

**Our Next Concert**  
**Sunday, February 18, 2024**  
**Jerry Rife's Blue Skies Jazz Quartet**  
**Haddonfield United Methodist Church**



Photo by Lynn Redmile

**Jerry Rife** - leader, clarinet, soprano saxophone  
**Pat Mercuri** - guitar, banjo  
**Peter Reichlin** - trombone  
**Danny Tobias** - trumpet

Jerry Rife's Blue Skies Jazz Quartet recaptures the infectious rhythm and tight improvisational spirit of the music of the Great American Songbook, standard jazz, and revival Dixieland. Formed in 1994 as a smaller ensemble of the traditional jazz band Jerry Rife's Rhythm Kings, the Blue Skies Jazz Quartet specializes in swing music of the early jazz, pre-WW II period. They share several traits with the traditional Dixieland jazz bands of this period including an abiding commitment to ensemble jazz. Collective improvisation is the trademark of their music especially in the musical heads and extended out choruses. Each member of the band improvises solos, but under the solos you will hear background riffs and spur-or-the-moment counter melodies crafted to compliment the soloist. This integrated, dense style characterizes much early jazz especially jazz from New Orleans and Chicago.

Jerry Rife's Blue Skies Jazz Quartet have entertained crowds for over thirty years with repeat performances at many central New Jersey institutions. They have played at family reunions, class reunions, town holiday special events, community concerts, and for fifteen years held educational workshops at high schools in the tri-state area under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Jazz Society. The group played at The Marroe Inn in Lawrenceville, NJ weekly for nine years.



Made possible by funds from the Camden County Cultural & Heritage Commission at Camden County College, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts

**Coming on March 24, 2024**  
**Bryan Wright - Piano**  
Community Arts Center, Wallingford, PA



Bryan S. Wright, Ph.D., is a pianist and musicologist specializing in ragtime and early jazz piano styles. With his wife, Yuko, he has performed and lectured on ragtime across the United States and abroad and released two full-length solo CDs, *Syncopated Musings* and *Breakin' Notes*. He is founder and executive producer of Rivermont Records, a Grammy-nominated label specializing in ragtime and early jazz. Bryan holds degrees in historical musicology from the College of William and Mary and the University of Pittsburgh, where he is presently an instructor.

[Bryan Wright's webpage](#)

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Listen to "In a Mist" by Bix Beiderbecke



Listen to "Big Fat Ham" by Jelly Roll Morton  
2011 Central Pennsylvania Ragtime Festival



# Drew Nugent and the Midnight Society

## January 21, 2024

### Review by Jim McGann



Photo by Jim McGann

**Drew Nugent** - leader, trumpet, piano, “teapot” trumpet, vocals  
**Steve Moise** - valve trombone, recorder  
**Devon Kortan** - banjo, four string plectrum guitar  
**Gary Cattley** - string bass, tuba  
**Mike DiMonte** - drums

Despite having endured four to six inches of snow in recent days, TSJS opened 2024 with the return of Drew Nugent and the Midnight Society Orchestra. The band was the first to perform for TSJS to a live audience once the Covid restrictions were relaxed back in 2021 and have been performing for TSJS since the early 2000s.

For this Sunday’s concert, Nugent was aided and abetted by trombonist Steve Moise, who has himself appeared at TSJS Jam Sessions in the past, and with a rhythm section of Devon Kortan, Gary Cattley and Mike DiMonte on guitar/banjo, bass/tuba and drums respectively pointed signs for a pleasant afternoon of jazz.

Whatever the reason, Nugent’s and the MSO performed in a tired, lethargic fashion. Throughout the concert, there were moments where the band appeared to put together a solid performance only to return to a perfunctory status.

The band tended to fall into a routine, with most of the performances followed this formula:

- Band Chorus
- Nugent vocal (if not an instrumental)
- Moise and/or Nugent (trumpet) solo or trading of fours, eights, etc. by the two horns
- Kortan solo
- Nugent (piano) solo
- Cattley solo
- DiMonte drum solo or Nugent (teapot trumpet) solo
- Second vocal or band rideout chorus

There was a need for a solo feature by one of the instrumentalists or a vocalist other than the leader. Even a third horn, like a sax or clarinet to pare off against the brass. The band needed a spark to get things going.



Photo by Jim McGann



From performances past, Nugent's group would pull some unknown or rarely heard gems of the past and give them new life. It was in these tunes, for this concert, where the band tried to get out of its funk and put out an inspiring performance. The Isham Jones number, "Down Where the Sun Goes



Photo by Richard Barnes

Down" is one example of this, with Nugent and Moise in a spirited exchange, Kortan on banjo (excellent throughout) backed by Nugent's piano, who took an unaccompanied solo, ending a creative Nugent trumpet break. The Henry "Red" Allen "Smooth Sailin'" allowed Moise to throw in some J.C. Higginbotham phrasing, Kortan to display his mastery

of the four-string plectrum guitar and DiMonte's drums some solo space.

