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Bentley School's Jazz Festival Features Jazz Stars of Today and Tomorrow

Submitted by Jenna Starkey



Students from Bentley Upper School and Stanley Middle School perform together Photos provided

"Josie." The Master Class also welcomed members of the Bentley Jazz II Ensemble to perform together on "Song for Bilbao."

The show followed with a performance by duo Brian Pardo and Lynn Ray, who showcased songs from their upcoming album. Brian Pardo is the Director of Bentley Ensembles and is on the faculty at various East Bay schools including The Jazz School in Berkeley, Mills College and UC Berkeley. He has performed and recorded for commercial radio, television, and film and collaborated with well-known musicians including Eddie Harris, Bonnie Raitt and Jack McDuff. Lynn Ray is known in the R&B and Gospel communities and was nominated for an Outstanding Female Vocalist Bammy Award by BAM magazine. During the show, Pardo and Ray were backed by members of Ray Obiedo and Mambo Caribe, David K. Mathews on keyboards, Marc van Wageningen on bass, and Phil Thompson on drums. Ray's soulful voice and Pardo's strong musicality were a true pleasure. Especially moving was Pardo's unique arrangement of Johnny Nash's song, "I Can See Clearly Now," which offered a bittersweet note to the evening.

The night ended with Ray Obiedo and Mambo Caribe taking the stage. Obiedo is a well-known smooth jazz artist and producer in the Bay Area, and has recorded numerous albums with artists such as Herbie Hancock, Pete Escovedo, Grover Washington Jr., Sheila E., and Brenda Russell, to name a few. He has four of his own albums on the Billboard Top 25 charts, and has produced a great deal of music for film and television.

Mambo Caribe is made up of some of the finest jazz musicians from the San Francisco Bay Area, including those noted above and Alex Murzyn on flute and soprano sax, Phil Hawkins on steel pans and percussion, and Sandy Cressman, vocals and percussion.

From the first note to the last, Mambo Caribe had the audience moving in their seats to the exciting rhythms of Brazilian, Afro-Caribbean and West Coast Latin jazz masterpieces. In addition to outstanding and crowd pleasing improvisational solos by Mathews, van Wageningen, Thompson, and Murzyn, Hawkins took a moment to explain the history of steel pans, Trinidad's beloved national instrument. He played a long solo, which showed off the pans' beautiful range of sound. In the final number David K. Mathews, currently touring with Santana, captivated the crowd with a special 10-minute piano solo.

The show ended late into the evening, with a standing ovation from the audience and a buzz of anticipation for what hopefully will become a new annual jazz tradition for Lamorinda.

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