

MUSIC/NIGHTLIFE



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Bootsie Barnes, all about Philly jazz

By David R. Stampone For The Inquirer

Even without the recent passing of several revered Philadelphia jazz artists - pianist Sid Simmons, organist Trudy Pitts, bassist Charles Fambrough - a trek up Germantown Avenue Thursday evening to catch Philly's veteran tenor-sax master Robert "Bootsie" Barnes, 73, seemed like the right idea.

Barnes' rich tone, sympathetic ensemble interplay, and living-legacy status make him a local icon best experienced sooner rather than later. Although he's likened to both Coleman Hawkins and such soul-jazz tenors as Gene Ammons, Barnes' sound entails a classic bop capacity with ample ability to swing or soften as desired. And his gigs showcase an edifying knowledge of Philly jazz, and beyond.

Over 90 minutes, Barnes led a quartet through five leisurely paced numbers within the woody confines of Mount Airy Presbyterian Church. It marked the venue's debut hosting a community Neighborhood Concerts Series show presented by Glenside's Jazz Bridge, a nonprofit organization that assists area jazz musicians with their "health, legal, financial, personal, and professional needs."

Barnes, of course, has played with a who's who in local jazz over the last half-century, including an aspiring drummer pal with whom he grew up, in North Philadelphia's Richard Allen Homes, named Bill Cosby.

At the church, the saxophonist shared horn lines with renowned trumpeter Duane Eubanks, backed by Hammond organist Lucas Brown and drummer Anwar Marshall. After a question-and-answer session moderated by host (and accomplished drummer) Robert H. Henderson, they closed with a 15-minute version of Mulgrew Miller's "The Sequel" - a departure from most of the set, as Barnes noted with a chuckle, because it's "not by anybody from Philadelphia." Brown negotiated the bluesy walking bass lines with his Hammond's foot pedals while giving the interpretation a different coloring, his organ replacing Miller's piano. Eubanks waxed melodic and sounded comfortable - he actually played trumpet on the original in Miller's group Wingspan.

Earlier, Barnes especially delivered on Hank Mobley's "A Peck a Sec," a lesser-known number from the late Philadelphia tenor saxist (a key influence on Barnes), as it came out on Freddie Hubbard's 1960 'Goin' Up album, on which Mobley was a sideman. The somewhat obscure Lee Morgan ballad "Carolyn," off Mobley's underrated 1963 LP 'No Room for Squares', also got a gorgeous airing Thursday night.



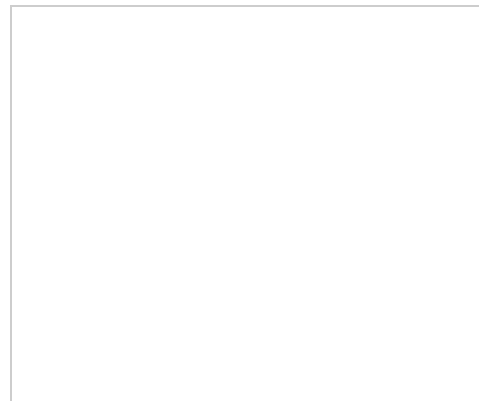
Saxophonist Bootsie Barnes played Mount Airy Presbyterian Church on Thursday.

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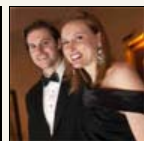
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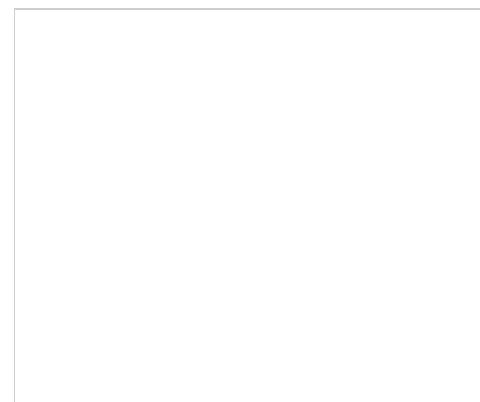
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