

Benny Russell and Friends at An die Musik Live . . . . . 1  
 Véronneau: Joie de Vivre . . . . . 3  
 January at Caton Castle . . . . . 4  
 JazzBiz by Tom Reyes . . . . . 7  
 Who Knew? . . . . . 8  
 BJA Products and Discounts . . . . . 10  
 Ad Rates and Member Sign-up Form . . . . . 11

# Benny Russell and Friends at An die Musik Live



PHOTO COURTESY OF BENNY RUSSELL

**The Benny Russell and Friends concert was exceptional in every respect.**

On Friday, January 18, I had the pleasure of attending the "Benny Russell and Friends" concert at Baltimore's An die Musik. The ensemble comprised Benny Russell (tenor saxophone), Alan Blackman (piano), Warren Wolf, Jr. (vibraphone), Blake Meister (acoustic bass), and George Gray (drums). The packed room was treated to a scintillating display of technical fireworks, matched only by the players' amazing musicianship and conversational eloquence.

The concert began with "A Balm in Gilead" and its bright, attention-grabbing rhythmic opening. Wolf's technical mastery of his instrument was evident as he moved with ease and aplomb through the harmonic changes. A powerhouse bassist, Meister demonstrated a solid, rhythmically excellent command of what is often a cumbersome instrument, flying over every inch of his fingerboard with uncanny intonation. Blackman's solos were exhilarating, his tasteful accompaniments rhythmically and harmonically vibrant, and Gray's drumming was a marvel to behold, as he punctuated with a variety of rhythms, never overplaying. He set a stable pulse without seeking the spotlight—and that castanet effect he employed with his sticks at the end was pure magic!

The next tune, Wayne Shorter's "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum," featured an astounding bass solo, with Meister creating and relieving harmonic tension. Russell then began "My One and Only Love," one of the evening's highlights, with a long cadenza, and the set ended with "Moment's Notice," which was introduced by an energetic drum solo, in which Gray used a wide variety of tones and colors by employing his cymbals and all of his tom-toms. An a capella improvised duo by Russell and Gray followed, in which each fed off the other and anticipated what was to come. Meister's frenetic, yet completely-in-control, bass line added to the drama.

The second set began with McCoy Tyner's "Passion Dance." Wolf's mallets flew in a controlled blur over Meister's solid

*(continued on page 2)*



The Baltimore Jazz Alliance (BJA) is a grass-roots organization of jazz aficionados, musicians, and venues dedicated to enhancing and promoting jazz in Baltimore and the surrounding areas. New members sharing this passion are always welcome as the BJA continues its efforts to build a stronger and better networked jazz scene. Together we can help this music thrive in the region and reward listeners and musicians alike.

#### BJA Priorities

- To develop new audiences for jazz
- To strengthen communication within the jazz community
- To improve media relations on behalf of the jazz community
- To bring greater visibility to the entire array of jazz offerings in the Baltimore region
- To provide greater access to performance opportunities for Baltimore-area jazz musicians

Visit [www.baltimorejazz.com](http://www.baltimorejazz.com) for information about our accomplishments and future goals.

#### Baltimore Jazz Alliance

847 North Howard Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Please direct your  
questions and comments to:  
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## Benny Russell and Friends at An die Musik Live

(continued from first page)

foundation of melodic and rhythmic lines, and Blackman's piano and Russell's sax left Earth and explored the stratosphere, even while remaining connected to the firmament. Meister's dizzying pizzicato impressed this violinist to no end. A drum solo followed in which George covered every square inch of his drum set in a seamless display of virtuosity.

Russell performed a blues piece, which, he said after it ended, was composed "on the spot." Its opening capella cadenza revealed a master at his craft, and the dialog between Blackman and Russell was a study in vertical vs. linear movement, a dramatic juxtaposition of extremes. Fragments of "Rhapsody in Blue" were audible throughout, and Russell's rapid repetition of just two notes, Bb and Db, over and over, enhanced the tension. Again, Wolf, via his uncannily dexterous use of chromaticism, caressed us with his mallet work.

