



ALTADENA HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

Music Issue

Musicians – They’re Thick on the Ground

by Mark Goldschmidt

Throw a brick anywhere in Altadena and you are likely to hit a musician. For one reason or another, an inordinate number of professional musicians make our community home. When we decided to make Musical Altadena the theme of our spring Newsletter, it seemed a happy subject.

Alas, just as we began reaching out to local musicians the order came to hunker down. Deprived of meeting in person and attending musical events, we instead worked by phone and email. It’s sad for musicians — performances have been canceled for the foreseeable future, and performing is what musicians live to do. And do to live.

We invite you, however, to visit the online version of this newsletter at altadenaheritage.org, and to click on links to music of artists mentioned herein. Add Magical Musical Tour of Altadena to your shelter-in-place “to do” list! We apologize in advance that we couldn’t possibly get to every notable musician — but we fanned out, did considerable research, and tried our best to present a wide range and good smattering of incredible Altadena talent in a few pages.

Musical education and teaching as back-up

Music teaching continues despite the coronavirus, mostly via computer screen, so the beat goes on. It’s a bad break for Altadena’s youth, our future greats, who attend their very own conservatory, Eliot Arts Magnet Academy. **John Maynard**, head of the music program, listed some of the remarkable curriculum offered at Altadena’s middle school: an outstanding choir, a regular band, a jazz band, an after-school drum line, and a “modern band” class teaching rock. They also have a school rock band, The Fusion, that tours nationally. Eliot’s gorgeous, refurbished auditorium is put to good use in musical productions that involve all the arts taught there, graphics for sets, dance, drama, and music. These are high quality, spirited productions, highly recommended — though none this semester.

Two blocks west, Altadena Elementary has been



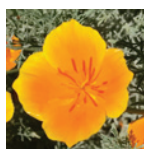
Cellist Sarah O'Brien mixing at Jackalope Studio in Altadena

reborn as Altadena Arts Magnet offering dance, visual arts, theater, media arts, and music. Principal **Benita Schekel** (a trained opera singer who serenades the campus every day) writes “our school acts like a conservatory in that all students receive discrete arts instruction every day” integrated with academic core learning. The school has newly dedicated arts spaces, including the Patrice Rushen Music Studio, named for renowned r&b artist, composer and long-time Altadena resident.

Of course there are many who teach privately. **Mary Jean Shaffer** arrived in LA in the 1980s as keyboardist, singer, and songwriter with The Holy Sisters of the Gaga Dada, a grunge rock all-female band with a political agenda. She began teaching piano and voice while still a band member, and has helped scores of young singers and musicians become proficient. She is known for packing her van with students, usually girls of middle-school age, and hauling them to various performances for fun and to check out the talent. Over the decades, one or more of her students always seem to be starring in a local high school production, having honed their chops with Mary Jean.

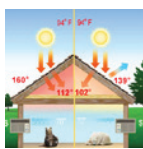
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Events



Golden Poppy

Sunday, May 17
Golden Poppy 4 pm



Cool Roofs

July 16
Third Thurs 7 pm



Tree Workshops

Saturday Mornings
Oct. & Nov. TBA

ADVOCACY & PRESERVATION

Spring/Summer
2020

Letter from the Chair

Sharon Sand

We are living in a time that seems unreal, something we read about in history books — not a time we thought we'd be living through. I hope you are well, and that you are finding light in your neighborhood, with views of our mountains and signs of spring blooming all around.

I am so thankful to live in Altadena — we have an amazing community. I have witnessed neighborly kindness and consideration — the free pop-up produce stand on Poppyfields is being continuously replenished, neighbors are distributing handmade masks, the Altadena Farmer's Market is making sure farmers can continue to sell their produce while insuring our safety, and volunteers are picking up groceries for those at high-risk. Of course we must thank the first responders, healthcare workers, grocery clerks, and all who keep going out to work, risking their health, while the rest of us stay home to flatten the curve.

I am thankful, too, for the wonderful people who make up Altadena Heritage's Board of Directors. We joined together via various online platforms and figured out what needed to be postponed, cancelled, and what we could go ahead with digitally in an engaging way. Our Third Thursday event for March led by Val Zavala, Reducing Single Use Plastics, was postponed and became our first on-line event, on the third Thursday in April instead. About 150 signed up, and 80 people actually participated.

Our Golden Poppy Awards and Garden Party will go ahead May 17 at 4pm as planned, but this year the party will have to be in your own garden, with your computer and refreshments. Michele Zack and film maker Pablo Miralles (a new member) have created mini tours of our four winning gardens so we will get to meet their creators, and even ask questions. We have enjoyed figuring out how to hold our spring celebration with a virtual twist. Please join us.

