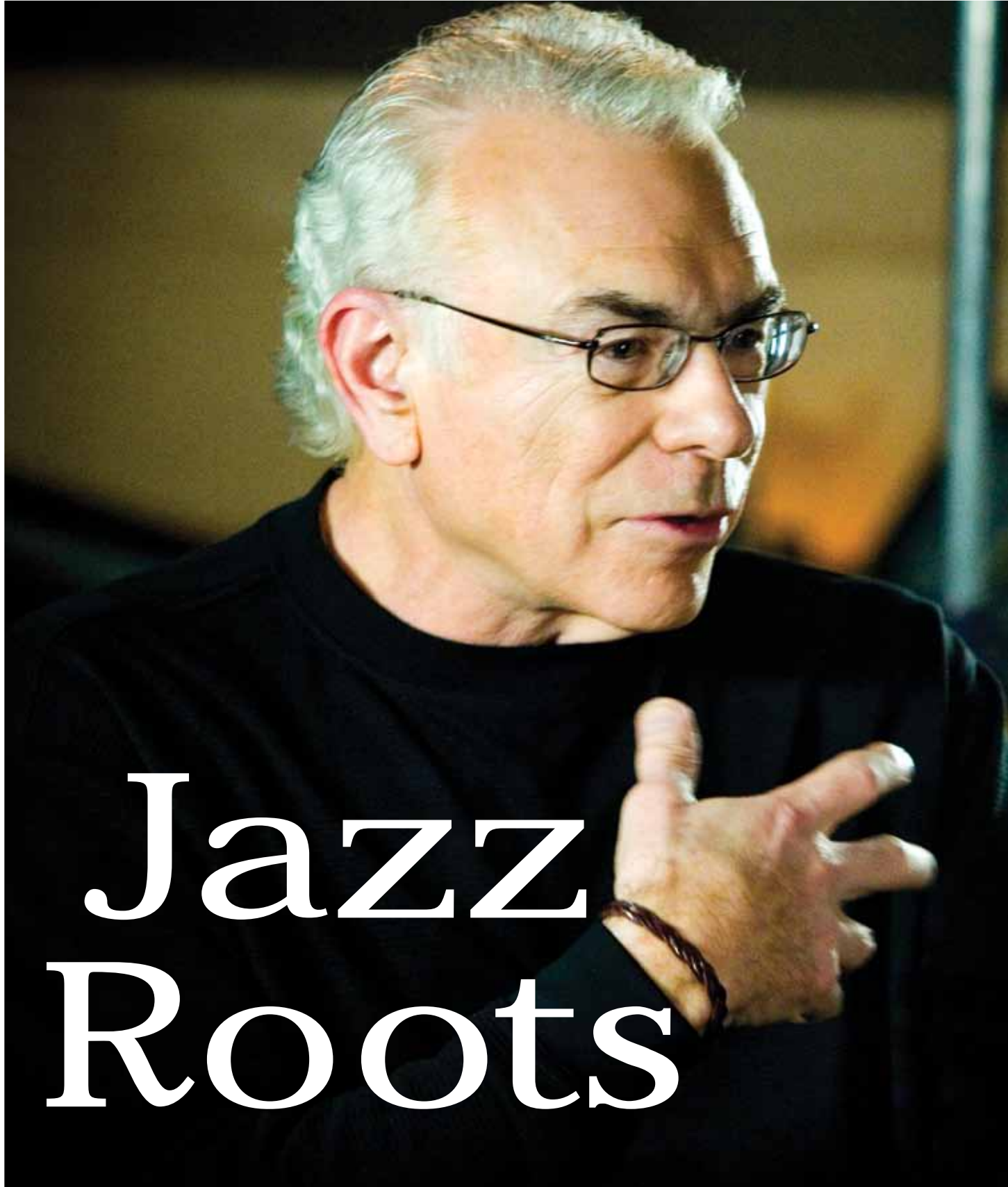


Recording legend **Larry Rosen** inspires a new generation with old fashioned ideals



Jazz Roots

Rosen with the Golden Horns on Legends of Jazz: (L-R) Roy Hargrove, Larry Rosen, Clark Terry, Ramsey Lewis, Chris Botti. ▼ Phil Ramone, Quincy Jones, and Larry Rosen. ▼ Rosen with Dave Grusin at Electric Lady Studio B, 1977.

