

Rich Tozier and Saylove, Maine Public Classical's Friday Night Jazz Hosts



What is the first album or CD that you ever purchased?

Rich: The first album ever was “Twist With Chubby Checker.” Yes! When I was a kid in Bangor in 1960, we didn’t get American Bandstand on TV, but when I saw him perform “The Twist” on WMTW, and ABC affiliate available in Portland, I was knocked out, and bought the single before I even had a record player. I later discovered Hank Ballard’s earlier, better 1958 version, but that’s another story. Checker’s album followed after that. My first album might otherwise have been Henry Mancini’s “Peter Gunn,” but either I didn’t have the money or the local Bangor record store didn’t have it at the time.

Saylove: My first audio format was the cassette tape, back in the mid ‘80s. I started making “pause tapes” recording hip hop music off the Colby College station WMHB. LL Cool J, The Fat Boys, and Run DMC were some of the first hip hop artists I recorded. My uncle made me my first dub tapes. Among

those, were Public Enemy, “Yo! Bum Rush The Show,” and “It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back.” I am not sure which is the first tape I bought but it was around the time of De La Soul’s “3 Feet High and Rising,” as well as Janet Jackson’s “Rhythm Nation.” From there, I was pretty much hooked to pursue sampling and songwriting in my own way.

What type or style appeals to you the most?

Rich: It’s difficult to say what specific type or style of jazz appeals to me the most, but offhand, generally, the mid-‘50s to mid-‘60s urban East Coast Blue Note “hard bop” sound exerts a strong gravitational tug.

Saylove: My preferences vary. I find myself rooted in ‘60s and ‘70s soul, funk, jazz, R&B, rock as well as hip hop rooted in the ‘80s and ‘90s. My jazz catalogue is rooted in hard bop and in Latin jazz but I’m always exploring, testing my own limits.

How would you describe your own show?

Rich: “Jazz Tonight” attempts to offer a wide array of “straight ahead” music, from the early days of jazz to the present moment, although most of the tracks heard are probably post-1945. Defining jazz by category is always slippery, but, basically I try to offer something from most genres, the boundaries between which are porous since jazz can be seen as an evolutionary music, with many roots and branches. (Pardon the cliché.) The main thing is that the sounds must be emotive, inspirational and swing, by which I don’t mean up-tempo. A ballad can swing in its way. I also believe the show should expose a wide variety of jazz and thereby serve an educational function.

Saylove: “The Jazz Flower” was named after one of the more broadly accepted stories of where “jazz” music originally got its name. Hypothetically, “jasmine” was shortened to “jazz” to depict the “herb” that some musicians smoked during their creative process. Beyond the story, I think of flowers for their healing qualities. Jasmine promotes relaxation. It helps alleviate anxiety, stress, promotes confidence, and is almost otherworldly. These are some of the qualities that I value most about music. I think of “The Jazz Flower” as a seed planted back in the ‘60s and ‘70s era of jazz, with roots reaching back before that time, and with flowers blooming up to the music of today. I’m also a deejay and a hip hop artist, so there’s a hip hop cultural influence to the program.

How would you describe each other’s show?

Rich: Sufiyah (Saylove), who is much younger than I, brings a different, fresh perspective to the music in “The Jazz Flower.” What we call “jazz” started in the U.S. and has travelled the world. A few of her shows have shown how it’s affected other countries where it’s taken on an evolution of its own. Her recent series on Ethiojazz, for example, has been an enlightening lesson on how Ethiopian music has absorbed America’s music, added its own touches and come up with something quite original. Jazz is world music now, and her show reflects that. She also airs other types of the music, including soul. “The Jazz Flower” is blossoming!

Saylove: “Jazz Tonight” by Rich Tozier is a hard act to follow! Fortunately for me, I’m the opening show. Rich has been producing for Maine Public all of my life. He is a wealth of knowledge and experience. He’s had the honor of seeing and interviewing some heavy hitters in the game, such as Jimmy Smith, Sonny Rollins, and Donald Byrd. He’s inquisitive, humble, and committed to sharing the best of the best with our audience. It’s difficult for me to put a stamp or label on a program with so many years in the making! “Jazz Tonight” is an essential program for jazz lovers in Maine and beyond!

