MCG Jazz Celebrates 25 Years of Creating Hope through Music

Discover Our History and Your Future Inside
MCG Jazz & Marty Ashby Celebrate Their Silver Anniversary

As Marty Ashby celebrates his 25th Anniversary with Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild, we reflect on a career most people would long for. As Executive Producer of MCG Jazz, Marty has invited the who's who in jazz to perform at the MCG Music Hall. MCG Jazz consists of: a subscription concert series Marty instituted when he came to MCG in 1987, a multi-GRAMMY® Award-winning music production company that has created over 50 commercial and educational CDs and DVDs, and a line of services packaged especially for the independent jazz community that includes educational programs like School of Swing, Jazz Is Life® seminars, and professional development and network building tools through a variety of initiatives.

As a musician, Marty has performed all over the globe with artists such as Paquito D’Rivera and the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band and was a guest on Marion McPartland’s Piano Jazz. Continued on Page 2
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Marty began playing guitar when he was only seven years old. His father, a guitarist and music store owner, taught Marty, his brothers and mother to play a variety of instruments. The “Ashby Family” was one of Central New York’s most in-demand society bands during the 1970s and provided a strong musical base for all of the Ashby boys. While he was growing up, Marty was constantly exposed to and surrounded by great music. He remembers listening to records ranging from Chet Atkins to Duke Ellington as a child.

After graduating from Ithaca College, Marty moved to New York City to pursue his career. Working in clubs and producing some local concerts and festivals, Marty quickly realized he needed a “day job” to survive financially in the big apple. He took a position with the New York Philharmonic selling tickets over the phone. Marty was struck by the business infrastructure the orchestra had developed to further its art form. This realization compelled him to learn about the management side of music. Marty’s endeavor to learn as much as he could from performing arts organizations such as symphony orchestras, opera and ballet companies took him to accept positions with the Cleveland Orchestra and, eventually, the Pittsburgh Symphony.

In 1987, close friend and fellow guitarist, Emily Remler, asked Marty to join her to tour a “new venue on the North Side” that she just heard about. This chance encounter brought Marty to Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild and to meet Bill Strickland. Strickland explained how he built the music hall to present jazz concerts, but the hall sat dark because they did not have anyone with experience in that area. Seeing the opportunity he had been waiting for, Marty seized a chance to discuss jazz programming further with Bill. After a second meeting, Marty took a 60 percent pay cut from the Pittsburgh Symphony, programmed the first subscription series for MCG Jazz and has never looked back.

As it enters its 25th year, MCG Jazz is thriving and continues to operate under the simple mission statement: Preserve, Present and Promote Jazz. Marty believes that the artists presented at MCG need to be treated like the national treasures that they are. This philosophy has made MCG one of the “must play” venues in the US. In fact, MCG Jazz was voted as one of the top 150 venues in the world by Downbeat magazine in January 2011.

Jazz encourages improvisation and Marty explains that in the context of life, we improvise everyday. “Take a typical mother; she is constantly improvising. If the power goes out and the alarm doesn’t go off, or one of the kids wakes up sick, or she does not have all she needs to make a meal — she is improvising as she deals with each of those unexpected moments during her day. Mothers are master improvisers but we all improvise in life. Jazz music is a way of celebrating that and welcoming the challenge.”

After 25 years at MCG, and also programming jazz for several concert series from Racine, Wisconsin to Phoenix, Arizona, and generating over $50M for the jazz sector; Marty is energized about the future of jazz and the music industry. In his latest adventure, Marty is teaching the first ever Business of Jazz course at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. “The young musicians in my class will carry on the legacy of jazz and move the music into its next evolution,” explains Marty. Jazz will continue to improvise its way through the ever changing times and Marty’s 25 years of dedication to improvisation has provided MCG Jazz the base to continue to grow the legacy of the music long into the future.
On Board with Dot Davis

Dorothy A. “Dot” Davis is a lawyer with Eckert Seamans where she chairs the Board of Directors Women’s Initiative (WIE), a firm-wide program designed to foster an energetic and supportive atmosphere for women at Eckert Seamans. Through her friendship with Dianna Jannetta, a lifetime Board member at Manchester Bidwell Corporation (MBC), she was introduced to MBC in 1997 and, shortly thereafter, asked to join the MBC Board of Directors. Since then, Dot has been tremendously committed to MBC. She believes that MBC’s value-based educational model — with its focus on arts and career development — exemplifies a “cornerstone of a great democracy.”

