Big band salutes King of Swing

By Keely Kaleski Wygonik
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Benny Goodman's Big Band music is timeless and still popular. On Sunday, April 28, The Windsor/Detroit Jazz Club will salute Goodman in a tribute concert featuring clarinetist Bill Wyse, Paul Keller and his 17-piece orchestra, and vocalist Susan Chastain.

"This event sold out last year in August at the Livonia Knights of Columbus Hall, so we had to move to a larger venue," said Bill Knowles of Farmington, president of The Windsor/Detroit Jazz Club. "Our capacity was 400 people. We turned down 300. We sold out 10 days before the concert. It was so well received that we decided to do it again. Temple Beth El has seating for close to 1,000 people."

Nostaglia is the reason Keller believes Goodman's music is so popular. "People recognize it, they remember it," he said. "People just go nuts over it — it's music with strong melodies."

Don't Be that Way, is one of the songs Goodman's known for. It and 27 other gems will be performed at the concert.

A bass player and band leader, Keller likes Goodman's arrangements because they provide a framework for some good jazz solos. Most are only three-and-a-half minutes long, the length of one side of an oldtime record. The concert will be like listening to Goodman's original records.

"Goodman played a melody like a song," said Keller. "Then he'd improvise afterward. In his day he was like Madonna or Prince, he was the popular music of that generation. That's what the kids were listening to, and having a singer was just one more way of pleasing the audience."

Susan Chastan, owner of the Firefly Jazz Club in Ann Arbor, will sing about seven songs accompanied by Keller's orchestra which plays at the club 8-11 p.m. every Monday.

"Personally, I like all kinds of jazz," said Keller. "I'm a big lover of swing, and Goodman was the King of Swing. There's some kind of excitement in all of them, a kind of power that's attractive to me musically. I'm a nut for harmony and trying to learn new songs and chords."

A lot of research went into putting this concert together. "When we put together a concert of 28 gems like this one I feel like a millionaire," said Keller. "We put a spin on some of Goodman's obscure songs. There's a raw excitement in the swing beat, that's what makes people want to dance. Jim Wyse is the guy on the local scene, he's right up there with the best clarinetists."

For more information about Keller and the Firefly, visit www.firefly.com or www.boporecords.com

A Tribute to Benny Goodman

What: Paul Keller's 17-piece orchestra, vocalist Susan Chastain, and clarinetist Jim Wyse on clarinet

When: 3 p.m. Sunday, April 28

Where: Temple Beth El, 14 Mile Road at Telegraph, Bloomfield Hills

Tickets: $15 per person, in advance or at the door. Call (248) 476-2674 for tickets/information.

Talented team: *Vocalist Susan Chastain and Paul Keller.*

Guest artists: *Paul Keller (bass, center) and his orchestra.*

Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival announces artists

The Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival will present more than 20 concerts during its ninth season, scheduled this year from June 15-30.

A coalition of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish congregations sponsor the secular event, which is recognized for its dedication to excellence and intimate dialogue between artists and audience.

St. Hugo of the Hills, Kirk of the Hills and Temple Beth El join together with host ensemble, Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings, to bring the Festival's music to venues throughout metropolitan Detroit, Ann Arbor and East Lansing.

Pianist Ruth Laredo, and sisters Ani and Ida Kavafian, violinists, will join pianist James Tocco and conductor Philip Greenberg. Also returning to the Festival will be violinist Jeffrey Multer, cellist Paul Katz, soprano Linda Hohenfeld and members of the Detroit Chamber Wind & Strings.

Violinist Shmuel Ashkenasi, cellist Andres Diaz and pianist Sandra Rivers will perform at the festival for the first time this year. The contemporary music sextet eight blackbird will join the Festival performers this year. The group appeared in 1997 as part of the Festival's Shouse Institute training program.

This year's composer-in-residence, John Harbison, is one of the country's most prominent composers. His opera, *The Great Gatsby*, commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera, premiered to worldwide acclaim in December 1999. The Lyric Opera of Chicago performed Harbison's opera in October 2001. It returns to the Met stage next month.

Harbison has been composer-in-residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Tanglewood, Marlboro and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festivals and the American Academy in Rome.

The Festival's concerts have been featured on National Public Radio's Performance Today and the Festival has released two compact discs on the Gasparo label. A third disc, featuring the music of 1999's composer-in-residence, Ned Rorem, was released in 2000 on the Newport Classics label.

Tickets for the ninth annual Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival will be available for individual concerts or on a series subscription basis. For more information, call the Festival office at (248) 559-2097.

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