



Photo by Susan Sabino

Musicians from left to right: Marc Mommaas, tenor sax; George Schuller, drums; David Clark, bass and Armen Donelian, piano.

'Jazz the way it's meant to be heard'

By John Paul Keeler

For Columbia-Greene Media

A festive Jazz concert titled "Jazz the way it's meant to be heard" thrilled a full house at the home of Richard Collens in North Hillsdale. The program honored the friends and supporters of the Columbia County Habitat for Humanity.

The concert in the superb acoustics of the Collens' great room more than lived up to its title. The four musicians are virtuoso performers on their instruments. They produce together that rare musical entity today, Classic Jazz.

Pianist Composer Armen Donelian produces the vibrant poetic sound of the best Classical as well as Jazz musicians. Bassist David Clark brings an elegance and lush beauty from his instrument. George Schuller is both a playful and expressive tympanist. The golden glow of Mark Mommaas sax bound these perfect Jazz musicians to magnificent ensemble. The compositions of Armen Donelian were featured in both sets. His music is quite wonderful with pungent rhythms, jaunty and gracious lyricism and poetic musical expression. His "Waiting for Flora" was all impatience waiting for that Diva to appear, and suspense and dramatic and humorous music celebrated her arrival. "Stargazer" was all celestial wonder. "Smoke" celebrated with elegant looking back to the famous song "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes".

After intermission two Donelian pieces "The Poet" and "Easy Does It" raised the musical pulse to a higher pitch. Khachatur Avetissyan's masterful "Eem Anoush Davigh" stirred the soul. Leonard Bernstein was wonderfully remembered in his dashing "Lucky To Be Me". Exciting brilliance went through the roof with Marc Mommaas and his superb piece "Bygone".

A moment of musical enchantment occurred in the piano solo of Armen Donelian playing his arrangement of the great 18th Century singer composer Sayat Nova's song "Without You What Will I Do". It is a moving song of poignant beauty. Donelian wraps this beautiful song in harmonic splendor and touching lyricism. If the other arrangements and songs are like this gem, a CD should be produced of these stunning songs! The concert ended with the all out brilliance of Donelian's "Joy Dance".

It is amazing to this writer that we have a resident Jazz Trio of world class music making right here in Columbia County. They should continue to perform here more and more in some wonderful acoustic space which without electronic nonsense will allow the music of these fine artists to delight Jazz buffs of the Twin Counties and up and down the Hudson Valley.