

# In Tune

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## Letting the good times roll

Singer Ronnie Leigh celebrated the kinship between jazz, the blues and R&B in his Monday, November 14 appearance in Punta Gorda, FL for the Charlotte County Jazz Society.

The suave, engaging entertainer from upstate New York made his CCJS debut with a performance that dug into the Great American Songbook and more-modern jazz and R&B sources, including material from Gregory Porter, the late Al Jarreau and even Steely Dan.

Leigh and his tight seven-piece jazz band put extended interpretations on all of the material. The band included saxophonist David MacKenzie, trumpeter Charlie Bertini, trombonist Herb Bruce, pianist John O'Leary, bassist Charlie Silva, drummer Paul Parker and guitarist Steve Luciano. While the other players were no strangers to CCJS audiences, this was also Orlando-based Luciano's first visit.

Leigh opened with Porter's "On My Way to Harlem," a wistful but upbeat acknowledgment of jazz and the Harlem Renaissance as one's musical roots. Right away, it was clear that generous solo space for the horn players would be a strength all night.

The three-man horn section added unison riffing behind Leigh's sometimes-teasing, laid back, mellow vocals. He also dropped in wordless scatting segments on various songs without overdoing the techniques. A few times, he sounded like a fourth horn, emulating the sounds of a trombone or trumpet while trading melodic-phrases with MacKenzie.



Leigh, Parker, MacKenzie

A Latin-tinged take on "Stompin' at the Savoy" had Leigh scatting a bit and dancing in place to its cha cha rhythm. It was followed by another gem from Porter, who emerged a decade ago as a fine singer-songwriter equally at home in the jazz and R&B genres. This one was "When Love Was King," an extended ballad that Leigh sang with just the rhythm section.

After a laid-back, teasing introduction, Leigh transformed the standard "Bye, Bye Blackbird" into a playful yet soulful treat, riding Silva's beautiful bass line. MacKenzie on flute and trumpeter Bertini were featured soloists.

Over the course of the two sets, Leigh dug into four Jarreau tunes. "We're in This Love Together" during the first set was just the teaser. The second set included three more hits from the Jarreau songbook: "I Need Somebody" (featuring a robust horn interlude), the uptempo "Easy" and "Mornin'," with Leigh's soaring vocals riding the groove. On all of these, scatting and horn emulation supplemented the vocals, much like Jarreau did.



John O'Leary

Riffing horns and a frisky tenor sax solo from MacKenzie enhanced Leigh's take on "Bring it Back." The singer first heard the gritty tune performed by singer Catherine Russell, who recorded it in 2014. It was written in the late 1940s or early 1950s by R&B and jump blues singer-guitarist Harrison Nelson, who performed under the name Peppermint Harris.

Leigh also shared Steely Dan's "Deacon Blues" and jazz singer Ron Boustead's humorous, quasi-romantic "(Let's Go Out For) Coffee." Leigh's melodic accents and pauses added a joyous effect to the latter, setting up an extended keyboard solo from O'Leary.

The night's three other tunes spoke volumes about headliner's zest for the stage and rapport with an audience. "Let the Good Times Roll," a bluesy take on "Ain't Misbehavin'" and, of course, "I Love Being Here with You."

The event at the Gulf Theater and the Military Heritage Museum became the CCJS 2022-2023 season opener. An October concert was canceled due to facility damage from Hurricane Ian.



Ronnie Leigh



MacKenzie, Bertini, Bruce



The Ronnie Leigh Octet

## CCJS debuts new jam session focus

The Charlotte County Jazz Society rolled out a new format for its long-running jam sessions on Sunday, November 20 at The Grill at 1951 in Port Charlotte.

The three-hour matinee event included a partial focus on the music of one legendary jazz great, in this case hard-bop trumpeter Lee Morgan. There also was a hefty dose of performances by student players from Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers. Other musicians were encouraged to sit in – and many did.

St. Petersburg-based trumpeter Kevin Celebi was a featured guest, digging deeply into Morgan compositions and other musical gems during the jam. In exploring the Morgan legacy, the musicians performed his most-popular composition, “The Sidewinder,” the poignant ballad “Ceora,” “Cornbread” and the Jazz Messengers classic “Moanin,” which drummer Art Blakey’s band first recorded with Morgan on trumpet.