The Board continues to advocate for our community. We wrote to our supervisor pointing out that new LED lighting recently installed on New York Drive is overly bright and

glaring. Supervisor Barger responded, agreeing to replace the 4000 kelvin fixtures with 3000k ones (a big improvement, but still too bright in our estimation). We are continuing the conversation with her staff, bringing in an environmental scientist with extensive experience consulting with city conversions from high pressure sodium to LED street lights. (See story, page 11)

We also wrote on behalf of Webster's owners Meredith and Michael Miller, after their new building owner, Calitex, served a three day notice to vacate despite a County-wide eviction moratorium. Our letter helped get results; Meredith wrote: "One thing is for sure, Michael and I can't thank you and Altadena Heritage enough for your continued support of Webster's business and legacy, and your willingness to step up to let your voice be heard. We really appreciate the letter from the AH Board and believe it made a difference to Calitex."

The world doesn't stop because of Covid, and now we also find ourselves engaged in trying to preserve the Altadena Sheriff Station with other civic groups and citizens caught off guard when its closure was announced early this month. If losing our station disturbs you, please send in letters to our Supervisor and the Los Angeles County Sheriff voicing your concerns — if ever there was an all-hands-on-deck moment for Altadena, this is it!

On a lighter note, I hope you enjoy this special big issue of our Newsletter focused on Altadena's amazing musical heritage. Altadena Heritage believes in supporting local talent. For almost 35 years we have always showcased one or more musicians at our events — from Annual Meetings and Golden Poppy Celebrations to the Boho Highbrow Weekend and Alta-Ditty. Be sure to check out altadenaheritage.org for links to the musicians mentioned in our newsletter — take a Magical Musical Tour of Altadena!

And boy, I can't wait to see you around town once again, maybe at a live show at Backstage at the Coffee Gallery or the Folly Bowl!



2020 Altadena Heritage Board

Sharon Sand, Chair	Kathleen McDonnell
Kenny Meyer, Treasurer	Val Zavala
Anne Chomyn, Secretary	Michele Zack
Alma Apodaca	
Gina Chamberlain	Newsletter edited by
Catherine Cadogan	Mark Goldschmidt

*Visit altadenaheritage.org/music
for links to listen to artists
mentioned in this newsletter!*

In Memoriam Ian Whitcomb: He turned us on

By Michele Zack

Longtime resident Ian Whitcomb was Altadena's own: a one-of-a-kind, fun-loving and multi-talented musician, entertainer, and writer who arrived with the British Pop Invasion of the 1960s. His career morphed over the years from heart throb -- Ian's *You Turn Me On* reached the Top 10 in 1965, and he toured with the Beach Boys, Kinks, and Rolling Stones — into one of author, radio host, musicologist, record producer, and performer of old time, mostly Ragtime, music. He was on stage less often after he suffered a stroke in 2012, but continued to perform occasionally until his death April 19, 2020.

Ian's band, The Bungalow Boys, recorded music for *The Titanic* and other films, and he would often join Janet Kline and her Parlor Boys as guest performer when they played the local Backstage at the Coffee Gallery in Altadena — around the corner from his home. Ian, in fact, was good friends with Bob Stane, Backstage manager, since Bob's long run as impresario at The Pasadena Ice House in its 1960s-80s glory days.

"Altadena was the first and only place Ian looked when he wanted to buy a house," says wife Regina Whitcomb. "He loved to call it home." She remembers when he performed one 1920s ditty, he would often substitute his community for Pasadena in the lyrics: "Beneath the palms, in someone's arms, in Al—ta—DEEN—a-a-a-ah town!"

Ian was an enthusiastic showman, British to the core, who played his role to the hilt locally whether as MC for the opening of Christmas Tree Lane, grand marshal of Altadena's Old Fashioned Days Parade, or entertaining at an Altadena Heritage party. He could be counted on to contribute copies of his books and CDs to Christmas Tree Lane and Altadena Library fundraisers.

Ian memorialized his home town in *Resident Alien*, a darkly funny account of his life as an British expat in LA,

Leaf Blower Blues

A Nextdoor discussion led to the founding of CHA-CHA (Clean Healthy Air, Clean Healthy Altadena), dedicated to eliminate the scourge of the gasoline-powered leaf blower that poisons in so many ways.

Led by Joy Walters, CHA-CHA is getting the word out about how truly bad — both for human health and the environment — these devices are, and to encourage a return to the tried and true (much quieter) rake and broom or garden sweeper. This message is gaining traction in the time of the coronavirus, as research shows people exposed to less pollution fight off the virus better — and we breathe what they blow.

