

In Tune

Official Publication of Charlotte County Jazz Society, Inc.

Volume 34, Issue 1

March 2023

The CCJS jazz education commitment is on the grow

Jazz education is alive and well in Southwest Florida, and the Charlotte County Jazz Society is right in the thick of initiatives that are benefiting students in Charlotte County and several neighboring counties.

Here's a look at these exciting, related efforts.

Education Fundraiser

CCJS held its first Education Fundraising Dinner on Sunday, February 5. It featured trumpeter and singer Benny Benack III with the Brandon Robertson Trio, kicking off the trumpeter and singer's week-long music education and concert residency.

More than 100 guests enjoyed this sold-out event at the Charlotte Harbor Yacht Club. It included testimonials from area band directors and students, and Benack's 90 minute concert.

Special thanks to our sponsors, Dr. Douglas Joyce and Scott & Audrey Gould, and to Dr. Tony Gil for his lead in organizing the event.

All proceeds from this event will continue funding our school visits and student-training activities.



Benny Benack III

Community Outreach

On February 6, we partnered with Lemon Bay High School in Englewood to bring Benny Benack and the Florida Gulf Coast University Jazz combo into the school for a three hour clinic and an evening concert. The students learned about improvisation and had a chance to perform and work on their jazz band pieces with Benny.

At the evening concert, Benny played a full set with the FGCU combo, the Lemon Bay Jazz Rays played several tunes, and then they all played "Benny's from Heaven," (singer Eddie Jefferson's whimsical update of "Pennies From Heaven"), which featured Benny on vocals and trumpet.

On February 8, a similar set of events were hosted at Charlotte High School. The students had a two-hour after-school clinic with Benny Benack plus a performance by the Brandon Robertson Trio. The feedback we received from the band directors, students, and audience members has been very positive.

If you are interested in helping to organize events like these please, contact Shawn Marren by email at shawnmarren@mac.com. The more volunteers we have involved, the better we are able to serve the community with professionally structured events like these.



Lemon Bay High School clinic

Student bands are Superior



Several of our Board members attended the District 11 Jazz Ensemble Music Performance Assessments, which were held February 15 at Lemon Bay High School.

Twenty-six middle and high school jazz bands, totaling 573 students, competed from Charlotte, Sarasota, and Manatee counties. All three Charlotte County bands in the competition (Charlotte High, Lemon Bay High, and L.A. Ainger Middle) earned Superior ratings.

Scholarship Update

CCJS continues to be a strong supporter of our local students who have taken up jazz studies as part of the music curriculum. The scholarship committee has visited all three Charlotte County high schools to introduce our scholarship for this year and answer any questions from seniors and directors.

The response to our first Members' Funded Scholarship has been beyond expectations and we are grateful for your support of the CCJS mission to assist high school Seniors with college expenses. The project began with a \$1,000 pledge of matching funds, which was quickly met and then supplemented by an additional \$1,000 donation.

Scholarships will be awarded at the April concert, so there is still time to contribute to this designated fund by a direct contribution via cash or check to CCJS Scholarship Fund, or by a donation of \$5 to enter the drawing for a gift basket valued at more than \$400. Gift basket tickets will only be available before the start of the March 13 concert and the winning ticket will be drawn during intermission.

All donations to this fund must be made no later than March 31, 2023 so that the scholarship committee can determine the number of awards to be presented to deserving Seniors. With your help, this can be a significant scholarship which will be proudly presented in *your* name!



Charlotte High School concert



Lemon Bay High School concert



Charlotte County Jazz Society

Additional photos from February 5 fundraiser



1



2



3



4



5



6

1. Mason Hunt, Benny Benack III, Brandon Robertson, John Gonzales
2. Brandon Robertson, Benny Benack III
3. Shawn Marren
4. BennyBenack III, Lynda Platt, Shawn Marren
5. Shawn Marren, Aaron Lucas, Rocky Lucas
6. Benny Benack III, Ken Franckling, Dr. Tony Gil



A jazzed winter wonderland

Saxophonist and singer Valerie Gillespie added a full holiday twist to the Charlotte County Jazz Society's concert season on Monday, December 12 in Punta Gorda. She and her talented sextet from the Tampa Bay area coursed through 15 winter- or Christmas-themed musical chestnuts before closing with a brief salute to another holiday.



Valerie Gillespie

There was a wide variety to the music, performed with both cohesiveness and strong solos. Her band included trumpeter James Suggs and three new faces on the CCJS stage: pianist Jody Marsh, bassist Steve Boisen and drummer Dave Rudolph.

