

Friends of the PAC form new Ormond Beach Jazz Society

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Marc Schwartz, Ormond Beach Performing Arts Center supervisor; Chauncey Dunham, Friends of the PAC board member; and Lucy Jackman, president of the Friends of the PAC. Photo by Jarleene Almenas

The Friends of the Ormond Beach Performing Arts Center are looking to jazz things up in town.

Six months ago, the nonprofit organization formed the Ormond Beach Jazz Society, a new arm of The Friends of the PAC whose mission is to promote jazz music through both community performances and educational outreach.

The society is the brainchild of Lucy Jackman, president of The Friends of the PAC. She used to play piano in her high school jazz band, and in college, she sang with a jazz group for a time.

"That created my interest, but depending on where you live, you don't have that access to jazz," Jackman said.

Friends of the PAC board member Chauncey Dunham, who owns A Dante Production, said the society was born from both the need for affordable jazz shows in the area as well as the love for the music by people like Jackman and PAC Supervisor Marc Schwartz.

"Jazz is not dying, but in some areas it is," Durham said. "So, Lucy came up with the idea, 'Let's do something about that.'"

Dunham joined The Friends of the PAC two years ago. Born and raised in Philadelphia, he lived on a block where 90% of his neighbors were musicians.

"I had no talent," Dunham said. "So, because I was one of the neighborhood kids, they gave me a talent. They said, 'You run the business for us.'"

He learned all the "back office" skills — marketing, publicity, etc. A Dante Production has five bands, including the Divas of Jazz, that play locally.

The PAC is no stranger to jazz music. Prior to the building's remodel, the Glenn Miller Orchestra and Tommy Dorsey Orchestra had performed about six times at the PAC.

"I have a real love for that music because it is uniquely American," Schwartz said. "Big band jazz, and jazz in general, is very much more respected and admired outside of the United States."

Schwartz's father played the coronet, so as a child, the music of many great jazz trumpet players filled his home. As an adult, he worked for some time at the Blue Note Jazz Club in New York City, where he got the chance to work with and listen to some of the biggest names in jazz music.



The Friends of the PAC have been pushing the renovation of the Ormond Beach Performing Arts Center for about seven years. Photo by Jarleene Almenas

Art "Jazz is a universal musical language that people all over the world welcome and enjoy," he said. "And so, I think it's an essential centerpiece in any performing arts venue to have jazz performances on a regular basis."

From the beginning of the \$1.7 million renovation, a project The Friends of the PAC first pushed for about seven years ago, Jackman's goal for the building was to create a cultural center in Ormond Beach.

"That really is the goal — and that's what it should be," Jackman said. "Because we have an art gallery, and we bring in every art: music, dance, drama, and etc. This could be a gold mine for the city."

A cultural gold mine, added Dunham.

A Dante Production, which has been helping in getting more members for the jazz society at its events at Cinematique in Daytona Beach, is aiming to showcase the history of jazz in a musical play next year, to be shown at the PAC. The jazz society now has about 20 members.

The jazz society's biggest sponsors are 31 Supper Club and Rose Villa, where they have held membership drives. On Nov. 15, the jazz society will hold a membership drive from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at 31 Supper Club.

There is no opening date yet for the PAC, as construction is ongoing, but Schwartz said that once it reopens, it'll be an economic asset for the city.

"Cultural assets are really important decision influencers for people that are deciding where to locate their businesses, because they want their staff to have access to cultural amenities, like museums and performing arts centers," Schwartz said. "... Arts and culture are economic drivers, and a performing arts center in particular is one that invites people for overnight stays."

Schwartz remains excited about the renovations to the PAC. When it reopens to the public, it will look like a brand-new building, inside and out. The project is currently working on a new shade structure on the exterior of the building, which Schwartz said will help to create a welcoming environment people will associate with the arts.

"This is making an important visual statement that this is a building that serves a cultural purpose," he said.