Sure, old fashioned tools might take a bit longer (debatable). But gasoline blowers noisily disperse toxic 2-stroke engine exhaust (far worse than from modern automobiles) and particulate matter — dust, animal feces, mold, and pollen — into the air. Not just unhealthy for humans, they are also terrible for plants and beneficial habitat because they blow off fine soil and organic matter, leading to desiccated soil and higher water use.



and was a prolific author of books including *After the Ball*, (a history of pop music), *Lotus Land: a story of Southern California* (a novel), *Tin Pan Alley: a Pictorial History*, *Rock Odyssey: A Chronicle of the Sixties*. He also produced and starred in several television documentaries here and in Great Britain, and wrote widely on music and culture.

Ian's scholarly career is less well-known; he conducted research at the Huntington Library for years and was a sought-after academic speaker. Not content just to talk, he sang, accompanied himself on the ukulele and accordion, played 78 recordings on a Victrola, and shared his graphically fabulous collection of sheet music to give audiences an authentic feel for his topics. In one memorable lecture, "Presidents and Propaganda," Ian expounded on how Woodrow Wilson forcibly harnessed Tin Pan Alley's song writers (he threatened to invoke the Alien and Sedition Act against them unless they penned patriotic songs to whip up enthusiasm to enter WWI) — although he'd campaigned in 1916 to keep America out of it.

We'll miss you Old Bean, and all the fun we had.

CHA-CHA folk are sensitive and sensible, proposing a staged withdrawal from leaf-blower addiction for those who can't go cold turkey. The move to battery-powered leaf blowers mitigates the noise part of the problem, but not the health risks. With education and lobbying efforts CHA-AHA intends to make Altadena a quieter, healthier, and more tranquil community.



Contact and Follow on FB: Altadenans for Clean Healthy Air

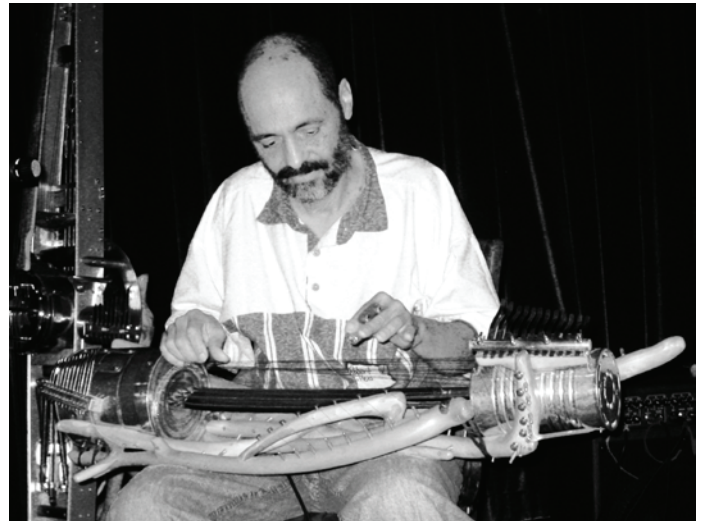
Robert Hilton • Sculptor of Magical Sounds

By Trish Pengra

If you had attended Robert Hilton's recent exhibit at El Camino College you would have seen beautifully crafted sculptures lovingly assembled from found materials. But they are more than sculptures; when he plays one of his pieces the effect is magical. The sonorous tones that he produces from his teapot horn can't be likened to those of any traditional instrument, and its design, using two teapots as resonating chambers, is equally unique. You might not know what to do with a large can once all the chocolate covered walnuts have been eaten; Robert artfully turned just such a big red tin into an instrument that sounds sort of like a Japanese shamisen but with its own highly distinctive styling.

Robert has been part of the music scene in Altadena since the 1970s, playing on his own stringed, wind and percussive creations. He performed with a group that was the very first to play at the Coffee Gallery, and played Backstage when that local venue opened. In 2012 Altadena Heritage hosted him at our "Logging the Urban Forest" event showcasing the use of salvaged wood from fallen timber after the horrendous winds the year before, and he played for our Golden Poppy in 2013. Robert was out collecting wood again after recent high winds brought down more branches (he favors Chinese elm), and is considering how to incorporate them into a new instrument that will be a cross between his many stringed Fujifilm-can instrument and the one he made using a red walnut tin. His hope is that the new one will be easier to play with its shorter cello strings.

He built his first instrument in 1974, and has since used all sorts of cast-offs in his craft, explaining that "chambers are natural



Artist/musician Robert Hilton with one of his creations.

resonators and they appeal to me." He taught children how to create their own fantasy musical instrument designs at the Armory Center for the Arts, and recently donated some of his works to the center for their fundraising auctions. While some may purchase Hilton's instruments for their sculptural beauty, for him the musical sounds they create have always been his ultimate goal.

