



TIM LAMORTE/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

The Roy Hargrove Quintet performs at Jazz Forum last Friday, June 9.

Morganelli puts a roof over jazz lovers' heads

By Jackie Lupo

TARRYTOWN — Mark Morganelli's name has been synonymous with jazz in Westchester for more than two decades. Last weekend, the former Dobbs Ferry resident unveiled a new local venue for that music with the grand opening of Jazz Forum, a club in downtown Tarrytown. With its lineup of top talent, its wine and liquor bar, and its relaxing lounge, Morganelli wants the intimate spot to become a center of weekend nightlife for jazz aficionados.

Jazz Forum, at One Dixon Lane, operates Fridays and Saturdays, presenting two sets per night, at 8 and 10, and Sundays for Brazilian-style jazz, at 4 and 6 p.m.

Last weekend, Morganelli hosted the two-time Grammy Award-winning trumpeter Roy Hargrove. Tonight (June 16) and

tomorrow, saxophonist Lee Konitz — 90 years old and going strong — performs with his quartet. Some of the summer's upcoming acts include the Newport Jazz Assembly, Jason Marsalis, the Roberta Gambarini Quartet, and Freddy Cole.

Morganelli, 62, is well known to area audiences. The curly-haired musician/concert presenter/record producer lived in Dobbs Ferry for 25 years, after moving from the Upper West Side of Manhattan with his wife, Ellen Prior, and sons, Ian and Jaren, now 27 and 22. Morganelli has presented Jazz Forum Arts' free summer concerts on the Dobbs Ferry waterfront and at Lyndhurst for many years. He also plays trumpet or flugelhorn (the trumpet's wider, mellower cousin) at gigs throughout the region. He has produced about 150 jazz concerts starring internationally known artists at The Music

Hall in Tarrytown.

Thirty-two years ago, while living in Manhattan, Morganelli established the nonprofit Jazz Forum Arts. He was part of the jazz club scene in Greenwich Village, opening his first Jazz Forum loft on Cooper Square in 1979, and then a larger club on Broadway and Bleecker Street that operated from 1981 to 1983. Morganelli has successfully straddled two worlds — the Manhattan jazz scene and the more laid-back, but still vibrant music scene in suburbia — since he and his family moved from the city. In all that time, the opportunity to establish another jazz club eluded him.

With their sons grown, Morganelli and Prior, a former consultant who is now Jazz Forum's general manager — decided to downsize two years ago. But the idea of moving into an apartment evaporated

when they happened upon a property for sale on a quiet side street off Tarrytown's Central Avenue that was being used as an antiques warehouse. "I said, 'This could be a performance space,'" he recalled. They decided to sell their house on Clinton Avenue, and turned to a longtime friend, architect Stephen Tilly of Dobbs Ferry, to help them transform the cement-floored space into a Manhattan-style jazz club — and the floor above into their home.

The club is structured as part of the Jazz Forum Arts nonprofit. In the entry area, some 50 charter donors who collectively contributed about \$100,000 in seed money are acknowledged, while Montefiore, the healthcare/hospital corporation with offices in Tarrytown, has signed on for a three-year sponsorship totaling

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\$105,000. Because of the sponsorships, the cover charge per set is \$20 per person on Fridays and Saturdays and \$15 per person on Sundays. In addition, there is a \$10 per person minimum for food or beverages. The club accommodates about 85 patrons. Tables are for guests of all ages, but the bar is restricted to those 21 and over.

A "quiet food" menu of Italian wines, charcuterie, cheeses, antipasti, and desserts was developed with Rivertowns restaurateurs Chris Vergara and Jason Steinberg, the team behind Harper's in Dobbs Ferry and Saint George in Hastings. There's a wide selection of liquors, spirits, beers, and cool-sounding cocktails (\$12), such as the "Righteous Syncopation," the "Quinine Quartet," and the "Lilt & Slide."

For Morganelli, the acoustics are as important as the layout of the room (the "stage" area is in a corner so that all patrons are within 30 feet of the musicians). The interior avoids reflective surfaces in favor of wood because of the way wood enhances the tones of jazz. There's a glossy bamboo floor, two colors of wood on the inlaid tabletops, curvy cherrywood chairs, and massive bar tops made out of polished slabs of black walnut. The walls are lined with a rotating selection of art, much of it for sale. Also on display are examples of Morganelli's vast collection of autographed record albums. (He produced 60 and has played

with or produced for artists from Lionel Hampton and Chuck Mangione to Dave Brubeck and Sonny Rollins).

In the adjoining lounge, which doubles as a casual eating area for patrons who arrive early, there's a pool table and a comfortable sitting area graced with two Gothic-style thrones, gifts of South Presbyterian Church of Dobbs Ferry, and a carved Asian settee from local friends Ken and Jennifer Lewis. A shopping nook off the hall offers Jazz Forum items, including T-shirts.

Jazz Forum has free dedicated parking during club hours at the Key Bank on Dixon Street, just west of North Broadway (Route 9), and in the employee lot at Chase Bank on McKeel Avenue, east of North Broadway. Two handicapped permit spaces in front of the club are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Tickets are available online at jazzforumarts.org. Click on "Calendar" for the next two months of upcoming shows.



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Patrons applaud the Roy Hargrove Quintet.