The leader shifted between alto and soprano saxes and flute, plus vocals on two-thirds of the material. Suggs added beautiful horn solos and fills behind Gillespie's vocals all night long.

Gillespie has been a familiar face on the CCJS stage in other musicians' bands, but this was her first appearance as a bandleader and singer.

Gillespie said the evening would include "traditional tunes performed in a non-traditional way," an apt description for the rhythmic choices and extended instrumental solos that enhanced them.

"Angels Heard on High" and "Winter Wonderland" preceded two classic Vince Guaraldi tunes from television's *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. "Skating" was presented in a friskier arrangement than the evocative original, while "Christmas Time is Here" was more traditional, with Gillespie's vocals beautifully locked into its nostalgic message. She has a charming, no-frills and trills vocal delivery - and a natural sense of timing and off-the-beat phrasing.

Three standout vocal gems this night included material not often heard in jazz settings: "Mary Did You Know?," the Carpenters' hit "Merry Christmas Darling," which featured a poignant solo from Suggs, and "It Can't Be Christmas Without You." The latter romantic ballad has all the qualities needed to become a true holiday standard. Gillespie's big brother, Chuck Brand, wrote this title track on her Christmas CD. Her cover of "Mary Did You Know?" was particularly powerful, with Gillespie noting that the lyrics speak directly to "the reason for the season." Mark Lowry and Buddy Green wrote this gem in 1984. It was a huge hit for the young a cappella group Pentatonix 30 years later.



Valerie Gillespie

Other selections included "The Christmas Waltz," first popularized by Frank Sinatra, featuring the leader on vocals and alto sax, a Latin-tinged take on "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," and "Little Drummer Boy" (a natural feature for Rudolph's percussion mastery). Also, "Let It Snow," a frisky cover of the 1954 Eartha Kitt hit "Santa Baby" (with Suggs' growling trumpet complementing the vocals), and Mel Torme's classic "The Christmas Song."

If food and beverage had been allowed, chestnuts roasting on an open fire would have been a popular item. The audience started out at nearly 200, but dropped off in size by intermission. Credit that to a very chilly - and unadjustable - room temperature at the Charlotte Performing Arts Center. Hot chocolate, anyone?

The evening wound down with "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," spotlighting Marsh's piano artistry on CPAC's Steinway; a salsa-fied take on "Feliz Navidad," with Gillespie shifting to flute; and a brief romp through "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?"

While past December bands usually played a few holiday tunes, this was the first CCJS concert that featured them for the entire program. That made this night even more special for hardy listeners.

The Charlotte High School jazz ensemble performed a fine and varied pre-concert set.



Jody Marsh



James Suggs



Charlotte High School Jazz Ensemble



Marsh, Gillespie, Boisen, Suggs, Rudolph

Reprinted with permission from writer-photographer Ken Franckling's Jazz Notes blog.

Paul Gavin's Mosaic project

Paul Gavin and his group Mosaic brought a high-energy performance of the music of Art Blakey to our first concert of the new year on January 9, 2023 at The Charlotte Performing Arts Center.

The Mosaic sextet included Paul Gavin on drums, James Suggs on trumpet, Valerie Gillespie on saxophone, Herb Bruce on trombone, John O'Leary on piano and Brandon Robertson on bass.

The music was artfully presented in a way that both honored the original performance style but brought the individual voices of the performers on stage. All of the musicians were featured on various songs and were definitely working hard for the audience.

Paul's solo performance of "The Freedom Rider" was so captivating that we didn't even notice that he was the only one playing! The coordination of keeping time while soloing for such an extended length of time was a celebration of Paul's musicianship and attention to detail.

This concert was truly representative of one of the greatest jazz artists— and his famous fellow sidemen— of the heart of bebop and the jazz "combo" tradition.



Paul Gavin



Mosaic Project—John O'Leary, Brandon Robertson, Paul Gavin, Valerie Gillespie, Herb Bruce, James Suggs

The tasty groove of Jazz Simpatico

After pandemic pauses and a Hurricane Ian-related cancellation last fall, the Charlotte County Jazz Society delivered the fifth edition of its informal matinee concerts on Thursday, February 2 – and it was a gem.

Trumpeter Bob Zottola performed with his Naples-based Jazz Simpatico band at the Grill at 1951 in Port Charlotte, Florida. It was billed as a trio performance with steady collaborators Stu Shelton on keyboard and Tim Ruger on drums. But it was much more, given the scope of their musicality and an unexpected guest, tenor saxophonist Len Pierro, a Philadelphia bandleader who spends winters here.