Bob Stane • Another Fork in the Road

by Stacia Raymond

Not everyone knows at four years old that they're a night person, but that's precisely what allowed Bob Stane to discover his calling. After getting out of the Army and doing surveying for the railroad, he promised himself he'd never do another job that meant no more than just a paycheck. In the late 1950s, he stumbled into the Unicorn coffee house on Sunset Boulevard and saw his future. Opened by Bob Dylan's tour manager, the Unicorn had poetry, live music, and people reading and playing chess — the first of its kind on the West Coast.

The Unicorn inspired Bob to open The Upper Cellar in San Diego and later The Ice House in Pasadena, where he nurtured some of the greatest comics of a generation. By 1998 when he opened the intimate music venue known as Coffee Gallery Backstage, he'd amassed quite a contact list along with a stellar reputation. "It's more than a show. It's an experience," Bob told me — because of the combination of the cultured audience and world class folk, jazz, world, and rock musicians who come from far and wide to play the acoustically superior room designed to look like a coffee warehouse in the jungle.

At a spry 85 years young, Bob hopes to keep the venue open another few years. Then he'll come to another fork in the road. (His first fork is a piece of public art, first illegally installed as a birthday prank but which now stands legitimately at St. John and



Pasadena Avenues.) He hopes to show a new buyer the ropes, the way he successfully did with The Ice House. If the venue were to close after Bob's tenure, it will be at great cost to our community and as Bob predicted, fans of CGB "will feel lost."

Johnny Otis “Godfather of Rhythm & Blues”

By Mark Goldschmidt



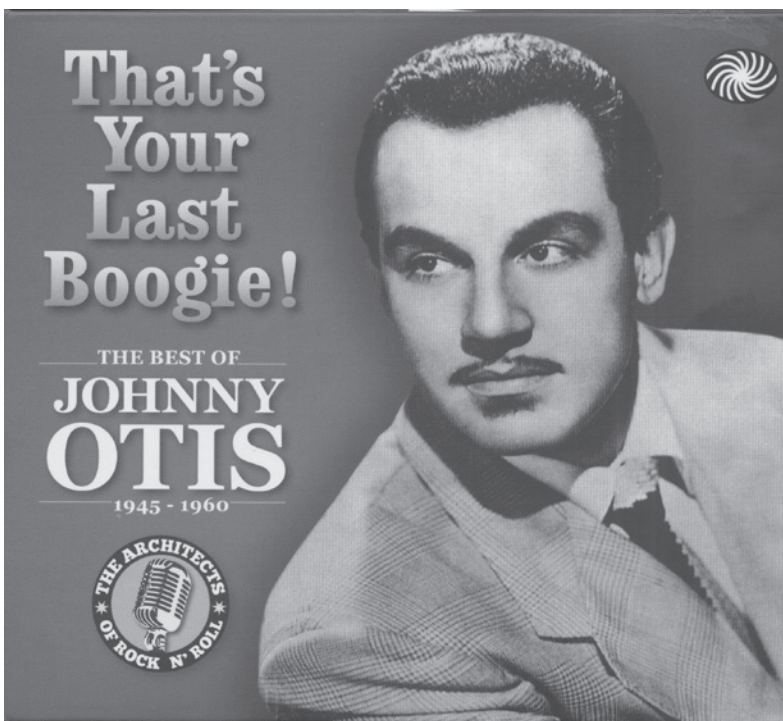
One of the all times greats of Rhythm and Blues – credited by many as the originator of the sound – made Altadena his home. In the 1980s his big house on Palm and Marengo was always full of family, visitors, and fellow musicians, his rakishly decorated tour bus parked outside whenever

the famous Johnnie Otis Review wasn't on the road. His yard was scattered with sculptures and cages full of exotic birds (he never finished high school, but was consulted by biologists as an expert on avian diseases). He authored several books and was a highly respected painter and sculptor. One reason he moved from L.A. to Altadena was to join the many black artists and musicians living here. Another was surely to feel comfortable with his mixed-race family and friends.

Johnnie was not black (his wife Phyllis was), but a Greek American who grew up in an African American neighborhood in Berkeley. In one of his books, *Listen to the Lambs*, he wrote “As a kid, I decided that if our society dictated that one had to be black or white, I would be black.” That book was published following the Watts riots to shine light on the situation of people of color in Los Angeles at a time when racism was rampant and the LAPD brutal. Johnnie was familiar with this as owner of The Barrelhouse Club, a hotspot of Central Avenue's exciting music scene that flourished in L.A. from the 1920s through 1950s. He was a musician (drums, piano, vibes and vocals), composer, lyricist, conductor, arranger, and promoter.