Following "My Shining Hour," the evening ended with a lightning-fast "Rhythm-a-ning." I cannot recall a bass ever being played so fast. These guys wound us up like a top, and then we spun



PHOTOS BY GLENN ANGUS

Alan Blackman

and spun and spun.

The concert was exceptional in every respect. These fine musicians all live in the Baltimore metropolitan area, which speaks volumes about the excellent musicians this area continues to produce..

— Glenn Angus

From left: Blake Meister, George Gray and Warren Wolf



# VÉRONNEAU

## Joie de Vivre

When I first met Lynn Véronneau, some years ago at Maryland Summer Jazz, I knew I was hearing a star, even though I had never heard of her before. My intuition was corroborated when I was asked to review her recent album, *Joie de Vivre*. Here again I heard the same pure soprano with the swinging lilt, full of warmth and—yes—the same “joie de vivre” with which I had heard her sing “All Right, OK” in our little jazz camp combo session.

In fact, in an article on the *All About Jazz* website (“Take Five with Lynn Véronneau,” May 2011), Lynn credits coaching by vocalist Alison Crockett at Maryland Summer Jazz and in private tutoring as a “springboard” into the new album, saying that Crockett “gave me the tools and confidence I needed to further my understanding of jazz.”

... the album's predominating style  
is gypsy jazz ...

Born in Quebec and classically trained in France, Véronneau has performed in a variety of styles, including opera, pop, and folk. Her 2001 album, *Something Cool*, included a couple of jazz standards, although the folk/ballad style predominated. Her musical influences are wide-ranging; she names singers Aretha Franklin, Ella Fitzgerald, Annie Lennox, Bobby McFerrin, Bjork, Etta James. “All these singers,” she says, “shaped my sound and how the songs should be delivered—and showed me that genre doesn't matter as much as the songs do. For me it's all about the song.”

Although this new album moves her further into the realm of jazz, it includes an eclectic selection of tunes of various genres, reflecting Lynn's professed interest in world music. Not too surprisingly, given her French Canadian background, she sings in French on “La Mer,” a song written in 1943 by Frenchman Charles Trenet which became the basis of the song “Beyond the Sea,” recorded by 1960s crooner Bobby Darin. The French lyrics express joie de vivre in the beauty of a pastoral French seaside, with white clouds, grazing sheep, reedy ponds, and rustic cottages along a sparkling clear gulf.

Then she sings in Spanish on the popular Mexican mariachi song, “Cielito Lindo,” with more “alegría de vida” in the chorus: “Ay, Ay, Ay, Ay, sing and do not weep, / Because by singing, one gladdens the heart.” Interestingly, she chooses to sing her four Latin numbers “The Gentle Rain,” “Corcovado,” “Brazil,” and “One Note Samba” in English, even though she often sings in Portuguese.

The album also includes a wistful interpretation of the



From left: David Rosenblatt, Ken Avis, Lynn Véronneau and Pete Walby

Beatles tune “For No One” and a joyous rendition of “On the Street Where You Live,” from the Broadway musical *My Fair Lady*. The album ends with the 1926 Irving Berlin standard, “Blue Skies,” a song that has remained popular long after its musical, *Betsy*, has been forgotten.

The album's predominating style is gypsy jazz, as exemplified by the great Belgian guitarist Django Reinhardt (1910-1953), who regularly performed with French violinist Stéphane Grappelli (1908-1997). Guitarist Ken Avis (Lynn's husband) ably captures the distinctive steady strumming style of gypsy jazz called “le pompe” (the pump), while violinist Dave Kline contributes the jazzy lilting swing that not every would-be jazz violinist can readily capture. Lead guitarist David Rosenblatt is featured on the single instrumental, his own composition “Abertura do Verão.” Both guitarists add percussion, and Pete Walby provides tasteful rhythmic background on drums. DC saxophonist Jeff Antoniuk plays a sensitive solo on “The Gentle Rain,” with his usual keen sense of melody, and backs “Blue Skies” with his own rollicking joie de vivre.

“genre doesn't matter as much as the  
songs ... for me it's all about the song.”

