

LBIF Uncovers Hidden Jazz Scene Through Sold-Out Show

By | Jul 07, 2016

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Photo by: Marjorie Amon

On July 3, while many families on the Island rang in Independence Day early with barbecues, fireworks and evening trips to the beach, the community surrounding the Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts and Sciences spent the evening at the Boris Blai Building in Loveladies for the first-ever Jazz Cocktail Hour.

The relative quietness of northern LBI stopped at the building's entryway, as loud drink orders, jokes and commentary filled the room. The event was sold out, and by 7 p.m. was overflowing with people, lovers of jazz or not, and their conversations.

Sara Michaels, the night's host and coordinator as well as a jazz vocalist herself, took to the stage to introduce The Jost Project, but not before Rick Bushnell, president of the foundation, thanked the sponsor of the show, Benée Scola Realtors & Co., as well as the audience. "We want to be more responsive to our community and what they want," Bushnell explained, citing the cocktail hour as a step in that direction.

When The Jost Project took the stage, lead vocalist Paul Jost, spoke briefly about the group's philosophy, focusing on how, as educators, they want to make jazz as accessible as possible to people from every walk of life. This idea led him, along with vibraphonist Tony Miceli, to create jazzier arrangements of popular rock songs from the late 20th century to appeal to a broader audience.



(Photo by: Marjorie Amon)

The two plus Matthew Parrish on upright bass and Marko Marcink on drums proceeded to fill the room with familiar tunes wrapped in jazz rhythms, beats and improvisational sections. Playing songs by Deep Purple, Sting, Aerosmith and Paul Simon, The Jost Project's talent

and awareness made their set at the cocktail hour particularly exciting and enticing. They will perform at the Scranton Jazz Festival on Aug. 6.

At the start of the night, Michaels recounted that when she first had the idea for a Jazz Cocktail Hour, she was met with hesitation, along with the idea that “this island is rock ‘n’ roll only.” But instead of being discouraged, she wanted to challenge those ideas, and change what jazz might mean for the people of LBI. “Jazz is not just your grandpa’s jazz,” she explained, with The Jost Project proving just that.

The first Jazz Cocktail Hour fell fittingly in line with Independence Day. Michaels said, “The word ‘freedom’ rings more than any other for a jazz artist.” As audience members celebrated the country’s freedom by enjoying The Jost Project’s freedom to improvise, Michaels and others behind the scenes of the event celebrated the success they had had with providing jazz to LBI. “We encourage you to open your minds, hearts and souls to jazz,” Michaels said as the evening ended.

The Jazz Cocktail Hour unleashed a previously hidden jazz community of LBI, which proves promising for future events. There are two Jazz Cocktail Hours left for this summer, the next one on Aug. 21 featuring a new act, Lynn Riley and the World Mix.

— **Kate Tell**

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