By supporting MBC, Dot says that “people can see the direct result of their investment in the community.” Between its career training and academic enrichment for adults in transition and education of urban youth through the arts, it is easy to see the importance of an organization like MBC. In these trying economic times, when supporting nonprofit organizations can be seen as a financial sacrifice, Dot believes that people who invest in MBC “can simply look into the neighborhoods of Pittsburgh and see the immediate and tangible results of their gift.”

Dot Davis’s longtime dedication to the Board and unwavering support can be viewed as a testament to her belief in MBC’s innovative past, inspiring present and promising future.

The Growing Resonation of Jazz

Seeds of inspiration were sown when Reverend Tim Smith, Executive Director of Center of Life (COL), met Bill Strickland and Marty Ashby. Subsequently, Reverend Tim formed The COL Jazz Band, which is comprised of students from middle school through college who have auditioned and committed to furthering their musical talents. Through a relationship with MCG Jazz, the students have been given exposure to some of the greatest jazz musicians in the world.

Reverend Tim remembers one of the first concerts he and his students attended, “[It was] Toots Theilemans. I remember sitting there watching the faces of my sons and their friends as they watched this 80-year-old man, sitting in a high chair ‘playing a harmonica like nobody’s business!’ They saw how the musicians communicated with their instruments, how they communicated musically with other musicians on stage, and how they connected with the audience. This served to develop our students’ stage presence, gave them ideas about improvisation, and inspired them to practice.”

And inspired they were. Every spring, the Monterey Jazz Festival invites musicians from across the United States and around the world to participate in the Next Generation Jazz Festival. This year, The COL Jazz Band will be among the select few young, talented jazz bands to compete in the three-day celebration. With their God-inspired musical mix of the past, present, and future, the band integrates contemporary and standard songs with the history-rich tradition of jazz. MCG Jazz wishes them continued success in this adventure known as “jazz.”

To learn more about our educational initiatives, please call us at 412-322-0800.

The COL Jazz Band

Empowering Education in Pittsburgh and Beyond
BTC Receives Prestigious Award for Community Service

Bidwell Training Center (BTC) was honored with the inaugural 2010 ACCSC Community Service Award that recognizes our significant commitment to the local community through service initiatives.

ACCSC, the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, is BTC’s accrediting commission. The ACCSC evaluated 29 nominations from its accredited member schools. The criteria considered included the scope and impact of the service initiatives, the connections between the education programs and service learning, the commitment of the school to its community, and the demonstration of how service activities touched the lives of personnel, students, and community members.

“Service often enables students to realize their own self-worth, and it provides an incentive for the development of leadership skills, which are critical to students’ success as they enter the job market,” said Gary Baranowski, director of the Horticulture Technology major.

Many of BTC’s career-training majors include volunteer service as part of the curriculum or provide students with opportunities to participate in community service. Our students welcome the opportunity to contribute to the community by offering their time, talents, and newly acquired professional skills.

ACCSC gave special mention to our blood drives, collections for local food pantries and the homeless, advocacy and fundraising for breast cancer awareness, and various horticulture and community garden initiatives.

Engaged Advisory Boards Make a Difference

One of the most frequently asked questions about Bidwell Training Center’s success usually can be answered with two words: advisory boards. This is the answer to such questions as: How do you determine what majors to offer? How do you gather feedback on the curriculum? How do the students obtain valuable hands-on learning experience? How do you achieve outstanding career placement rates?