The album is available on CD Baby and on Amazon. Upcoming area performances include 49 West Café in Annapolis (Sunday Feb. 19, 7-9pm) and Germano's in Baltimore (Saturday March 24, 7-9pm). The group performs regularly at Bistrot Lepic in Georgetown.

See <http://www.veronneaumusic.com> for other dates.

— Liz Fixsen



## January at Caton Castle

On January 1st Caton Castle held its annual New Year's Day Brunch, with vocalist George V. Johnson, Jr., saxophonist Harold Adams, bassist Amy Shook, pianist Bob Butta and drummer Robert Shahid on the bandstand. A surprise visit by vocalist Sheila Ford and guitarist Mark Mosley made our quintet a septet, and a good time was had by all. It was easy to imagine Eddie Jefferson in the room as George sang tunes from the Jefferson repertoire (some I hadn't heard in quite a while), including "A Night in Tunisia," "My Little Suede Shoes," "Moody's Mood for Love," and "Green Dolphin Street." George and Sheila's "Summertime" duet was a special highlight. And when Harold dedicated "My Funny Valentine" to his sisters, who were in attendance for the fifth year, it was another special moment. The room was filled with folks who had attended all five years of the Brunch. It was wonderful to spend the first day of the year with great music and good friends!

The Quincy Phillips Quartet provided a terrific show on January 7th, with Phillips on drums, Brian Settles on sax, Luke O'Reilly on piano and Eric Wheeler on bass. With gusto, Phillips departed from usual practice by leading with a barrage of sound perfectly executed at the opening of the tunes. Pianist O'Reilly was totally animated as he blended a rag, blues and the kitchen sink in his solos. The sound was so clean and crisp on Settles's opening saxophone solo on "A Child Is Born" that you could almost see the notes. The usual conversation during bass solos was suspended, as Wheeler's low tones resonated in the quiet room. This was a polished band that sounded as though it had been playing together for a while. But in truth, some of them had just met.

On January 14th we celebrated Camay Calloway Murphy's birthday with the straight-ahead jazz of the Craig Alston Quartet, featuring Alston on sax, Warren Wolf on piano, Blake Meister on bass and Eric Kennedy on drums. All of these outstanding musicians were in fine form, and the enthusiastic crowd enjoyed an excellent program of jazz favorites and familiar standards.

— Leslie Imes



PHOTO BY LESLIE IMES

From left: Cheyenne Brooks, Camay Murphy, Gail Marten, Gina DiMeno, Peter Brooks and Miriam Barrett  
Background: Arthur Hoffman

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The Baltimore Chamber Jazz Society is a non profit organization and is supported by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council, an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.



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Please call 410-225-3130 for booking opportunities.

★ *Special discounts available for BJA members!*



**Jazz Giant Sam Rivers Dies at 88**

Sam Rivers, the multi-instrumentalist and bandleader who helped to define free jazz but whose compositions also embraced form and melody, died in Orlando, Florida on December 26th. Rivers re-created his

landmark *Inspiration* and *Culmination* albums in Baltimore, performing with the Peabody Jazz Orchestra in April 2005. The event was organized by conductor and guest bassist Michael Formanek.

Rivers, who kept performing until the end of his life, had recently said, "There's no such thing as retirement, anyway. Retirement? What is that? Who retires?"

– The Editor

**The BJA is dedicated to promoting  
Jazz in Baltimore!**

[www.baltimorejazz.com](http://www.baltimorejazz.com)

## CONDOLENCES



### ELIZABETH BARTZ

December 1, 1915 – January 12, 2012

A patron of the arts and Black American Music, Elizabeth Bartz co-founded with her late husband Floyd the historic North End Lounge at North Avenue and Gay Street. She was the proud mother of the Grammy Award-winning recording artist, alto/soprano saxophonist Gary Bartz, and of a devoted daughter, Torah Bartz Thomas, and will be missed by her extended family and many friends.



