years through Marlboro, invited me to participate. I had a wonderful week and found the organization, the community support, and the level of musicianship an amazing experience! Everyone went out of their way to make me feel welcome! This makes you stand out as a festival - beyond the music.

**DB:** The old cliché “world class performers” is often overused, however, we do feel the caliber of musician at our Festival is “world class” – you among them. What was it like for you to perform with the musicians at the Festival?

**LB:** Every moment, I felt I was making music with musicians of the highest level. A relationship is developing and the level and quality of playing is crucial. Creating a musical conversation is best when it is with people of like minds in an informed dialog. You come to a consensus and develop ideas and concepts, but because you have such a short time to put all of this together, the playing level has to be of the highest quality. In the end, the higher experience and caliber of musician allows us to engage in this dialog quickly. Being able to be open and honest with experienced players gets you to the inherent structure of the music. You can delve into the nuances and subtleties which makes all the difference between a good performance and a great performance. It was a pleasure to work with such gifted artists.

**DB:** As a musician myself, a misnomer is that we “play” music and that somehow, this isn’t work. Describe what it’s like to prepare for festival concerts for our readers?

**LB:** As you know, there’s never enough time to prepare. The performances don’t feel much like work – that’s the payoff and thrill. Rehearsals and practice are work. Every performance was different, different personnel, different music. It felt like a lot of work because I play opera all year long, so the repertoire was new and it took a lot of rehearsal time to prepare. The fact that we had so many people at the open rehearsal says a lot about people’s interest in what kind of work goes into making a great performance.

**DB:** Your piano four hands concert with Robert McDonald was a crowd pleaser and highlight of the Festival. Playing piano four hands is a personal endeavor, unlike any other musical experience and genre. What was it like sharing the bench with Robert McDonald?

**LB:** Wow – pianists don’t get a chance to do it that often, so doing it with Bob was a fantastic experience. I grew up listening to his recordings with Isaac Stern and Midori – so for me a real thrill. Good music making is all about trust - knowing that you don’t have to worry about anything the other musician is doing is huge. He is a gentle soul and makes great suggestions that helped get to the heart of the music. I not only learned so much, but took away a great musical memory!

**DB:** Are there other great take away moments you can share with our readers?

**LB:** There were many! The recital accompanying Chris Brandes was a fantastic experience. It had been 6 years since I had played the Fauré cycle in its entirety, so being able to play it again was rewarding for me. Playing Mendelssohn’s Piano Trio in d minor was a rare opportunity. It doesn’t come up that often in my performing life so performing it was a treat! Meeting all the people and musicians was, of course, a highlight!

**DB:** You have a busy schedule beyond your work with the Met. What’s next on your slate?

**LB:** I’m at Marlboro through mid-August, then off to the San Francisco Opera for two months. After that, I’m at the University of Cincinnati to coach a new opera. Then back to the Met for my regular duties.

**DB:** With a schedule like that we feel lucky to have heard you perform at the Festival. Thanks so much for your time!

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**Russian Trio touring schedule (as it relates to CCMC)**

**October 6, 2012:** Washington College Concert Series, Chestertown MD
7:30 p.m. Decker Theatre, Gibson Center for the Arts.
Tickets: $15 adults, $5 youth. At the door. 410-778-7839.

**October 19, 2012:** Friends of Chamber Music, Reading PA
8:00 p.m. WCR Center for the Arts, 140 N. Fifth St., Free, no tickets required.

**March 22, 2013:** Academy Art Museum Twilight Concert Series, Easton MD.
Dinner 5:45 p.m. Concert at 7:00 p.m.
Full event: $55 members, $90 non-members. Reservations: 410-822-2787

**May 5, 2013:** Christ Episcopal Church, Cambridge MD.
4:00 p.m. $10 admission, students free. 410-228-3161.
GOING WHERE THE MUSIC IS GOLDEN

by Carol Rizzoli  On the eve of this year’s Chesapeake Chamber Music Festival, violinist Catherine Cho took time to answer questions about her life and work. She and her husband, violinist Todd Phillips, have performed at the Festival for a decade, and now they and their young son, Brandon, travel together to the Festival.

Your father taught himself to play violin, I believe, while in medical school. Was he your first teacher?

No. I started lessons because I wanted to tag along with a friend, who was six and taking Suzuki violin. I was four-and-a-half. My parents thought I was too young, but I begged them until they said yes. After a few months in the Suzuki program, I began private lessons.

You advanced quickly.

I was lucky. The two most important factors in learning an instrument are good teachers and the support of your family. I had both.

That included studying with the legendary Dorothy DeLay at Juilliard.

Yes. She used to say, “Now listen, sugar plum, the job of the teacher is not to mess up the student.” Then she would suggest something, and I would disagree - at the time I seemed to need to disagree! She would always listen and then quietly repeat what she had said previously.

Festival fans, including myself, wonder how a two-star household - with you both performing all over the world - manages. Who cooks, who babysits?

That’s an important life question. How do you keep your nest stable? Todd just came home from London two hours ago. Now he’s doing his laundry and taking out the recycling. We share household responsibilities, and we have such irregular schedules that we have to be flexible, which sometimes means canceling an engagement so that one of us can be home with Brandon. Other times my mother will help out.

Do you and Todd ever find yourselves competing with each other professionally?

Not really. He’s nine years my senior, and very supportive of me. We’re at different places in our careers. Sometimes we’ll play for each other and ask advice, and we know each other’s strengths and weaknesses, but his focus is the string quartet, the Orion, with his brother. My ambitions are different: solo work, playing various kinds of chamber music, and of course teaching.