Advisory boards consist of professionals from a variety of career fields who support BTC by providing industry information, resources, and experiential learning and career placement opportunities, among other contributions.

While everything we do depends on knowledgeable and dedicated staff, the advisory boards have an active role in our ability to anticipate and address industry demands. They provide our students with professional development opportunities that employers notice and have come to value.

BTC students and graduates reap the benefits of our unique combination of exceptional staff and committed Advisory Boards. “We value and utilize our advisory board members and their involvement. They have truly enhanced training opportunities and job placements for our students,” said Val Njie, Senior Vice President and Executive Director of Bidwell Training Center.
New Partnership Benefits Underserved

Earlier this month, MCG Youth & Arts began a new daytime program. In partnership with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, we are now providing students from Holy Family Institute with a twice-weekly art experience. The Supplemental Education Program (SEP) is designed to instill the students with a sense of accomplishment and to encourage creativity and communication skills.

SEP will be funded for two years thanks to a $125,000 grant from Casey Family Programs, a nonprofit foundation that seeks to improve foster care and child welfare programs. The program has been further funded by a $250,000 grant from an anonymous foundation.

“This partnership between Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild and Holy Family Institute will offer our youth new opportunities and potentially demonstrate successes that could be replicated in other parts of the country,” county Human Services Director Mark Cherna said.

While the programming is strictly arts-based, the courses also encourage the use of traditional academic skills including communications, math and science. Furthermore, there is an important social component that reflects the MCG values of mentorship and respect.

In addition to the daytime SEP program, students from A Second Chance, Auberle, Circle C, Gwen’s Girls, Mars Home for Youth, Pressley Ridge, and Three Rivers Youth are participating in MCG Youth & Arts afterschool classes.

Design Studio Upgrades Inspire Future Fashionistas

The MCG Youth & Arts design studio received a monumental makeover thanks to a trio of grants from PNC, Ruscitto, and Cox & Hafner, totalling $69,250.

Perhaps the most significant improvement was the acquisition of 10 new computers, each equipped with Adobe CS4 professional design software. Combined with an Epson BlackMax printer, a Microtek flatbed scanner, and various pieces of industry-standard screenprinting equipment, the design studio is now as technically well-equipped as most commercial screenprinting studios.

Anyone who attended last year’s fashion show knows that the MCG Youth & Arts fashion students are serious about their work. With the addition of Project Runway dress forms, an embroidery machine, and numerous new commercial sewing machines, our students are well-equipped to make their visions a reality.

Virtually every aspect of the design studio has been improved to some degree, including basic equipment—even the tables and chairs. The electrical system has been re-wired for safety and convenience, and the sink has been upgraded to a professional-quality equipment-washing station.

Get Ready for Summer

MCG will once again offer incredible summer programming. Register your kids and spread the word!

www.mcgyouthandarts.org/summer

or call 412-322-1773.
MBC’s Educational Model Hits the Streets of Cleveland

The staff of the National Center for Arts and Technology (NCAT) is very happy to announce the November 2010 grand opening — in Cleveland, Ohio — of our fourth affiliate site. Located in the Midtown area of the city, between the downtown and University Circle area on the Euclid transportation corridor, NewBridge Center for Arts and Technology is ideally situated to help those in need of an empowering educational environment.

- Studio arts training is underway in ceramics, digital arts, and photography. The first semester of classes were full and were completed in early January. Their second semester is underway now.
- The first in a series of workshops for faculty and staff was offered in early January.
- Student interviews for the phlebotomist and pharmacy technician programs began in January 2011. The first class of phlebotomists is beginning in April.

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Pittsburgh, PA

Youth students at one of NCAT’s operational affiliate sites.
Thank You for Your Support!

Manchester Bidwell Corporation would like to thank all of our supporters for their generosity. All gifts listed in this section are from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010. Any gift received after December 2010 will be listed in A Better Way Forward’s spring 2012 issue. All names are listed as requested by the donor.

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