## Baltimore Jazz Alliance Big Band

BALTIMORE JAZZ MUSICIANS are welcome to be a part of the BJA Big Band. For further information or complete details for sending mp3 and pdfs, please contact Anthony Villa at [avilla@loyola.edu](mailto:avilla@loyola.edu).



# BJA NEEDS YOU!

We're always looking for new members. If you enjoy reading our newsletter, please show your appreciation by joining the BJA. If you're a musician, joining will get you on our email list for gigs. If you just love jazz, your membership will help our efforts immeasurably.

The membership form may be found on page 11 of this newsletter or join online at the BJA website.

[www.baltimorejazz.com](http://www.baltimorejazz.com)

**REACH A TARGETED  
JAZZ MARKET  
WITH A DISPLAY AD IN THE  
BJA NEWSLETTER.**

SEE DETAILS ON PAGE 11.

## who knew?

### Music Headphones Can Interfere with Heart Devices

Have a pacemaker or an implanted defibrillator? Don't keep your iPod earbuds in your shirt pocket or draped around your neck—even when they're disconnected (ASCAP).

### Does This Song Match My Sofa?

Music can alter a space as much as lighting, fabrics and artwork, but until recently most people relied on their own judgment when it came to sound. Now, though, an increasing number are hiring personal music stylists to pick out tunes for their homes just as they might hire an interior decorator to select furnishings (ASCAP).

### Jazz According to Yogi

Ninety percent of jazz is half improvisation. The other half is the part people play while others are playing something they never played with anyone who played that part. So if you play the wrong part, it's right. If you play the right part, it might be right if you play it wrong enough. But if you play it too right, it's wrong (Yogi Berra).

### New Features Added to Digital Music Downloads

New technology is being used to fill a glaring omission that has existed since the beginning of downloadable music: the lack of liner notes, lyrics, photos and other information that are typically included with most CDs. Visit: [www.apple.com/itunes/lp-and-extras](http://www.apple.com/itunes/lp-and-extras) (ASCAP).

*If you learn of opportunities for music education scholarships or grants, please email the information to the editor at: [jazzpalette@gmail.com](mailto:jazzpalette@gmail.com)*



# JAZZBiz

by Tom Reyes

A series of interviews of movers and shakers in the area involved with the business of promoting jazz

**ROBERT GARLAND, JR.** is co-owner, manager, and the face of Bobby's Jazz Club, located near M&T Bank Stadium at 1140 South Paca Street in Baltimore City. Bobby's opened for business in October, 2007. In a tough economy it has survived and thrived, thanks to a base of loyal patrons and new customers who show up every week to check it out. In addition to being a great place to hear live jazz, Bobby's is a well appointed, full service bar and restaurant. Website: [www.bobbysjazzclub.com](http://www.bobbysjazzclub.com)

*Tom: What is your favorite part of being a club owner?*

**Bobby:** My favorite part of being a club owner is enjoying my partnership with my family. My wife and I co-own Bobby's, but we all have input, including our kids Robert III and Tranise, for its direction. I love it.

*Tom: How did you get started in the entertainment business and opening Bobby's Jazz Club?*

**Bobby:** Now that's a long answer. It started with a dream, and a love for jazz.

*Tom: What are your impressions of the jazz scene in this area?*

**Bobby:** Baltimore's jazz scene is different and unique. It doesn't work like D.C. or Virginia. It moves to its own tune.

*Tom: How did you get interested in music?*

**Bobby:** I got interested in jazz through music evolution. First it was soul. Then it moved to rock. And as I matured, it is jazz.

*Tom: Who are your favorite artists when you listen to music at home?*

**Bobby:** Joe Sample and the late Grover Washington, Jr.

*Tom: What do you do when you have some free time, and able to relax?*

**Bobby:** I like to write, read, conduct research, listen to music and watch jazz DVDs.

*Tom: You smoke and sell cigars. What is your favorite brand these days?*

**Bobby:** I truly love smoking cigars. Especially Perdomo, and Rocky Patel.

*Tom: You own a bar. What is your favorite drink?*

**Bobby:** Grand Mariner 100.

*Tom: Where do you call home?*

**Bobby:** I live in Bowie, Maryland, but grew up in Baltimore.

*Tom: I would like to know your feelings about the word "jazz?"*

**Bobby:** It's an American treasure, and we need to take care of it.

*Tom Reyes is a pianist, B3 organist and bandleader. His website is [www.tomreyesjazz.com](http://www.tomreyesjazz.com)*