I Who are some of your favorite artists of all time?

Rich: This question is a toughie. There are so many. Besides the obvious giants – Coltrane, Ellington, Miles, Charlie Parker, etc. – I’d have to add those who make me stop whatever else I’m doing when I hear their sounds, and that would include Horace Silver, Red Garland, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Smith and many others. Sun Ra’s contribution to the music is still underrated. Current artists who arrest me are singer Cecile McLorin Salvant and composer-arranger Maria Schneider. I’ve been digging this music since I was a teenager (many decades ago!) and there is not enough room here to name them all.

Saylove: Some of my all-time favorites include, but are not limited to: The Wu Tang Clan, De La Soul, The Main Source, Nas, A Tribe Called Quest, GangStarr, James Brown, The Jacksons, The Sylvers, The Dramatics, The Stylistics, Patrice Rushen, Sade, The Carpenters, Monk Higgins, Lou Donaldson, Mongo Santamaria, Celia Cruz, Donald Byrd, Dizzy Gillespie, Dexter Gordon, Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Horace Silver, Gil Scott-Heron, Roxanne Shante, Biz Markie, Slick Rick, Erykah Badu, Richie Havens, Jr. Walker and the All Stars, and I am just getting started!

I Who has recently emerged on the jazz music scene whom you especially like?

Rich: Singer Jazzmeia Horn grabs my attention. So does trombonist Marshall Gilkes, whose composition, arrangement and solo of “Puddle Jumping,” with the Westdeutscher Rundfunk Big Band will take your breath away. Altoist Idit Shner impresses me. I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention pianist Joey Alexander, who is now 18 years old, a real prodigy!

Saylove: Fortunately, I have been featuring more contemporary jazz this month on “The Jazz Flower.” Some artists you’ve got to check out include Shabaka Hutchings, Sons of Kemet, Theon Cross, Nathaniel Cross, Kamasi Washington, Jazzmeia Horn, Nubya Garcia, Akale Wube, The Heliocentrics, Maisha, Ego Ella May, to name a few, as well as new content from established artists such as Orlando Julius, Louis Moholo, and Gary Bartz. If I were to give you two names to start? You’ve got to check out Shabaka Hutchings and Kamasi Washington, and also Nubya Garcia!

I Which musical artist – alive or passed – would you want to talk with over a cup of coffee and why?

Rich: Duke Ellington. He was like a mighty river. He did just about all you could do creatively. A chat with him might take more than one cup of coffee.

Saylove: The artist-activist in me would love to sit with Tupac Amaru Shakur, to think of a master plan as artists and activists, how we could make the strongest impact, to make this world a more just, equal, free, and peaceful society. I often thought if he could have turned things around, he would have made a great advocate for poor and oppressed people. I say that, but it would be hard to pass up a meeting with Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Nina Simone, Billie Holiday, and others. Alive today? RZA. We could conceptualize projects, lyrics, beats, as well as our duty to spread knowledge and understanding to the human family.

I The old stuck-on-a-desert-island question... you can take one full album or CD with you... What would it be and why?

Rich: “Mingus Ah Um” by Charles Mingus. It’s a daring, courageous record which shows Mingus at his nakedly strongest and most volatile and vulnerable. I discovered it in the mid-1960s when I was just getting into jazz deeply, but this was the one which converted me from a jazz buff to a jazz fanatic, if you will. My sense of the world has not been the same since, and I still hear surprises when I listen to it.

Saylove: No! Not this question! This is so difficult for a deejay, because we are on a constant quest for sounds that we’ve never heard before. Music is such a mood, so what if I’m not in the mood that day? I can turn it off? It’s a tough hypothetical. Maybe, Wu Tang, 36 Chambers? Nas, Illmatic? Jimi Hendrix, Are You Experienced? Or...

I Complete this sentence in five additional words or less: Music is . . .

Rich: Music is a gateway to the soul.

Saylove: Music is worth living forever for!