Len Pierro, Bob Zottola

Zottola moved to Florida in 2004 after decades on the New York jazz and Broadway musicals scene, including a 16-year run in the pit orchestra for *Les Miserables*. The leader's trumpet and flugelhorn chops belie his 86 years on the planet. His range and control of dynamics on this most demanding of instruments are marvelous. He often mutes his trumpet with a purple Seagram's Crown Royal bag to dampen the horn's bright sound.



Bob Zottola

Shelton brought an interesting twist, passing up the venue's Yamaha grand piano for his own electric keyboard. He has an unusual technique, playing swinging, beautiful melodies with his right hand while delivering solid bass lines with his left. Close your eyes, and you'd swear there was a string bass player in a dark corner of the stage.



Tim Ruger

Ruger spent years on the road with the *Tony Award*-winning musical *The Fantastics*. He delivered solid, no-frills propulsion all afternoon, adding tasty accents without any excess or bombast. This is a very good thing.

Their material shifted between The Great American Songbook and a bit of Broadway to jazz chestnuts, the latter including Antonio Carlos Jobim's bossa nova classic "Triste." Pierro added his beautiful tenor work to half of them. Zottola also sang on four numbers: "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square," "Bye Bye Blackbird," "I'm Old Fashioned" and a poignant version of Leonard Bernstein's "Some Other Time" from the 1944 musical *On the Town*.



Stu Shelton

Several instrumental choices underscored the band's creativity.

- *Their uptempo version of John Coltrain's minor blues "Mr. "P.C.," written in tribute to bassist Paul Chambers, featured Pierro on tenor sax, with Shelton delivering a relentless bass line and a classic B-3 organ sound.
- *Alternating notes on their respective home, Zottola and Pierro teased their way into the melody before turning up the heat on "Stella by Starlight."
- *A clever rearrangement of Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" took the beautiful ballad in new directions.
- *An extended exploration of the classic tenor saxophone feature "Body and Soul," which Coleman Hawkins transformed into a jazz standard, showcased Pierro's beautifully laid-back tenor sound. He can swing hard when warranted, but never overplays.

They closed the afternoon with an extended take on "The Theme," one of Miles Davis's classic jazz heads based on the first eight bars of "I Got Rhythm." They rode with great joy over the chord changes, known in the jazz vernacular as "rhythm changes." It was the perfect summation of everything that preceded it.



Pierro, Zottola



Pierro, Zottola, Ruger, Shelton

Reprinted with permission from writer-photographer Ken Franckling's Jazz Notes

Saluting Henry Mancini's immense musical legacy

If you watched television, went to the movies or listened to the radio in the 1960s, '70s or '80s, the music of composer Henry Mancini was everywhere. He left a stunning legacy of movie scores and TV theme music, which the Orlando Jazz Orchestra explored and celebrated on Monday, February 13 in its first Charlotte County Jazz Society appearance.

Mancini, who was both prolific and versatile throughout his five-decade career, died in 1964 at age 70. He won four *Oscars*, one *Golden Globe* and 20 *Grammy Awards*, plus a posthumous *Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award*, for the most memorable of his hundreds of compositions.



Greg Parnell

Musical director Greg Parnell brought an 11-member version of his fine Central Florida-based repertory ensemble. Thanks to crafty, swinging arrangements for its six horn players, it often sounded like a robust big band.

For the several hundred listeners at the Charlotte Performing Arts Center in Punta Gorda FL, this was a trip down a musical Memory Lane, with Parnell interspersing bits of historical perspective and anecdotes as the band explored Mancini's elegant melodies.

The band included David MacKenzie on alto sax and clarinet, Rex Wertz on tenor sax, Fil Lorenz on baritone sax, Charlie Bertini and Justin Diaz on trumpet, Clay Lucovich on trombone, Judi Glover on piano, Steve Luciano on guitar, Greg Zabel on bass, and the drummer's wife, Amy Parnell, adding vocals on six tunes.

They opened with an early composition "BT Jump." Mancini, then a journeyman pianist, arranger and composer wrote it for the Tex Beneke Orchestra, which was carrying on the Glenn Miller big band tradition. (Parnell was the revived Glenn Miller Orchestra's drummer and road manager for many years). They followed with "Too Little Time," the love theme from 1954's film *The Glenn Miller Story*.



Justin Diaz, Charlie Bertini



Steve Luciano, Greg Zabel

Two pieces followed from the late 1950s TV private detective series *Peter Gunn*: "Brothers Go to Mothers" and "Dreamsville." Wertz and Luciano were featured as the band dug into the theme from the series *Mr. Lucky*, opting for a version that trombonist Phil Wilson arranged for the Buddy Rich Band.