# JAM SESSIONS

## Monday Nights – Red House Tavern

Monday night jam sessions at the Red House Tavern, 2239 Essex Street. House piano, drums, and PA system. Hosted by Tom Reyes and friends, featuring the band's Hammond B3 organ. Showtime at 8 pm. 410-522-0015

## Tuesday Nights – Randallstown

Open Jazz Jam Sessions/ Book and Poetry Readings every Tuesday at 6:30-8 pm at the Randallstown Community Center, 3505 Resource Drive. Hosted by Derrick Amin. Musicians and vocalists are welcome. 410-887-0698

## Thursday Nights – Caton Castle – NEW!

Thursday night jam sessions at Caton Castle, 20 S. Caton Avenue, Catonsville. House piano, drums and PA system. Musicians and vocalists are welcome. Showtime at 8 pm. 410-566-7086

## SHARE

If you know of local jam sessions, please share the information with our readers by emailing the details to the editor at: [jazzpalette@gmail.com](mailto:jazzpalette@gmail.com)

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## From our readers . . .

### Exciting news!

Because of the Baltimore Jazz Alliance mention of my "Hybrid Jazz" show, I've had three acts booked and confirmed (Véronneau, Richard Walton and Bob Jacobson).

In February, the show expands to three hours! There are a number of local and regional artists being exposed, as well as international artists. I recently had George Duke spend time with me, as well as Larry Carlton and Kevin Toney. Howard University's sensational "Sing Off" stars Afro Blue will be joining me in the next several weeks.

– Trish Hennessey

[www.blogtalkradio.com/HybridJazzFromTrishHennessey](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/HybridJazzFromTrishHennessey)

BJA members are invited to email letters regarding member interest, constructive criticism, and/or good suggestions. We thank BJA'er Vicki Freeman for suggesting that we add this feature to our newsletter. One or two letters will be printed in each issue. 300 word maximum. Letters should be emailed to the editor at: [jazzpalette@gmail.com](mailto:jazzpalette@gmail.com)

It's not what you play, it's how you play it.

– Mary Lou Williams

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## Vocalist Etta James Dies at 73

Etta James, whose powerful, versatile and emotionally direct voice could enliven the raunchiest blues as well as the most subtle love songs, has died at 73. One of her four Grammy awards was for Best Jazz Vocal Performance, which she won in 1995 for the album *Mystery Lady: Songs of Billie Holiday*.

– The Editor

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## bjā member notes

### Hybrid Jazz

Trish Hennessey is looking for great talent in our region to interview on her radio show *Hybrid Jazz from Trish Hennessey*. The only requirement is to have a CD and a positive outlook. The show will expand to three hours in February. Contact: [altcwgai@aol.com](mailto:altcwgai@aol.com) or 410-686-4424.

### Volunteers Needed at Eubie Blake Center

Do you have computer and/or people skills? There are opportunities for reliable volunteers of all ages and skills to help at the Eubie Blake Center located at 847 N. Howard Street. Contact Troy Burton at 410-225-3130 or [eubieblake@rcn.com](mailto:eubieblake@rcn.com).

### Don't Be Shy. Share.

Share your news with our readers. Send your announcements to the editor at: [jazzpalette.com](mailto:jazzpalette.com).

## bjā member discounts

**Chamber Jazz Society of Baltimore** is now offering BJA Members a \$2 discount off the general admission price. Just indicate your affiliation when ordering tickets.

**An die Musik** offers 10% discount for BJA members for music purchases at the An die Musik record store.

**Donna's Restaurant** in Columbia offers BJA members 15% off their bill for up to two people during live jazz (Saturdays, 7-9 pm).

**Eubie Live!** at the Eubie Blake Cultural Center at 847 N. Howard Street offers a discount to BJA members on rentals of its performance and events spaces.