Otis on vibes



Most famous for his 1958 hit “Willie and the Hand Jive,” he composed scores of other songs. He had a nose for young talent, mentoring and hiring many who went on to big careers: Etta James, T-Bone Walker, Esther Phillips, Big Mama Thornton, Jackie Wilson, Hank Ballard, and The Robins (who later became the Coasters), among others. He toured most of his life, while hosting a TV show and later “The Johnnie Otis Show” on KPFK radio, wrote articles and books, preached the gospel at a South LA church, recorded in his Altadena home studio, and made art. Before moving here, he'd lost a couple of fingers in a saw accident, and could no longer play the drums. He continued to play piano and was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and the Blues Hall of Fame in 1994.

Johnnie Otis was bigger than life, there is not enough room here to catalogue his accomplishments, his festival organizing, his political career. He left Altadena for more rural Sonoma County, continuing to perform and to broadcast his show on KPFA, finally retiring in 2004. He and Phyllis returned to Altadena in 2006 where they spent their last years in a lovely cottage behind his daughter's home on Altadena Drive. Johnnie died in 2012; he and his wife are buried in Mountain View Cemetery.

Musicians – They're Thick on the Ground *Continued from Page 1*

Talent finds a way

British-born cello player **Sarah O'Brien** (who entertained at Altadena Heritage's 2019 Holiday party) has been touring with Yanni, the popular Greek composer with a worldwide following, for 20 years. In March their South American tour had to be abandoned after only the second show in Mexico City. They played a full house even as managers scrambled to get everyone back home. "We felt like the orchestra on the Titanic playing one last concert," she says. Currently she does a bit of teaching from home. Her partner, **Joel Taylor**, originally from Wyoming, is a highly sought-after drummer who works regularly on recording sessions, teaches at Redlands University, and tours every summer in the States, Europe, and Russia. That's been cancelled for this year, and now he teaches at home via Zoom and records remotely off a click-track at his home "Jackalope Studio."

Luthier (violin maker) **Mario Miralles** grew up in Altadena, attended John Muir High School, and still lives here. He apprenticed in Verona, Italy, and travels widely (mostly to Europe) to scout for the right wood to make his instruments — which some of the world's most renowned musicians order years in advance.

When **Jeffrey Schindler** moved to Altadena 12 years ago he was orchestrating and conducting film scores; since then his career blossomed, he travels the world as a guest conductor, and cites conducting at the famous Sydney Opera House as a peak experience. This stellar life is on hold for the duration, as it is for his wife **Bonnie Schindler**, an opera singer who is able to do some teaching online.

Why are there are so many musicians in Altadena? It's not that difficult for a professional and versatile musician to cobble together a career here, Jeffrey says. There's lots of work in LA, and Altadena was considered affordable until very recently. Musicians perform and tour, and a few are salaried members of an orchestra. For many, their bread and butter is in composing and orchestrating for movies and TV— "in LA orchestration is anything you say yes to" — often arranging and recording someone else's compositions to make the music work. In general, film and TV work is high-pressure with tight deadlines, jobs are sporadic like so much Industry work, and musicians must do whatever is called for.

Asked about other musicians in Altadena, Jeffrey sighs. "Well, there are so many — but at least one world famous modern composer and percussionist lives right up the hill, **William Kraft**." He also mentions harpsichordist **Ian Pritchard**, who shares Jeffrey's passion for this instrument. Ian is a specialist in Renaissance

and Baroque music and teaches at the Coburn School of Music downtown. **Stephen Erdody** is a truly great cellist. He's enjoyed a brilliant career with orchestras and chamber music ensembles as well as in the studios, playing many well-known cello solos in top movies, including a duo with Yoyo Ma.

There are too many prominent classical musicians inhabiting our town to do more than scratch the surface (see The Mt. Lowe Ensemble story, page 9 for a few more)

Donald Crockett, professor and chair of the composition department at USC's Thornton School of Music with a focus on chamber music has composed for, and conducted an illustrious list of ensembles and orchestras including the LA Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Kronos Quartet, the Hilliard Ensemble, and many more.

Jeffrey Kahane, also at the Thornton School, holds the title Professor of Keyboard Studies, served as music director for the LA Chamber Orchestra for 20 years. He is equally at home on the piano or podium and has soloed, or guest conducted, in just about every major orchestra in the country. He

made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1983.

Early Modern Altadena

Back in the 1950s the lines between genres were far more strict. Even the legitimacy of modern jazz as an art form was subject to debate.

Some didn't care for it. In a 1950s piece in the Star News (exact date unknown), music critic **Gus Albrecht** (also a CalTech chemistry professor and Altadenan) railed against jazz: Gus, artist **Jirayr Zorthian**, and jazz critic **George Laine** published a joint review of a jazz ensemble that played at Zucca's Cottage on East Foothill.