The band's Latinized take on "Moon River," the Mancini-Johnny Mercer ballad from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, featuring Amy Parnell's wistful vocals and a Bertini horn solo. That in turn set up a swinging romp through "The Days of Wine and Roses" that energized the room. Mancini won *Grammys* and *Academy Awards* for both.



Amy Parnell

Other fine moments included MacKenzie's teasing clarinet solo on "Baby Elephant Walk" from the 1962 film *Hatari*, and the themes from two editions of *The Pink Panther*, with Lorenz turning in a fine baritone solo on "A Shot in the Dark."

The OJO's version of "The Sweetheart Tree" from *The Great Race* featured beautiful interplay between Amy Parnell and Glover, and then MacKenzie's answering alto sax solo. Shifting gears from soundtrack and TV theme music, the band dug into "Cheers!," a hard-driving big band instrumental that Mancini recorded in 1963 on his *Uniquely Mancini* album.



Judi Glover

Saving the best for last, the band wrapped up the evening with four standouts. They included Glover's poignant extended piano solo on "Two For the Road" and a searing Latinized take on "It Had Better Be Tonight" from *The Pink Panther* original movie with frisky vocals, as well as an extended drum feature for the leader.

Then came another Glover feature on Mancini's arrangement of Nino Rota's "Love Theme from *Romeo and Juliet*" (Also known as "A Time For Us".) Mancini's recorded version resulted in his only No. 1 hit single during the rock "n" roll era, spending two weeks atop *Billboard* magazine's Hot 100 in the summer of 1969.



David MacKenzie

The Orlando Jazz Orchestra finished on a high note, lots of them actually, with one of Mancini's first TV music hits, "Peter Gunn Theme."

The Lemon Bay High School jazz ensemble, the Jazz Rays, performed a varied pre-concert set that included several New Orleans classics, some Miles Davis, and closed with the Jaco Pastorius-Bireli Lagrene version of the Pee Wee Ellis composition "The Chicken."



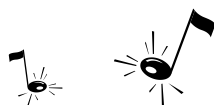
Orlando Jazz Orchestra



Lemon Bay High School's Jazz Rays

Reprinted with permission from writer-photographer Ken Franckling's Jazz Notes blog.

UPCOMING CONCERT NEWS



March 18 - Charlotte County Jazz Society is pleased to partner with the Gulf Theater at the Military Heritage Museum with a joint sponsorship of the Chris Walters Trio. This New Orleans-born musician has toured with such headliners as Barbara Mandrell, Alabama and Peter Mayer, and has performed with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. He is an award-winning animator, composer and arranger. The March 18th performance will feature the works of George Gershwin and Cole Porter in a review titled "Rhapsody in Burlesque" and will begin at 7 pm. Tickets are available online or through the box office at the museum in person or by phone at 941-575-9002. Ticket prices are \$35/40 and all seats are reserved. Join us for what promises to be a wonderful evening of some of the beloved classics of these iconic composers.



Chris Walters

April 10 - Trumpeter-composer Terumasa Hino, who turned 80 in October 2022, is a musical dynamo revered as a jazz elder statesman in his native Japan. He worked steadily in New York starting in the mid-1970s, playing and recording in the bands of saxophonists Davie Liebman and Jackie McLean, and drummer Elvin Jones, among others. This hard-bop player's trumpet mastery reflects his range, playfulness and enthusiasm for the music. This concert will take place at 7:00 pm at the Gulf Theater.



Terumasa Hino

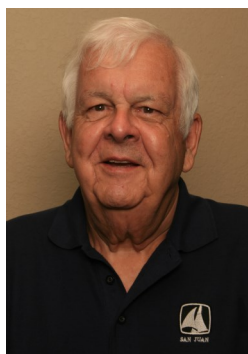
May 8 - Jeff Rupert's quartet, featuring tenor saxophonist Jeff Rupert. Due to Hurricane Ian, our scheduled opener concert was cancelled. This concert will now take place on May 8 at 2 pm at the Gulf Theater at the Military Heritage Museum. Admission is free for CCJS members, \$25 for non-members. Jeff 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 Morell, who was jazz piano great Bill Evans' longest-serving drummer.



Jeff Rupert



A fond farewell



Dave Nims

Dave Nims' bio is impressive - advanced college degrees and a 40-year career as a teacher of English in several high schools in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Then there's the music connection as a self-taught pianist who performed with small jazz and dance groups starting while he was a high school student and continuing well into his adult years. Those accomplishments would be sufficient for some, but not for Dave. He joined CCJS as a member in 2000 and became a board member in 2008, serving as Secretary, then almost nine years as President.