A young jazz drummer could hardly ask for a better way to grow up than what Larry Rosen experienced, a Bronx native who found himself performing at the Newport Jazz Festival as a teenager. It was the late '50s, and jazz had begun to reach a new level of maturity and institutional awareness that would soon give rise to formal education programs across the country. As jazz grew up, Rosen found success as a producer and entrepreneur. It was that early period of learning and evolution alongside peers and mentors, though, that would always be Rosen's model for effective education.



Rosen continued to expand his career through the Manhattan School of Music, tours with Andy Williams, and a role as record producer and label owner at GRP Records, which he started with friend Dave Grusin and went on to garner 33 Grammy awards for emerging artists. He pioneered online music communities and e-commerce with N2K, which won him an “Entrepreneur of the Year” award from Ernst & Young in 1998.

An acclaimed foray into television programming came next with his PBS series, *Legends of Jazz*, which starred pianist Ramsey Lewis in a weekly look at different elements of jazz music and the ways in which they’ve all evolved. He next moved onto a sprawling project with Quincy Jones and legendary producer Phil Ramone of A&R Records, which has involved hundreds of hours of interviews with musicians and engineers from across the industry – everyone from Dave Brubeck to Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers. That project, still in the works after five busy years, is known as *The History of Recorded Music*.

In the last five years, Rosen has done trailblazing work in music education, forming in alliance with a handful of city performing arts centers across the country. Jazz Roots began in Miami in 2008 as a way to meld world-class jazz performances with all-inclusive jazz education and mentoring-style outreach programs to young jazz students in the area, leading to life-changing opportunities to sit in on soundchecks with artists like Sonny Rollins and Marcus Miller. Meanwhile, Rosen has also begun collaborating with the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) to begin a new curriculum-based learning project that utilizes material from his *History of Recorded Music* interviews as well as the types of thematic performances that Jazz Roots has become known for.

He’s also begun a brand new program called the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocalist competition, which was formed in alliance with the New

Jersey Performing Arts Center. The first annual competition took place this fall, won by the Paris-by-way-of-New-York singer Cyrille Aimee.

JAZZed called Rosen at his home in Miami to learn more about his all-inclusive approach to the ideas of jazz history, education, and maintaining an approachable aesthetic that invites fans of all levels to concert hall.

JAZZed: What was the vision for the program when you got it together?

Larry Rosen: The vision was to present great artists in world-class concert halls and educate audiences and students about jazz, our American art form. One way you learn very

quickly if you’re a musician, especially in this genre, is to look at the history. Who were the artists who came before? Running the GRP Record label with Dave Grusin, we had our roster of new and award-winning established artists that went on to have amazing careers, but we also produced catalog reissues

when we became part of the Universal Music Group. I took the Decca catalog, which had historic recordings by Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington and all these legacy artists, then the Impulse catalog, the home of John Coltrane, and the Chess records catalog and created reissue packages and campaigns. So presenting the music and bringing jazz history to audiences was, and is, my passion.

JAZZed: Does Jazz Roots work the same in every city?

LR: Each performing arts center has their own perspective on what they’d like to do for their audiences. But

Kids listening to hip-hop music now need to know that that music wouldn’t exist if it wasn’t for Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington. You’ve got to connect all these dots.

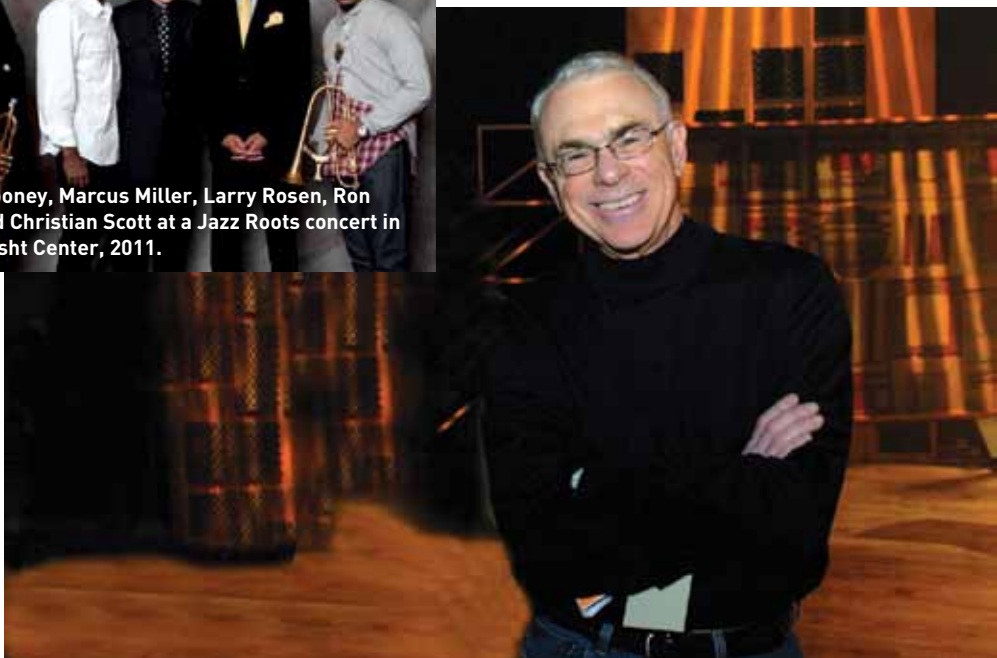
that’s okay – I have a ball doing it, so it doesn’t make any difference!