Gus did not appreciate the music: "While classic music contains a wide diapason of significant human emotions, jazz seems to express only a few diffuse and superficial feelings, such as a prolonged and involved uneasiness with no satisfying resolution of this tension." Laine countered: "I've found classical musicians are generally at a loss for something to play, wandering back time and again to the monotonous repeating of time-tested 'critics favorites.'" Jayrir added, "At classical concerts, I have an uneasy feeling that half of the audience is bored and only there for social or cultural

reasons." (That's not to say Zorthian didn't love classical music, he and wife Dabney were regulars at the opera). But since the 50s the world of music has expanded and rendered such disputes irrelevant. Zorthian, bohemian and jazz fan, helped this process along by hosting parties featuring musicians and artists, famous and



Sketch by Jirayr Zorthian



Louis Van Taylor

Continued next page

unknown (Nobel Laureate and bongo player **Richard Feynman** was among his pals) at his Altadena ranch at the top of Fair Oaks. At a party in 1952, bebop founder Charlie Parker (aka The Bird) jammed all night, and everyone got naked.

Jazz legacy continues

Louis van Taylor plays sax and woodwinds, especially sax. An Altadena resident since 1975, he cites a long list of gigs, soundtracks, world tours, and musicians he's played with. He has been in back-up bands for Ray Charles, Michael Bolton, and Tina Marie, and for the past 20 years has played tours with Kool and the Gang. He taught jazz saxophone at USC for years, and still teaches privately. Unable to perform due to lockdown, he says he's happy, he loves to practice his saxophone and now can do so with less interruption. He also does session work remotely and meets up with fellow musicians online.

One of van Taylor's idols is renowned jazz multi-reed player **Benny Maupin**, who also resides in Altadena. Maupin's CV is impressive, in a long and illustrious career there's hardly a jazz great he hasn't played with, including long runs with Herbie Hancock and Miles Davis. If you're a jazz fan, that's Maupin playing the base clarinet on *Bitches Brew*.

Another illustrious jazz musician and 35 year resident of Altadena is **John Clayton**, bassist, who founded the Clayton/Hamilton Jazz Orchestra with saxophonist brother Jeff and drummer Jeff Hamilton. Theirs is a big jazz band sound, but Clayton has worked on the classical side too; he spent five years as principal bassist for the Amsterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.

At least two famous jazz drummers make Altadena their home. **Roy McCurdy**, born in 1936 into a musical family, started making drum sets out of pots and pans and cardboard boxes, and got his first drum set at age eight. McCurdy came up in the golden age of modern jazz, playing with a long list of famous names, most notably Cannonball Adderly, performing with his combo for 10 years. He currently teaches drums at USC Thornton School of Music.

Kenny Elliott grew up, studied music, and played blues and jazz in Chicago until coming here 1975. As a session musician, he has backed a long list of famous names.

Rock & Soul

James Raymond is a keyboard artist, composer, and songwriter with a career in recording and producing music for film, TV, and advertising from his Altadena studio. As a child, adoptive parents figured they had a musical prodigy on their hands when, at age three, little James went up to the piano and started to play after

a church service. Music seemed to have been bred in his bones. He only discovered his birth father when he was in his 30s and well launched on his career — and it was famous rocker David Crosby. They have been collaborating ever since, writing songs and touring together. (This story is longer and more interesting than we have space for, and worth looking up on line.)



James Raymond with David Crosby



Bassist John Clayton

Alain Whyte moved to LA in the early 2000s, then to West Hollywood, Silverlake, Pasadena, and now is firmly ensconced in Altadena. A transplant from England, he is a first rate guitar player, singer and songwriter whose songs have been covered by the likes of Madonna, Rihanna, and the Black Eyed Peas. He was Morrissey's songwriting partner and guitarist from 1991 to 2007. He continues to compose and record on his own.

Everyone has heard the **Waters Family** vocal group. Based in Altadena, this family of vocalists have sung with an endless list of stars, from Michael Jackson to the Righteous Brothers, and performed on countless commercials and movie and TV soundtracks. The 2014 Academy Award winner for best documentary, *Twenty Feet from Stardom*, features these amazing siblings, and takes you right into their Altadena living room. Their harmonies are truly heavenly.

Patrice Rushen started piano at age three, went on to get a degree in music at USC, and has been busy in the music business for at least four decades. Classically trained, and a phenomenal piano player, she is best known for her r&b and funk compositions and performances, with multiple albums and 14 Grammy nominations. She has been commissioned to compose symphonic works, soundtracks, and directed many musical events. Currently she is a professor at USC and works with the LA Cultural Affairs Department and other organizations mentoring music education for disadvantaged youth.

Hometown Sound

Pierre Dupuy is a member of Wreck 'n Sow, the quintessential Altadena band. Pierre grew up in a big musical family in the iconic McNally mansion and picked up drums as his instrument, and later guitar. Wreck n' Sow plays many original compositions, both Pierre and his brother **André** (also an Altadenan) write songs — great melodies and crazy clever lyrics, kind of a hillbilly sound. The band plays regularly but members all keep their day jobs.