## CD, DVD, GIG AND VENUE REVIEWS

BJA members may send their commercially produced jazz CDs and DVDs for review consideration to:

BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE  
847 North Howard Street, Baltimore, MD 21201  
[www.baltimorejazz.com](http://www.baltimorejazz.com)

If you would like to have a gig or venue reviewed, please contact:  
[webmaster@baltimorejazz.com](mailto:webmaster@baltimorejazz.com)

Bear in mind that we're unlikely to review bands or venues already covered in previous issues.



PHOTO IMAGE BY LEO HOWARD LUBOW

## Baltimore Jazzscapes II

The BJA'S 16 track compilation CD *Baltimore Jazzscapes II*, showcases Baltimore jazz artists performing in formats ranging from piano trios to large ensembles, playing everything from standards to original contemporary jazz.

The new tracks (all but two of them original compositions) on *Jazzscapes*

*II* testify to the breadth and depth of the contemporary Baltimore jazz scene. *Jazzscapes II* also presents a bonus track by the late Baltimore saxophonist Mickey Fields, an inspired rendering of "Lover Man."

CD available at [www.cdbaby.com](http://www.cdbaby.com) and numerous retail outlets in Baltimore including:

AMERICAN VISIONARY ARTS MUSEUM, 800 Key Highway

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AN DIE MUSIK, 409 N. Charles Street

BALTIMORE SYMPHONY STORE, 1212 Cathedral Street

FELLS POINT VISITOR CENTER, 1724 Thames Street

JAZZ HOUSE WEST, 6035 Liberty Road

RECORD & TAPE TRADERS, 7551 Ritchie Highway, Glen Burnie  
and 736 Dulaney Valley Road, Towson

SOUND GARDEN, 1616 Thames Street, Fells Point

and by the various band leaders on the disk

## The Baltimore Real Book

Published by the BJA, this unique book includes 54 original compositions by 18 Baltimore jazz artists.

Members may purchase copies directly from the BJA for \$8 (20% discount) or at the following retail outlets:

*Appalachian Bluegrass*, 643 Frederick Road, Catonsville

*Baltimore Brass & More*, 99 Mellor Avenue, Catonsville

*Bill's Music*, 743 Frederick Road, Catonsville

*Coffey Music*, 31 E. Main Street, Westminster

*Dale Music*, 8240 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring

*Dundalk Music Center*, 15 Center Place, Dundalk

*Music Go Round* ("C" Book only), 10112 York Road, Cockeysville

*Peabody Bookstore*, 5 E. Centre Street, Baltimore

*Reisterstown Music Center*, 519 Main Street, Reisterstown

*Rosso Music Center*, 5600 Ritchie Highway, Brooklyn Park

*Stu's Music*, Rt. 140, Westminster

*Ted's Musician Shop*, 11 E. Centre Street, Baltimore

*The Guitar Center* ("C" Book only), 1524 E. Joppa Road, Towson  
and 6320 Ritchie Highway, Glen Burnie

*Washington Music Center*, 11151 Veirs Mill Road, Wheaton

## display advertising

### RATES for ad placement

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#### AD PLACEMENT RATES AND SIZES:

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[jazzpalette@gmail.com](mailto:jazzpalette@gmail.com)

## BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please return this form along with your check to:

THE BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE

847 North Howard Street

Baltimore, MD 21201

Your membership card will be mailed to you or the person named below.

**The perfect gift for the jazz lover who has (almost) everything!**

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt/Suite No. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe yourself: (just one please)  Music Lover  Musician  Producer/Promoter  Agent

Media  Club Owner/Manager  Non-profit or Educational Institution  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of Contribution:  \$25 Basic  \$50 Sustaining  \$100 Patron  \$100 501(c)3 Organization

\$200 Corporate  \$250 Lifetime  \$15 Student – (copy of ID required)  \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other

**THANK YOU FOR JOINING! Your Membership Makes A Difference.**





BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE

847 North Howard Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

*Dedicated to promoting* **JAZZ IN BALTIMORE!**