Have you cut back your schedule now that you have a child?

Yes. The first year we did ten different festivals, then seven, now three to five. Brandon comes to many rehearsals with us. He’s five-and-a-half and he’s good, he sits, listens, does puzzles. My brother-in-law and sister-in-law (Festival musicians Daniel Phillips and Tara Helen O’Connor) help out, too, and so do other Festival regulars.

You could go anywhere to play in a festival. Why do you return to the Chesapeake year after year?

There are always a few places we say we must return to. When we approach the Eastern Shore, we roll down the car windows, smell that air, and I see Todd relax—the whole stress of the year goes away. The people we stay with are incredibly important to us—first the Lermans, now the Welches. Everyone is welcoming and helpful, and the audiences are so responsive. Also, we’re playing with our friends. That is spiritually uplifting. You will always go where you sense golden music-making.

Carol Rizzoli, a violinist and avid festival-goer, is the author of The House at Royal Oak, a memoir of life on the Eastern Shore. Her new book-in-progress is Dreams of Home.

CCM New Board Members 2012

At the June meeting, the Chesapeake Chamber Music Board unanimously elected three new board members.

Don Berlin is a retired rabbi. He and his wife Norma have owned a home in St. Michaels for many years and began to live here full time in his retirement. Don has been a member of the YouthReach Committee for several years and is currently co-chair of that group. He will continue in that capacity as his Board responsibility. Norma Berlin has been an active member of the Competition Committee for several years.

Beth Spurry is Senior Vice President of Wye Financial & Trust. Wye Financial is a major sponsor of our Gala, and Beth became active at CCM when that relationship began. She has actively participated in Gala planning for at least five years and is the Gala Auction Chair for 2013. She has recently joined our Development Committee. She will continue in both these roles as her Board responsibilities.

John Waterston has recently retired from the World Bank.

He worked there for 36 years in Human Resources and his duties included the full range of responsibilities for HR policies, programs, training and automation. He has been a long time financial supporter of CCM and a regular attendee of CCM events. John will be joining the Development Committee as his Board responsibility.

While we welcome new faces, we say goodbye to three retiring Board members. Penny Proserpi has retired after two full terms at CCM. She served CCM actively, faithfully and generously in many ways for almost 20 years as a Competition Committee member, Gala Committee member and hostess extraordinaire. Jean McHale’s creative imagination, enthusiasm and talents have been essential to our Gala for many years. Chuck Petty has been a particular contributor as we continue to enlarge our Chamber Music Festival. He was involved with the addition of our opening Sunday concert at St. Marks. In addition, he has been a steady advisor and contributor on issues large and small.
Calidore String Quartet: 2012 Competition Gold Medalists at Festival 27

by Michael Silver

After hearing the Calidore String Quartet three times this Spring, I was surprised to learn that they had played together, with the current personnel, only since September, 2011. Their high level of expertise was evident, even to a casual chamber music attendee, with a rich, full and exciting sound.

I had the pleasure of meeting with the quartet on the afternoon of their Friday evening recital at the Avalon for Festival 27.

Having already won the Grand Prize plus a Gold Medal at the Fischoff Competition, the largest chamber music competition in the world, I wondered what importance winning the Chesapeake Chamber Music Gold Medal would have for their careers. They explained that coming from California it would provide them with the East Coast visibility and credibility necessary to widen their presence in the chamber music community. With the concert season starting in the Fall, and with bookings set up a year or more in advance, this exposure would help them fill out a successful schedule. They hope to continue performing and competing as a quartet going forward, eventually obtaining Masters degrees, leading to a residency at a university or other music institution, giving them desired teaching opportunities. They do not anticipate solo or orchestral engagements that would take time from the quartet’s demands. In addition to course work and individual instrumental classes, the quartet practices together three hours per day.

The musicians attend the prestigious Colburn Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles. The usual fierce competition for limited
slots in the nation’s premier music schools is made more so at Colburn because its endowment covers tuition, room and board for each student. The faculty includes world-class performers. Arnold Steinhardt, a founding member and first violinist of the acclaimed Guarneri Quartet, now teaches at a number of institutes. Each time his regular rotation brings him to Colburn, he spends several work sessions with the Calidore sharing skills and techniques from his years of performing experience.

The vast library of available music was a large factor in the Calidore’s choice of the string quartet format. They draw on their strong friendship and comparable levels of expertise, important requirements for a successful group. They share a marked passion for their music.

In the midst of a demanding performance calendar, the quartet plans to expand its repertoire by nine pieces by the end of the summer.

I will enjoy following the evolving careers of Ryan Meehan, Jeffrey Meyers, Jerome Berry and Estelle Choi, the Calidore String Quartet.
MONTY ALEXANDER

JAZZ FESTIVAL

Friday, August 31, 8:00 p.m.
Dominick Farinacci

Saturday, September 1, 4:00 p.m.
Salute to Duke Ellington
Chuck Redd and The University of Maryland Jazz Ensemble

Saturday, September 1, 8:00 p.m.
Monty Alexander Quartet

Sunday, September 2, 2:00 p.m.
Salute to Mahalia Jackson
Dee Daniels and her trio
with the Asbury United Methodist Church Celebration Choir

All performances held in historic Easton, MD at the Avalon Theatre.

In all his music, the 67-year-old Alexander’s right-hand lines ring out with the power of a great vocalist, while his percussive left hand builds a strong foundation.

National Public Radio