JAZZed: How were you approached by Miami to start the series?

LR: The city had just built the new Adrienne Arsht Performing Arts Center in Miami and they came to me to ask if I would put on a jazz series in their 2,000-seat Knight Concert Hall. My first reaction was, “I’m concerned



Wallace Rooney, Marcus Miller, Larry Rosen, Ron Carter, and Christian Scott at a Jazz Roots concert in Miami’s Arsht Center, 2011.



about being able to sell enough tickets to fill up a venue like that.” Especially in Miami, there isn’t a great history of jazz fans in this city. There are no jazz clubs at all. It’s not like in New York where you have like 30 jazz clubs, or someplace with a great tradition and history of jazz like Chicago, New Orleans, or L.A.

I thought I’d create a brand – “Jazz Roots.” That brand would stand for the roots of the music of the Americas. Not just American jazz – the history starts with African slaves coming to the new world bringing the drums and call-and-response and all the ethnic elements that became part of the music. When those slave ships ended up in places like Brazil, it became the basis for samba and the bossa nova. In Cuba and Puerto Rico it became rumba, son, mambo, and cha-cha. In the United States and New Orleans, it became the roots for blues, gospel, jazz, swing, R&B, rock ‘n roll all the way to hip-hop. It all came from the same root. Kids listening to hip-hop music now need to know that that music wouldn’t exist if it wasn’t for Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington. You’ve got to connect all these dots.

In the public school system in Miami, we found out that 900 kids play in jazz bands in high schools. We wanted to bring every one of those kids to a concert. We raised money, so we could have a program that sent a bus to the various areas to bring 150 students per show to the performance. They would attend the sound check, they can participate in a Q&A with the artists, get onstage to play, and then a professor from one of the universities – either Florida International University or the Miami University Frost School of Music – will talk to them about the theme and who these artists are, why they’re important, and play examples of their music, give them a boxed dinner, and take them in to see that actual performance.

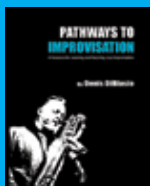
This became a very successful thing in Miami. The kids wrote essays about it and made videos about their experiences and shared it with other students in school. Before I knew it, performing arts centers across the country started calling me and asking me to bring the *Jazz Roots* program to their cities.



Rosen and Grusin at a Jazz Roots concert.

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Grusin and Rosin with an RCA engineer at RCA Studios, 1972.

JAZZed: Have they been selling out from the start?

LR: Right from the first show. Every one of the shows in Miami sold out every ticket per performance. We are now in our fifth year! It's amazing!

JAZZed: What are some of the effects on the students that you rope into the program?

LR: They get a chance to be up close and personal with world class artists, ask them questions, even perform with them, see how a sound check works, and learn about the history. The kids in the audience will ask anything. When

we did the Sonny Rollins show, we got to the Q&A part and one kid asked, "Mr. Rollins, do you still practice?" He said, "Not as much as I used to – now I only practice about eight hours a day."

JAZZed: How does the public school curriculum component work?

LR: The curriculum really has to do with each school system. Each one has its own approach when it comes to being part of their music program. There's no cookie cutter solution that's going to fit all schools. It has to do with financing, politics, boards of education, principals, teachers – it gets very complex.

JAZZed: When you were coming up, was there anything like this? You went to Manhattan School of Music and I don't think there wasn't even a jazz program there yet.