We can't talk about music in Altadena without mentioning the **Folly Bowl**; this idyllic amphitheater built into a steep hillside

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has been featuring interesting music offerings for the past 15 summer's. Listening to unusual modern music or an Indian raga on a summers night while enjoying a picnic on grassy steps in a beautiful garden, that must be as close to paradise as one can get in this town. Invitation only, but you can see the music offered on the Folly Bowl Facebook page.

A fairly recent arrival from Sweden, **Lennart Andersson** is a former music teacher, sound engineer, and jack-of-all-trades. He plays keyboard and guitar, composes music, and writes songs with his wife **Lisalotte Sandel**. Lennart has been a huge help to Altadena Heritage, setting up sound for our events, including Altaditty, an annual show of original songs and poetry about our town, sometimes co-sponsored with the Library.

Check out his 2019 video of *Leafblower Blues*, featuring saxophonist Louis Van Taylor and diva Kavita Sharma. Time at home during the pandemic is providing an opportunity to finally get down to writing that Altadena-inspired ditty for our next show — (whenever that is!) Music belongs to everyone in Altadena — where the famous, the almost famous, and the never-will-be famous all enjoy music, even in these strange times, in the shadow of the San Gabriels.



Patrice Rushen, composer, pianist, singer



Folly Bowl Altadena

This incomplete compendium of our local musicians is necessarily brief, but if you wish to learn more, please go to altadenaheritage.org for a list of social media and web sites for all the musicians showcased here. Listings will be in alphabetical order by last name.

You Can Help Make Streets Safer

By Anne Chomyn

About 30 community members brought laptops, tablets, and smart phones to the Altadena Community Center last February for Street Story 101, a workshop hosted by Altadena Heritage and Altadena Town Council's Safe Streets Committee. Participants were introduced to a free online tool to report and comment on traffic safety -- collisions, near-misses, perceived hazards, and safe locations on our county's streets.

Ana Lopez of UC Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research Center (SafeTREC) led the hands-on session on how to use this tool. The value of Street Story, Lopez explained, is to recruit residents as eyes on the ground to report traffic safety issues. No one knows a neighborhood like the people who live there.

Information collected in Street Story will supplement CHP's collision database, adding not just accidents, but also near-misses and locations that feel hazardous (or safe and pleasant!) Altadena Heritage encourages people to check out this

easy-to-use app at streetstory.berkeley.edu, where you will have the option to see data thus far accumulated on a map and add to it. Data will be available to support requests to the County for improvements to streets, crosswalks, sidewalks, bikeways, etc., and will help make our streets safer for all.

Chamber Music Played by Altadenans for Altadenans

by Trish Pengra

Bringing classical music to Altadena began with a bout of insomnia. **Monica Hubbard's** late-night musings led her to wonder why, with such an abundance of professional musicians in this community, she could seldom attend classical concerts close to home? Monica, a former choral director, counts many classical musicians among her friends, so invited some over to brainstorm ways to fill the void. This cross section of a symphony orchestra gathered around her dining table, conceived of a musicians' collective, and settled on a name: the Mt. Lowe Chamber Players. The new group's goal would be to provide Altadena with classical music concerts that are free, fun, and community oriented. But to turn a good idea into public performances takes more than willing musicians.

Though many see Monica as a community organizer, she calls herself a "catalyst" who gets things started. For the Chamber Players effort, she kicked off a small benefit concert to raise seed money. Fred and Fritzi Culick opened their home as the venue. Fritzi is the previous owner of Pasadena's Old Town Music and the couple are friends with many Altadena musicians. Caterers Onil Chibás Events, Mary Pat Brandmeyer, Karina Escamilla, a chef at The Raymond, and local restaurateur Paul Ragan of AltaEats provided food and libations. The concert sold out and patron-guests were treated to an intimate afternoon of music; **Antoinette Perry** performed two lovely Claude Debussy piano preludes, and an ensemble played one of Ludwig van Beethoven's most popular and successful works, the Septet in E Flat Major for violin, viola, cello, bass, horn, bassoon and clarinet.

By day, **Phoebe Ray** manages grants and administers a Caltech research lab. She's also bassoonist of the Wilder Trio, plays jazz and the fast, happy rhythms of Brazilian choro. She describes herself as "having the organizational gene," her fellow founding members all knew it, so she became the collective's manager, soon secured support from Fulcrum Arts, (a reincarnation of the Pasadena Arts Council), a non-profit supporting the arts. Fulcrum will accept donations and act as paymaster and bookkeeper for participating musicians who will receive modest honoraria. Claire Newman, president of the Friends of the Altadena Library, stepped up to underwrite the Players' first season, and Nikki Winslow, the library's new director, committed the main library and staff to stage concerts on Sundays, when the library is normally closed. Phoebe and founding members **Delores Bing** (cello), **Bill Bing** (trumpet), **Drew Dembowski** (bass), **Michele Zukovsky** (clarinet) and **John Steinmetz** (bassoon) planned three concerts, with one each devoted to strings, brass, and woodwinds respectively.