However, these moments were the exception. The band seemed to be longing for something else, despite the fact there was some attempt at making it work.

Nugent covered all of

the vocals, and while his Jolson/Putney Dandridge vocal style worked on up-tempo numbers like "Everybody Loves My Baby" and "With Plenty Of Money And You" but Lee Wiley's "Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere" and the Waller/Razaf



Photo by Jim McGann

collaboration, "How Can You Face Me?" called for subtle vocal stylings.



Photo by Jim McGann

Instrumentally, Nugent fared better at the keyboard. Pumping out rock solid stride on "At the Jazz Band Ball" and "My Honey's Lovin Arms." Less so on trumpet, save for a few exchanges with Moise, and vehicles like "Canal Street Blues" where he applied the plunger mute. The teapot trumpet, like Red McKenzie's comb on many a Mound City Blue

Blowers recording, is a band selling point, a gimmick. However, its shrill, shaky sound reminded one of Cliff Edwards's vocal abilities known as "effing." Edwards managed to make a better sound through vocalizing than Nugent's diminutive trumpet.

Goodman author D. Russell Connor, in describing the classic Venuti-Lang All Stars recordings where a young Benny Goodman and Jack Teagarden

participated, asked the question "What makes them so great?" He began by noting that the musicians were compatible, and the tunes recorded were jazz tunes, finally concluding that "It just came out that way." Another day it might not.

Jazz improvisation is like that."<sup>1</sup> For Drew Nugent and the Midnight Society Orchestra, the ingredients were there to create a great afternoon of jazz, but it was not to be. Perhaps, it was an off day.



Photo by Jim McGann

<sup>1</sup> Connor, D. Russell. **Benny Goodman: Listen To His Legacy.** Scarecrow Press. New Jersey. 1988.

### Review and Photos by Jim McGann

With a passion for traditional jazz, Jim McGann has reviewed and photographed Tri-State Jazz concerts since the early 2000s.



### Photos by Richard Barnes Photographer / Musician

Since 1978 Richard Barnes has been working as a photographer.

[www.RBarnesPhotography.com](http://www.RBarnesPhotography.com)  
[Blackbird Society Orchestra website](#)



|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
|                                  | <b>Tri-State Schedule</b>   |
| <b>02/18/2024</b><br>Haddonfield | <b>Jerry Rife's Blue Skies Jazz Quartet</b><br>The <b>Blue Skies Jazz Quartet</b> performs with infectious rhythm and a tight improvisational spirit, specializing in swing music of the early jazz pre-WWII period. They draw on the familiar tunes of the Great American Song Book, standard jazz and revival New Orleans Style.                              |
| <b>03/24/2024</b><br>Wallingford | <b>Bryan Wright - Piano</b><br>Bryan is a pianist and musicologist specializing in ragtime and early jazz piano styles. Brian has performed and lectured on ragtime across the United States and abroad. He is founder and executive producer of Rivermont Records, a Grammy-nominated label specializing in ragtime and early jazz.                            |
| <b>04/21/2024</b><br>Haddonfield | <b>Dave Posmontier's Philly Stomp!</b><br>"A New Orleans Band With a Philly Twist" -- <b>Philly Stomp!</b> is a six piece ensemble playing authentic New Orleans swinging jazz like you heard from the Twenties right up to today on Basin and Bourbon Streets and in the French Quarter.   |
| <b>05/19/2024</b><br>Haddonfield | <b>Neville Dickie with Joe and Paul Midiri</b><br>World-class British pianist Neville Dickie rejoins TSJS veterans Joe and Paul Midiri. Neville is among the most accomplished stride and boogie-woogie pianists on either side of the Atlantic. Joe and Paul Midiri, well-known to Tri-State audiences, have recorded with everything from trios to big bands. |
| <b>06/23/2024</b><br>Wallingford | <b>Danny Tobias and Friends</b><br>Danny has quite a group of friends - a stellar array of talent - including Randy Reinhart, Jim Lawlor, Arnt Arntzen and Vince Giordano. A "must see" event!  |
| <b>07/21/2024</b><br>Wallingford | <b>The Tri-State Jazz All-Stars</b><br>The Tri-State All-Stars return. Our annual tradition offers a core band of top performers jamming together with guest musicians, on familiar trad jazz tunes.  |
| <b>08/18/2024</b><br>Haddonfield | <b>TBD</b>  |
| <b>09/15/2024</b><br>Wallingford | <b>Ben Mauger's Hot 6</b><br>Ben presents his Hot 6 for a raucous afternoon of traditional jazz and New Orleans style favorites. The band will play old-time hot jazz from the 1920s-'30s and maybe even sample some swing-revival from the following era.  |
| <b>10/20/2024</b><br>Haddonfield | <b>TBD</b>  |
| <b>11/17/2024</b><br>Wallingford | <b>Manouche 5</b><br>This Philadelphia based quintet performs gypsy-jazz influenced standards and popular music similar to the original Hot Club of Paris. They've become a Tri-State favorite.   |

