

Winnipeg Free Press

Performance pleases pleasant afternoon audience

Winnipeg Free Press
Monday, April 14, 2003
Page: D5
Section: Entertainment
Byline: Peter Appleyard, Tommy Banks

Asper Foundation Jazz Performances

Berney Theatre

April 13

By Chris Smith

THE sun was out, the temperature was high and there was Ellington in the air yesterday afternoon as a couple of Canada's jazz stalwarts performed in the city.

Vibraphonist Peter Appleyard and pianist Tommy Banks kept to familiar territory in the first of two performances, with selections mainly from the Ellington and Benny Goodman songbooks.

And the material and Appleyard's friendly banter appeared to be just what the audience wanted on a pleasant afternoon.

The duo, backed by Winnipeg's Gilles Fournier on bass and Rob Siwik on drums, shared the spotlight during a two-hour performance, the first of two as part of the **Asper Foundation Jazz Performances** series.

After a piano/vibes duet to open the show, the quartet played a cosy, laid-back Sophisticated Lady before jumping into another classic from the Ellington band, Take The 'A' Train, which featured good solos by Appleyard, Banks and Fournier.

Appleyard, who spent many years playing with Benny Goodman and is known for his swinging, strutted his stuff on Satin Doll before Banks took the spotlight to perform alone before Fournier and Siwik joined him for Things Ain't What They Used To Be, always a crowd-pleaser, which featured very good solos by all three.

They broke out of the Ellington/Goodman format for a piece by pianist Marian McPartland, Twilight World, arranged by Canadian composer and arranger Robert Farnon. It was a lovely, almost wistful piece amid the more swinging numbers that were the order of the day.

Appleyard is old school from his immaculate appearance to his stage patter, sharing anecdotes from a long career as a musician. In other words, he is as much an entertainer as a musician.

He knows the classic tunes that punch an audience's buttons and the band performed Dizzy Spells and Stompin' at the Savoy from the Goodman songbook and Midnight Sun and Flying Home from the Lionel Hampton book.

Stompin' and Flying Home are almost guaranteed to get a crowd going, and the interplay between Banks and Appleyard to open Stompin' was a joy before Banks set off on a long, tasty solo.

Banks, a longtime big band leader, television host and a Senator since April 2000 is the perfect mix of accompanist and soloist, especially on the beautifully done John Lewis tune, Django.

There were a couple of miscues when a testy-sounding Appleyard called off the accompanists for coming in too soon. It may have been a lack of rehearsal time (Banks and Appleyard performed Saturday night at Edmonton's Yardbird Suite) or a cranky vibraphonist, but it stuck out in an otherwise well-orchestrated show.

© 2003 The Winnipeg Free Press. All rights reserved.

http://www.fpinformart.ca/doc/doc_print.php?key=ar|wifpp|87374|200304140001|7869966|1&... 30/10/2007