Most musical ensembles have strict hierarchical structures, but the Mt Lowe Chamber Players is a true collective and operates more like a democracy. Each concert has a curator

who selects the music and musicians, and sets a theme for the event. For the first concert devoted to strings, Delores's theme was "Auspicious Beginnings;" she was joined by another cellist, Cristina Soule, violinists **Joel Pargman** and **Carrie Kennedy**, **Dmitri Bovaird** on viola, and Steve Edelman on bass. Her program featured the early works of Rossini, Mozart, and Arriaga, and modernist Charles Ives.

Library staff prepared for an audience of 50, then had to scramble to set up enough chairs to seat the 150+ who showed up. Bassoonist John Steinmetz introduced each piece and explained how classical music is often broken into multiple movements and can repeat themes in variation. The library's acoustics that handle the rock, soul, country and folk of Second Saturdays did equally well with the lyrical sounds of the strings.

As word of the first concert's success spread, the Players' initial roster of 25 musicians quickly doubled to 50.

Most of us have heard these players before. Collective members play professionally in the orchestras of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, LA Opera, LA Master Chorale, LA Chamber Orchestra, Hollywood Bowl, Pasadena Symphony, and other ensembles, and have recorded scores for thousands of films. If you've seen a Star Wars film or movies of Gus van Sant, Tim Burton, or Sam Raimi, you've heard our local classical musicians perform. Drew Dembowski estimates that he has recorded tracks for 1800 films. These local professionals also perform in studio orchestras backing up platinum recording artists such as Barbara Streisand and Earth, Wind and Fire among many others.

These musicians are also committed to developing the next generation of players and teach at local colleges, universities and conservatories. **Karen Klages**, music coordinator for the Pasadena Unified School District and a music teacher at the Eliot Arts Academy and John Muir High School, is also part of the venture and will feature music students in future Players' performances.

With this new classical series, the Mt. Lowe Chamber Players are off to an auspicious beginning. Clarinetist Michele Zukovsky said that she "loves to play for our friends and neighbors, just like Beethoven and Schubert." The Players have a website at www.mtlowechamberplayers.com where you can donate to the group and find information on post-pandemic performances, or ask to receive notices of small outdoor musical performances at phoerberay@gmail.com.

They all agree: it's pure joy being able to rehearse and perform to appreciative audiences right here in Altadena without having to get on a freeway. Cellist and founding member, Delores Bing, smiling beatifically, observes, "it takes me longer to load my cello in the car than to drive to our rehearsal."



Dmitri Bovaird plays viola at the Altadena Library



Gil and Joan Acosta • 2951 Santa Rosa Avenue



Maita Prout & Will Gaskill • 787 Highview Avenue



Taylor Jacobson & John Knuth • 471 W. Mariposa Street

Sunlight on Streetlights Needed

By Michele Zack

Altadena Heritage has been in correspondence with Supervisor Kathryn Barger regarding health and safety concerns over the ongoing conversion from existing High Pressure Sodium to more efficient LED streetlights in our town. Saving energy is in everyone's interest. We have joined with community partners Softlight Altadena, the Town Council's Safe Streets Committee, Neighbors for Building a Better Altadena, and The Arroyo Seco Foundation in expressing our desire to avoid the excessive, blue-rich, eyeball-piercing glare, and over-lighting characterizing lights of 3000 Kelvin and above.



The LED industry is evolving rapidly, and research determining optimum light levels (for human and animal health and auto and pedestrian safety) takes time to filter down to public officials, so conversions are tricky.

Many cities adapting early to LED streetlights have had to do expensive refitting of new systems within a few years as standards consistently change in just one direction — lowering the Kelvin ratings to increase visibility and decrease traffic accidents and pedestrian deaths. Dimming capability is now possible, cheap, and highly efficient. However, ongoing contracts, politics, market forces, and other practical considerations have often ended up trumping scientific findings and new manufacturing capabilities.

We are advocating that Altadena health, safety, and ambiance should not be a casualty in this process, and look forward to further constructive dialogue with our Supervisor. We are happy to report that the letter sent with our partners to Kathryn Barger in April 2020 resulted in her directing LA County Public Works to replace the 4000K lights along New York Drive with 3000K.

However, we support the science that finds 2200K lighting is best. Manufacturers are now producing LED lights that are indistinguishable from the High Pressure Sodium ones they replace, and we'd like this standard applied to Altadena.



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