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MUSIC REVIEW

Honoring Harvard's jazz past

April 11, 2011 | By Bill Beuttler, Globe Correspondent

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40 YEARS OF JAZZ AT HARVARD At: Sanders Theatre, Saturday

CAMBRIDGE — There was much to celebrate at Sanders Theatre on Saturday, as Harvard's pair of extracurricular big bands were joined by a distinguished alumnus and a handful of jazz masters for a concert honoring "40 Years of Jazz at Harvard."

The evening began with the student musicians, who were plenty impressive in their own right, all the more so considering that none of them is majoring in music. A highlight of the short opening set by the Mark Olson-directed Sunday Jazz Band was "Peedlum," dedicated to the late pianist Hank Jones, who would have admired how deftly Andrew Chow introduced his composition.

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"40 Years of Jazz at Harvard" featuring Cecil McBee on bass, Brian... (KAYANA SZYMCAK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE)

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Jazz at Harvard founder Tom Everett then led the Monday Jazz Band through a three-song set consisting of Billy Strayhorn's "Take the 'A' Train," Charles Mingus's "The Shoes of the Fisherman's Wife" (Everett's bowdlerization of a title apparently not suitable for Sanders Theatre), and Betty Carter's "Myra." Kevin Sun took an especially impressive solo on the Mingus tune, and fellow tenor saxophonist Alex Rezzo traded licks on "Myra" with scatting vocalist Samara Oster, who before arriving at Harvard had sung jazz at Milton Academy.

Don Braden (class of '85) joined the band with his tenor sax, leading it through his tune "Landing Zone," which featured Andrew Kennard on some swinging piano and brief solo drumming from Kevin McNamara. Braden concluded the set by taking the Illinois Jacquet role on "Flying Home." A video montage followed of some past Jazz at Harvard Artists in Residence Carla Bley, Randy Weston, Jim Hall, Hank Jones, Jimmy Slyde, and others making return visits Saturday that ended with Jacquet himself leading previous Harvard students through the same tune.

Then came the masters. Eddie Palmieri and Brian Lynch led the students through Palmieri's Latin-accented "Elena, Elena," with Lynch conducting and supplying scorching trumpet. Benny Golson,



Cecil McBee, and Roy Haynes joined the others on tenor sax, bass, and drums, respectively, for Golson's "Whisper Not," Charlie Parker's "Steeplechase," and blues dedicated to late jazz master James Moody, plus a dazzling solo drum improvisation by Haynes and his mallets.

All performed masterfully, of course. But a visual image may have best summarized all being celebrated: Kennard seated beside the piano, peering over Palmieri's shoulder and delighting at his choice of complex chords and how Haynes was accenting them.

Bill Beuttler can be reached at bill@billbeuttler.com.

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