During his tenure as the latter, Dave was instrumental (pun intended...) in kick-starting the Community Partners program, which has been successful in bringing over a dozen local businesses and organizations onboard in support of our concert series and educational outreach programs. A recipient of a Lifetime Membership award in 2021, Dave has continued to be a strong presence on the business end of

the jazz society as well as a devoted member, enjoying the concerts and jazz jams along with his wife Marilyn. The Charlotte County Jazz Society is grateful for Dave's guidance, leadership and support of its missions and we wish him well as he retires from the Board of Directors and looks forward to not attending any more meetings!

Thanks for the memories, Dave.

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Upcoming Jazz on the Lawn: On March 18, 2023 they will welcome the Randy Sandke Group. Enjoy a beautiful afternoon of jazz presented on the campus of FSW State College, 26300 Airport Road, Punta Gorda.
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 or call the Symphony office at [941-205-5996](tel:941-205-5996).

Mission Statement of CCJS

The Mission of the Charlotte County Jazz Society is to increase the availability of Jazz music in our county and to foster the study and appreciation of this original American art form, especially among the youth of our community.

We seek to continually develop and improve upon our monthly concert series which showcases some of the finest jazz performers from throughout the state of Florida. We strive to broaden exposure to jazz among the general public through live performances at community festivals and other local events which reach a wide audience.

CCJS works to serve as a source of information about jazz activities throughout our area by informing local news media, publishing a Society newsletter, and providing a telephone hotline.

We seek to provide continuing aid to middle school and high school students furthering their jazz education and awarding college scholarships on a competitive basis to promising students.

We strive to further expose our area youth to jazz music by admitting local students free of charge to our monthly concert series and jazz jams.

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

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

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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

Charlotte County Jazz Society

New Member Application Form

Membership is good for the concert year October through May

PLEASE PRINT:

Date: _____

New Membership: _____ \$65 per person

Name: (First, Middle, Last): _____

Additional Name at Same Address: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: () _____ Email: _____

Permanent Resident? _____ Yes _____ No

If "No", dates at Florida Address: From: _____ To: _____

Are you a Musician interested in playing at the jam sessions? _____ Yes _____ No

What Instrument (s)? _____

Make check payable to: **Charlotte County Jazz Society, Inc.** (a non-profit organization)

Mailing Address: Charlotte County Jazz Society
P.O. Box 495321
Port Charlotte, FL 33949-5321

Become a CCJS supporter:

Our membership fees cover less than half of the cost to produce our concerts. We undertake various fund-raising efforts during the year to supplement these but inevitable we need to use assets from our endowment to balance the budget. We strive to keep our membership fees as low as they are to allow those with limited incomes to enjoy our shows. If you are fortunate enough to afford it please consider additional donations to our endowment fund. You may earmark your donation for support of our jazz performances or for the support our educational/scholarship programs.

Endowment: _____ Scholarship/Educational Fund: _____

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



UPCOMING JAZZ JAMS:

March 19-Spring is Here, featuring songs with themes of Spring.

April 23-Celebrating the Music of Frank Sinatra

The jams 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.



2022-2023 Concert Season

- March 13** **The Midiri Brothers**
(Gulf Theater)
- April 10** **Trumpeter Terumasa 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

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- Jordan Aquila
- Chris (Brown) Fitzgerald
- Les Kraus
- Shawn Marren
- James Mashburn
- Tom Osborne
- Ron Wallis

- 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

www.facebook.com/ccjazzsociety

Email: intunejazz@gmail.com

How Are We Doing?

Please tell us what you like or don't like about the season so far. Your input is important as we begin the planning process for the upcoming season. You may deposit this form in a basket at the check in desk at any event or just hand it to a board member. We appreciate your participation in this survey.

VENUES

Gulf Theater at the Military Heritage Museum:

Location: Good ____ Not Good For Me ____
 Accessibility: Good ____ Not Good For Me ____
 Parking: Good ____ Not Good For Me ____
 Other Comments: _____

Charlotte Performing Arts Center (CPAC):

Location: Good ____ Not Good For Me ____
 Accessibility: Good ____ Not Good For Me ____
 Parking: Good ____ Not Good For Me ____
 Other Comments: _____

CONCERTS

Please rate these as #1,2,3,or 4, with #1 being your favorite, etc.

November – Ronnie Leigh _____
 December – Valerie Gillespie's Holiday Show _____
 January – Paul Gavin with Mosaic _____
 February – Orlando Jazz Orchestra's Mancini Tribute _____
 Suggestions for future concerts: _____
