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Jazz: Striking concerts set for coming months

By Richard Scheinin

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You think jazz is background music for a \$12 glass of pinot? Uh uh. I only mention it because this seems to be a recently emerging misconception. Wine bars are nice, but the music is a lot more deep-going, bottomless when it's really happening. Read on for recommended concerts in the coming months.

The Kenny Garrett Quartet: Yoshi's, Oakland. Jan. 25-28

The Kenny Garrett Quartet performs with special guest Bobby Hutcherson. When he's on (which is whenever he decides to be), Garrett is an overwhelming alto saxophonist, blowing scarifying solos for 20 or 30 minutes at a stretch; vibraphonist Hutcherson, among the greatest living jazz musicians, has matched intensity with finesse for 40-plus years. Details: Yoshi's, 510 Embarcadero West. 8 and 10 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, 7 and 9 p.m. Sunday; \$14-\$26, (510) 238-9200, www.yoshis.com.

Babatunde Lea: Jazz at Pearl's, San Francisco. Jan. 26-28.

Drummer Babatunde Lea and his Afro-centric, blow-the-roof-off quartet will be at Pearl's. This band (with pianist Glen Pearson, bassist Geoff Brennan and saxophonist Richard Howell) keeps alive the spiritual vibe of McCoy and Pharoah in their heyday. Details: Pearl's, 256 Columbus Ave. 8 and 10 nightly; \$15-\$20, (415) 291-8255, www.jazzatpearls.com

Kenny Barron: Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society at the Douglas Beach House, Half Moon Bay, the Kuumbwa Jazz Center, Santa Cruz. Feb. 11-12.

Whenever the story of jazz piano since the '60s gets told, the same handful of names crops up: Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea and, these days, Brad Mehldau. But ask *musicians* whom they most admire and the list will grow, and one of the names that just about always comes up is Barron's. This master of touch, lyricism and mysterious harmony is giving a pair of solo concerts at two of the Bay Area's most intimate clubs. Details: Feb. 11: 311 Mirada Road (on Miramar Beach), Half Moon Bay. 4:30 p.m.; \$35, (650) 726-4143, info@bachddsoc.org. Feb. 12: 320-2 Cedar St., Santa Cruz. 7 p.m.; \$22 in advance/\$25 at the door, (831) 427-2227, www.kuumbwajazz.org

Joyce Randolph: Sainte Claire Hotel Grande Ballroom, San Jose. March 11

Randolph is an elegant and earthy singer. She picks the right tunes and the right band mates, too, leading a slick quartet: pianist Bill Bell, bassist Jeff Chambers, saxophonist Charles McNeal and master drummer Eddie Marshall. A classically trained musician who sees her life unfolding in chapters, Randolph claims this will be the last of her popular annual concerts of jazz, gospel and blues in the South Bay with this group. Details: 302 S. Market St. 3 p.m.; \$35, www.joycerandolph.org, www.ticketweb.com

Brad Mehldau and Joshua Redman: Herbst Theatre, San Francisco. May 4

A two-performances-only program titled ``Monk & Coltrane: Carnegie Hall Concert Revisited." This homage, as it's being billed, presumably will find pianist Mehldau, saxophonist Redman and a special quartet performing such tunes as ``Monk's Mood," ``Crepuscule with Nellie," ``Nutty" and other Monk gems from the 1957 Carnegie Hall date, which became an unlikely bestseller two years ago after an old broadcast tape was discovered in a Washington, D.C., warehouse and issued on CD. Details: Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness Ave. (at McAllister). 7 and 9:30 p.m.; \$25-\$75, (800) 225-2277, www.sfjazz.org

The Mehl dau-Redman date is only one part of the SFJAZZ spring season's Monk Project, which pays tribute to the pianist/composer in what would have been his 90th year (he died in 1982). Other Monk-related programs will feature the SFJAZZ Collective; pianists Fred Hersch (solo) and Jason Moran (with a 10-piece unit, paying homage to Monk's 1959 Town Hall concert); drummer Ben Riley (a Monk veteran) and others. For a full rundown on these and other spring season events, go to www.sfjazz.org

Guillermo Klein y Los Guachos: Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, San Francisco. June 1

Let's break out one more concert from the aforementioned SFJAZZ spring season. Klein, the Argentine composer, pianist and occasional singer, leads a mini-big band, los Guachos. It has served as incubator for lots of downtown New York talent (especially during Klein's mid-'90s Manhattan sojourn) as well as for his own compositions, which can echo with Piazzolla, Ellington or Wayne Shorter. They are uniquely rugged and mesmerizing. Now based in Barcelona, Klein is bringing los Guachos to San Francisco with a bunch of great, New York-based players including saxophonists Miguel Zenon and Chris Cheek and guitarist Ben Monder. Details: Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, 3301 Lyon (at Bay). 8 p.m.; \$25-\$56, (800) 225-2277, www.sfjazz.org

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