Kevin Celebi

Philadelphia-born Morgan was a busy, heralded player during his career, which stretched from the late 1950s, through the Blue Note label’s prolific 1960s heyday, until the snowy, early morning hours of February 19, 1972 when he was shot and killed by his common-law wife during a performance at Slug’s Saloon in lower Manhattan’s East Village. They had argued between sets because he was there with another woman with whom he was having an affair. He was 33.

The house rhythm section included jams coordinator Shawn Marren on piano, FGCU jazz studies director Brandon Robertson on bass and FGCU student John Gonzalez on drums.



Grant Cuthbertson

The other performers included tenor saxophonist George Ariante, snowbirding Philly-area saxophonist Len Pierro, trumpeter Philip Eyrich (Lemon Bay High School band director), bassists Grant Cuthbertson and Chris Norton, pianist Tim Goodman, singer & drummer Patricia Dean (who played on Morgan’s funky “Cornbread”), singer Pam Koontz, guitarist Scott Mitchell, drummer Jim Willisie, and the FGCU Jazz Ensemble.



Scott Mitchell, Pam Koontz, Kevin Celebi



Len Pierro, Philip Eyrich

That student band included Gonzalez, pianist Mason Hunn, saxophonists Carter Pople and Frank Saunders, bassists Gabriel Burgos and Matt Edwards, Piper Kemmerer on bass & vocals (on “Social Call”).

The next jam will spotlight the music of Sonny Rollins with guest Bob Miner on tenor sax. It is at The Grill at 1941 on Sunday, December 18 from 1 to 4 p.m.

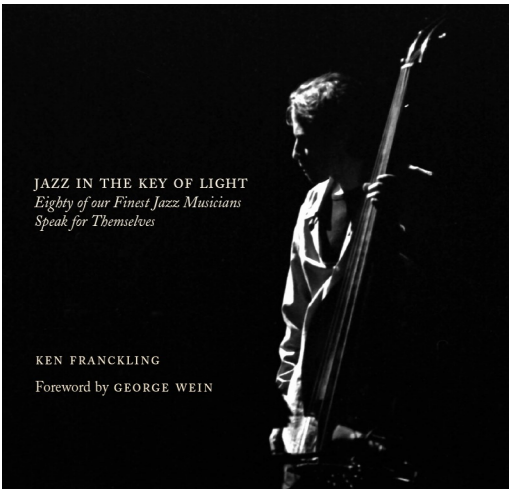


FGCU students Frank Saunders, Mason Hunn, Carter Pople, Piper Kemmerer, John Gonzalez

UPCOMING CONCERT NEWS



Don't miss our *Jazz in the Key of Light* book signing

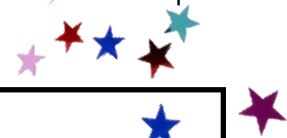


CCJS concert reviewer and photographer Ken Franckling will sell and sign copies of his fine-art book, *Jazz in the Key of Light*, at the December 12 concert featuring saxophonist Valerie Gillespie's Holiday Jazz band.

With the holidays approaching, not to mention the special occasions that pop up, be sure to keep in mind this limited-edition photography book when you're looking for something special for the jazz fan(s) and musicians in your life. If you're the fan, please tell your elves.

Most of the book's shared musical moments are from jazz events in Boston, Newport and New York, Floating Jazz Festivals in the Caribbean, and concerts here in southwest Florida. Each image is paired with an essential quote from Ken's interviews with the featured musicians. One reader's reaction: "This hardcover should be in every college music library as a reference for jazz students."

Ken was United Press International's jazz columnist for nearly 20 years. He now writes for *Jazz Times*, *Hot House* and *OffBeat* magazines and covers the Southwest Florida jazz scene for his blog. He has covered the past 41 Newport Jazz Festivals.



**CCJS is pleased to announce a performance by the jazz band students from Charlotte High School prior to the December concert. Doors will open at 6:00 p.m. Come early to support these young jazz enthusiasts.**



**\*\*\*\*\*CONCERT SCHEDULE UPDATE\*\*\*\*\***

Thanks to the impact of Hurricane Ian, the 2022-23 CCJS evening concert series got off to a late start- but it won't be diminished.