**THE POTOMAC RIVER JAZZ CLUB** [WWW.PRJC.ORG](http://WWW.PRJC.ORG)



## PRJC Educational Discussion: The Phonograph and Early Jazz

featuring John McCusker

Monday, February 26, 2024, 7-8:15pm

**Register ONLINE via Zoom**

John McCusker presents "The Phonograph and Early Jazz," an audio and visual presentation. Sound recording technology existed for more than two decades before the phonograph became a typical item in American homes. Why the lag, and how was consumer hesitance addressed by phonograph makers? What is the difference between a phonograph, a Victrola, and a Gramophone? How did the emergence of American music genres jazz, blues, ragtime drive the recording industry and the place of music in American homes?

John McCusker returns to PRJC for his third talk in this series, by popular demand. He is an author and independent scholar, has documented the people and places that gave New Orleans one of its many nicknames "The Cradle of Jazz." In addition to being an award-winning photojournalist, first at The Times-Picayune and then The New Orleans Advocate, John McCusker has written two books; *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (2012) and *Jockomo: The Native Roots of Mardi Gras Indians*, with Shane Lief, (2019). Both were published by the University Press of Mississippi. John also builds cigar box guitars and repairs antique phonographs.

This session will be held virtually via Zoom. Login information will be sent two hours before the start of the program. Although these monthly talks are free, the PRJC is always happy to have donations to offset the costs. Learn more about our organization, become a member, or contribute by visiting [www.prjc.org](http://www.prjc.org).

The event is FREE! Registration required by 5pm on the day of the event: **Zoom**

## Thank You to Our Premium Level Members

|                   |  |                                  |
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| <b>SUSTAINERS</b> | <b>\$200 for individuals \$220 for couples</b> |                                  |
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Tri-State Jazz Society depends on the generous contributions of members because basic membership dues and concert admission charges do not cover all costs. The board asks members to consider renewing their memberships at the Sponsor, Patron, or Sustainer level if they are able to do so.

Features Now ONLINE on the  
Tri-State Jazz Website

Our Premium Level Members

Tri-State Jazz Society Board of Directors

Tri-State Jazz Society Contact Information

Online Membership Enrollment and Renewal

CONCERT SCHEDULE  
Sundays from 2:00 to 4:30 pm

Visit our Tri-State Jazz Society website for up-to-the-minute news about schedule and concert changes, or call our Hotline at (856) 720-0232.

Member admission is \$10; general admission is \$20.

Introductory offer - start a new, first-time TSJS annual membership (\$20) at the door and receive free admission to this concert.

Full-time students with ID, or children accompanied by a paying adult, are free.

#### **Concert Covid Policy**

Tri-State Jazz Society recommends that guests wear masks, based on personal preference, to attend this full-capacity indoor concert.

You may also enjoy watching the concert remotely on our website or YouTube channel.

**CALL OUR HOTLINE for up-to-the-minute updates (856) 720-0232**

#### **ADA compliance**

Access to our concert venues is available at grade level.

Restroom facilities are available at grade level.



Tri-State Jazz Society, formed in 1988, is dedicated to the preservation and live performance of traditional jazz. Concerts featuring leading professional soloists and bands are presented throughout the year. Events are open to the public and all who enjoy traditional jazz are invited to join. The society is a non-profit educational corporation supported by its members.

#### **Membership**

Basic dues are \$20 per person. New and renewal memberships can be started in any month and run for one year. In addition to half-price concert admissions, members receive The Strutter newsletter by email.

**Premium memberships** help sustain and expand the work of Tri-State Jazz Society. Individual Sponsors contribute at the \$50 level (\$70 for couples); Patrons, \$100 (\$120 for couples); Sustainers \$200 or more (\$220 or more for couples). Premium-level members are eligible to attend an annual reception for Sponsors, Patrons and Sustainers.

Visit our website for more details:

**New Member application**

**Renew your membership** at the Sustainer, Patron, or Sponsor level.

Dues and donations may be tax deductible under IRS Section 501(c)(3).





# Membership Form

**Basic Dues:**       Individual \$20                       Couple \$40  
**Sponsor Dues:**     Individual \$50                       Couple \$70  
**Patron Dues:**       Individual \$100                       Couple \$120  
**Sustainer Dues:**    Individual \$200 or more    Couple \$220 or more  
**Amount Enclosed**    \$ \_\_\_\_\_      **Date** \_\_\_\_\_      **Check No.** \_\_\_\_\_

*Members are admitted to all regular concerts at half price. Memberships renewed prior to expiration start at the end of current membership; expired memberships start on receipt of payment. All memberships run for 12 months.*

First and Last Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail with check payable to Tri-State Jazz Society, Inc., P.O. Box 896, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054**

**TRI-STATE JAZZ SOCIETY, INC.  
P.O. BOX 896  
MOUNT LAUREL, NJ 08054**