LR: You're absolutely right. There was no jazz program at that point! But I was very lucky because the last year I was in high school, I auditioned for the Newport Youth Band. It was part of the Newport Jazz Festival, which was trying to foster these kinds of programs for students. This was the earliest period that I can remember that happening. We were all between 15 and 18 years old. We played at the Newport Jazz Festival and had rehearsals every weekend. We had Cannonball Adderley play with the band and we had the best writers like Ernie Wilkins, who wrote for Basie, Don Sebesky, and Bill Russo. It was a great band with great instruction. We played at Carnegie Hall, recorded for Decca, and made a number of live albums at the Newport Jazz Festival. So I felt like I grew up and was mentored in that environment. The players that came out of that band are Mike Abene, Eddie Gomez, Ronnie Cuber, Eddie Daniels, Jimmy Owens, and many more. I look at music students today and can picture myself being in the exact same situation. It's very personal!

JAZZed: As the new generation of jazz stars have emerged over the last 10 or 15 years, have you seen a difference that you might attribute to the difference in the way jazz is taught now?

LR: From a technical playing point of view, each generation keeps getting better. But on the other hand, the way folks learned to play jazz years ago was really through an apprentice program. You went out on the road and you were the youngest guy in the band. You learned what the guy next to you was doing and you listened to the records and you picked up from there. When you listen to the key players from early on, their styles became so identifiable because their playing styles weren't academically taught. It was very organic. I think, if anything, you find today young musicians who are incredible



The first annual "Sassy Awards" finalists with Rosen at NJPAC in 2012: (L-R) Left to Right - Sandra Booker, Alexis Cole, Hilary Kole, Larry Rosen, Cyrille Aimee, Ashleigh Smith, Jazzmeia Horn.

players, but finding any with unique styles becomes more difficult.

JAZZed: Do you think the combination of Jazz Roots and your work in school curriculums could lead to new ways of educating kids?

LR: I feel that we may be creating a new model for education, which is something that is beyond what I expected. Over the last 10 or 20 years, school budgets got tighter and tighter. Even before any economic downturns, arts programs got cut all the time. While all that was happening, there are performing arts centers being built all across the country. These centers were once really for the aristocracy – it was about the opera, the ballet, and the symphony orchestra. What's happened with performing arts centers today with the changing demographics in America is they now have a mission to present arts to the whole city. Jazz does exactly that, because it's an art form and it also has a great American history. So the new business model is that the performing arts centers, and their potential constituents and their funders, are now playing a role of creating education programs for the arts that could actually be presented to the local school systems.

JAZZed: How does your work with the Brooklyn Academy of Music play along with the Jazz Roots as an example of a more in-depth, curriculum-based program?

LR: The BAM program includes an education center that they've just built – the Fisher Education and Humanities Building – and they have an amazing VP of Education and Humanities. This is much deeper than what you'd find in the usual performing arts center. They have a group of people who write curriculum for schools – people with Ph.Ds in education and they work closely with the NYC school system.

They came to me and said that they wanted to do a major project for education and arts and they wanted to teach about American music and culture, and then present performances related to the program. I showed them the *History of Recorded Music* project

that I'd been working on with Quincy Jones and Phil Ramone for all these years. They thought it would be perfect to do a whole curriculum around it and bring it into the school systems. That way, they could teach American history and American culture and then bring in 1,500 students at a time for live performances around a particular subject. It's going to go into a beta test program this year.

JAZZed: Once you got out of the Newport band, it wasn't long before you were involved in a professional band setting, right?

LR: I was at the Manhattan School of Music when Dave Grusin came to New York working as the pianist/conductor for pop star Andy Williams. They were looking for a drummer to go out on the road and they'd pick up the orchestra wherever they were. Somebody recommended me because of the Newport band. Then they hired me and I stayed with Andy and Dave for six years, doing every kind of recording and playing. So working major concerts, clubs, stadiums, and major performing arts centers with somebody like Andy Williams, who at that point was at the top

of his game as a pop star – what an education that was from the standpoint of learning how to relate to audiences and present that kind of a show.

JAZZed: That seems like a lesson you carried over into your success with Grusin later on with GRP, reaching new audiences with jazz artists.

LR: There's no question about it. We always focused on increasing the market size of the audience. To me, that was a very big thing. How do you take people who are not aficionados of the music and who hadn't heard every Bud Powell record or every Charlie Parker solo, and bring them into the music?

I have that experience all the time now. We did one show that was about the 50th anniversary of bossa nova. Now, everyone's heard that song "The Girl from Ipanema." But how many people knew the artists that I had on the show, like Ivan Lins, Oscar Castro-Neves, or Eliane Elias? Probably a small percentage of the audience. But the music got across to them – that was the key element. A lot of the lessons I learned through the record business, I'm applying here through every area of promotions and marketing and presentation.



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