The scheduled opener, featuring tenor saxophonist Jeff Rupert's quartet on Monday, October 10, will now be the season closing event. Jeff's Orlando-based band will perform an afternoon concert at the Gulf Theater at the Military Heritage Museum in Punta Gorda on Monday, May 8 at 2 p.m. Admission is free for CCJS members, \$25 for non-members.

Jeff Rupert chairs the University of Central Florida's jazz studies program. He is no stranger to the CCJS stage. He will be joined by Richard Drexler, on piano, Ben Kramer on bass and Marty Morrell, who was jazz piano great Bill Evans' longest-serving drummer.





### **A life well lived, and then some....**

Someone's impact on others is a more meaningful measure of a life well-lived than the number of years they spend on the planet. That notion was reinforced when we received word that Dan Miller died unexpectedly on Friday, August 19. He was just 53.

Dan was passionate about a lot of things - auto racing and other sports, fine food, and his family. Most of us knew him best through his many contributions to the world of jazz. He was a high-octane trumpeter, blessed with a bright, soulful sound that graced the ranks of many a band through the years. He performed at least four times at CCJS concerts since 2016, most recently at the December 2021 concert at Gulf Theater.

His sudden passing came just a few days after he and his sweetheart, Judi Woods, returned from their regular 12-day vacation trip to New Orleans. On this visit, he caught up with many longtime musical friends and former band mates, and sat in one night at Preservation Hall.

The Chicago-area native worked with Maynard Ferguson, Harry Connick Jr., the Wynton Marsalis-led Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Tom Jones, Woody Herman, Lionel Hampton and others. It seemed he could do it all - and do it well. He was as passionate about teaching as he was about performing, maybe even more so.

Dan was a fixture on the New York jazz scene until 2004 when he began spending part of the year in Southwest Florida. He moved here permanently about a dozen years ago, quickly making an indelible impact on the region's music scene - as a performer, educator and mentor.

In addition to leading or co-leading groups, frequently with *NBC Saturday Night Live Band* alumnus Lew Del Gatto, Dan was on the Jazz Studies faculty at the University of Central Florida and also taught privately. He was a Yamaha Performing Artist and Clinician for more than 30 years, traveling the country frequently as a guest clinician at high school and college jazz programs.

He taught late pianist Barry Harris's principles of jazz improvisation to students of all instruments. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of jazz players and their recordings - not just the trumpeters whose work he studied in analytic detail. He shared that knowledge freely - and eagerly.

He started and directed the Naples Philharmonic Youth Jazz Orchestra, and led a Naples-based community big band concert series on Sunday afternoons during the snowbird season.

Here's what trumpeter Wynton Marsalis shared on Facebook about what he termed his "inexpressible grief" over Dan's death:

"Dan was the essence of our music: soulful, original, virtuosic and consistent. He was a great great educator and even better student. Most importantly, he was deeply engaged with humanity and how it could best be expressed in our interactions with each other, and through the trumpet. Big sound, big spirit, his sudden passing is shocking and a wake up call for us all to savor every moment down this road. Rest In Peace."

(adapted from Ken Franckling's *Jazz Notes* blog)

## Introducing our two newest board members

### Jordan Aquila

Originally from Buffalo, NY, Jordan moved to Florida in 1986 and attended Port Charlotte Middle and High Schools where he began his passion for playing the trumpet. He began working at Buffalo Graffix, his family's printing business, in January of 2000 and continues to work there and manage the operations. Shortly after graduating high school, he began playing trumpet professionally. He plays with a few bands and at churches around the Southwest Florida area but does most of his playing at the Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre in Fort Myers where he has performed in over 100 productions and has also conducted numerous shows.



### Les Kraus

Les is a retired music educator who served as Director of Bands at Port Charlotte Middle School for 25 years. He is a graduate of Kent State University where he earned a Bachelors of Music and a Masters in Educational Administration. After teaching in Northeast Ohio for 11 years he moved his family to Port Charlotte. As a freelance musician, Les has performed in swing bands, symphony orchestras, and in the "pits" for musical theater, taking him from Tampa to Naples. He and his wife Jan are the proud parents of two sons and a daughter, all of whom were involved in music. In retirement he has continued as a music educator working with area school band programs as a clinician. He loves helping all students develop their musical skills to the best of their ability.



### New Scholarship announced

The Charlotte County Jazz Society has been a strong supporter of our local students who have taken up jazz studies as part of the music curriculum. We're very proud of the fact that all three Charlotte County band directors, as well as two Jazz Society board members, are former recipients of scholarship awards from CCJS. Now we invite members and friends of our organization to join us in this commitment with the establishment of a **CCJS Members and Friends Scholarship** to be awarded in April 2023 along with those presented by CCJS.

The scholarship is already underway with an anonymous matching funds donation of \$1000. Donations can be made at any concert, jam, or special event, or with a check mailed to our post office box with "Scholarship" indicated on the memo line. Deadline for donations to this special scholarship is March 31, 2023. Just a few dollars from each member would provide a deserving graduating senior with a generous assist toward their college education. Can we count on your support?

### One and Done?

One thousand dollars pledged toward a member-funded scholarship. One thousand dollars matched by you, our generous members. One graduating senior will be awarded a \$2,000 scholarship from this challenge, but why stop now? Three is a great number, as in \$3,000. So, let's keep it going. You have four months to reach this new goal and there's no doubt it can be done. Our graduates need help funding their continuing education, and pledging to support their music studies is part of our mission statement. Donations made to the scholarship fund are tax deductible. Checks can be made payable to CCJS with "Scholarship" indicated on the memo line. Request a receipt at concerts and jams for cash donations. Scholarships will be awarded at the April or May concert and for the first time a Member-Funded Scholarship will be included along with those made from our educational endowment fund. Be there and be proud.



### Educational Programs Update

The Educational Outreach Committee has been hard at work re-establishing a presence in our local schools. As of this writing we have completed nine school visits with professional ensembles. Dave Potter and Retro Groove were in town from Atlanta in September, visiting two high schools and two middle schools. In November, singer Svetlana Shmulyian and her pianist Willerm Delisfort, both from NYC, performed clinics for an additional four high schools.

In addition to these ensemble clinics, Educational Director and board member Shawn Marren has been visiting schools each week to teach improvisation classes. He also forged a partnership with Brandon Robertson, the Director of Jazz Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University. The November Jazz Jam featured seven students from FGCU's jazz combo.

In February 2023, Brandon and Shawn have planned a special guest visit from trumpeter and singer Benny Benack, III. He is coming from NYC for a full week of fundraiser concerts at Lemon Bay, Charlotte, and Cape Coral High Schools (more information to come). Benny and his quartet will do more clinics in Charlotte and Lee County Schools, as well as perform at several local venues. The Lee County school visits are being facilitated through Lee County funding.

As this educational program picks up steam, more band directors are requesting these visits and clinics as their students are responding so positively to them. Our primary goal is to spread the love and knowledge of jazz music to the next generation of performers and concertgoers. This semester has been a huge success toward achieving that goal and with your support through membership dues and donations we will continue to expand this program and feature more local performances in our community.



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**New Community Partner**

The Charlotte County Jazz Society is pleased to announce that CCJS and the Punta Gorda Symphony have formed a partnership to promote music in many forms, and introduce the CCJS audience to *Jazz on the Lawn*. Enjoy a beautiful afternoon of jazz presented on the campus of FSW State College, 26300 Airport Road, Punta Gorda.

The December 3rd program will feature local favorite, Patricia Dean & Friends. February 18, 2023 will welcome Lew Del Gatto and Friends to the stage, followed on March 18, 2023 by the Randy Sandke Group.

The single ticket price is \$30, with a three-performance ticket available for \$81. Chairs are provided. Performances begin at 4 PM. To order tickets, visit [PGSymphony.org/Performances](http://PGSymphony.org/Performances) or call the Symphony office at [941-205-5996](tel:941-205-5996).

We look forward to this new collaboration and the opportunity to present even more jazz for your enjoyment.

**Swingin' Jazz Jams!**



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OPEN: Dinner 4:00 to 8:30 pm

**LOTS OF JAZZ 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.**

Call ahead for reservations 941-255-0994

**YOU CAN BECOME A LEGACY SUPPORTER**

Charlotte County Jazz Society is deeply grateful to former members Marjorie Jean Biermann, Helen Langdon, Donatella and Ken Neumann, and Roberta Gasparri. Their generous bequests now play a major role in helping fund the outstanding jazz artists brought to our community by CCJS. They have also been instrumental in supporting our commitment to pass on our love of jazz with the awarding of annual scholarships to graduating high school seniors. We invite you to join us in our mission to preserve, promote and present live jazz by including CCJS in your will, trust, retirement account or life insurance policy, or with a donation to CCJS in honor or memory of a fellow jazz lover. For more detailed information, please contact any CCJS officer or director as listed on the last page.

**CCJS on the Web!**  
[www.ccjazz.org](http://www.ccjazz.org)

- \* Check the concert schedule
- \* Join the jazz society
- \* Preview upcoming concerts and events
- \* Find out where your favorite jazz artists are playing

**LIKE us on Facebook**  
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Charlotte County Jazz -CCJS

**In Tune** is published **four** times a year. We welcome pertinent articles, letters and news items space permitting. Opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the CCJS.

Don't forget to take advantage of our CCJS email list. We send out reminders for events by email. Please send your name and email address to Emilie at [intunejazz@gmail.com](mailto:intunejazz@gmail.com)

**Charlotte County Jazz Society**

A 501© (3) Non-profit Organization

**Membership Form**

NEW or RENEW membership (please circle)

Individual \$65 \_\_\_\_\_

(Please Print)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Year-round resident: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**In Florida:**

Are you a Musician interested in playing at the Jam Sessions: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interest in being a volunteer for CCJS: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please let a Board Member know if you would like to attend a monthly meeting.

**Membership runs from October through May of the year you join.**

**You will see 7 concerts and 7 jams and other events.**

**The Charlotte County Jazz Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.**

**Membership dues and purchased concert tickets are non-refundable except in the case of cancellation of a concert date.**

**Become a CCJS Supporter:**

Hipster: (\$15-\$49) \_\_\_\_\_ Bopper: (\$50-\$99) \_\_\_\_\_

Cool Cat: (\$100-\$249) \_\_\_\_\_ Big Band Swinger: (\$250-\$499) \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Deluxe Membership: (\$500-\$10,000) \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:

**Charlotte County Jazz Society**

**PO Box 495321**

**Port Charlotte, Florida 33949-5321**

Please **mail** this completed form with your check when applying for renewal. Thank you!



## Charlotte County Jazz Society

A 501 ( c ) ( 3 ) Non-profit Organization

### Membership

Don't forget to notify us if there are changes to your name, street address, phone number or email address!

Due to rising costs in printing and postage, we will no longer be mailing newsletters or special events notices. Your correct email address is critical in allowing us to stay in touch and keep you current on all our activities. The Charlotte County Jazz Society will never share your personal information with any other entity.

# JAZZ JAM



**OUR JAZZ JAMS** : The December Jam will be held December 18 at The Grill at 1951. The jam will start at 1:00 but you are welcome to come early and enjoy a great lunch before the music begins. Bring your instrument and join in or just come by and enjoy the great music. Admission to the jam is free to CCJS members and a donation to our scholarship fund for non-members. Food and beverage selections will be available. **SEE YOU THERE.!**



## 2022-2023 Concert Season

- December 12** Valerie Gillespie Ensemble with a holiday themed show (CPAC)
- January 9** Paul Gavin & Mosaic with an Art Blakey tribute (CPAC)
- February 13** Orlando Jazz Orchestra salute to Henry Mancini (CPAC)
- March 13** The Midiri Brothers (Gulf Theater)
- April 10** Trumpeter Terumaso Hino (Gulf Theater)
- May 8 (at 2:00)** Jeff Rupert Quartet (Gulf Theater)

## CCJS 2022-23 Officers

- Lynda Platt, President
- Aaron Lucas, President Elect
- Dan Cobb, Treasurer
- Pam Koontz, Secretary
- Dave Nims, Past President

### Directors

- Chris (Brown) Fitzgerald
- Shawn Marren
- James Mashburn
- Tom Osborne
- Ron Wallis
- Jordan Aquila
- Les Kraus
- Herb Bruce, Concert Coordinator
- Emilie Deskins, Administrative Assistant

Messages for individual board members can be sent via our email address or through the CCJS hotline number.

**CCJS HOTLINE: 941.766.9422**

**[www.ccjazz.org](http://www.ccjazz.org)**

**[www.facebook.com/ccjazzsociety](https://www.facebook.com/ccjazzsociety)**

***Best wishes for a  
joyful holiday season  
from your CCJS Board  
of Directors and  
Associates***

