Interview

Steve Getz

Musician, Jazz Impresario, Talent Buyer/Music Director

A Visionary With a Beautiful and Beneficent Heart Brings His Music Hall to Lehman College.

By Nora McCarthy

JI: I am very happy to speak with you and excited on behalf of the entire jazz community because of your new upcoming series that's going to be taking place in September at Lehman College, *Steve Getz Music Hall and Stan Getz Memorial Jazz Workshop*, but before we get into that, let's talk about your journey thus far which has been very amazing starting off of course with your being the son of the great tenor saxophone legend, Stan Getz. Steve, what was it like growing up with such a famous father?

SG: It was a very beautiful and interesting journey. I remember when I was three years old my father was in Los Angeles recording, *Stan Getz Plays*. The album cover is a picture of a little boy and my father who is beckoning me to come over and give him a kiss on the cheek because he said that I'd been there in the studio too long—it was my first moment in music and I was overjoyed as far as I can recall to be there but he said, "No son, you have to go home now, you've been here too long, so I'm putting you in a cab and you're going to go home, just come over here and give me a kiss on the cheek." I said, "What do you mean a cab, I'm only three years old, I can't go in a cab by myself." So, they took that picture, it's the album cover for *Stan Getz Plays*; that was the beginning.

JI: And did you go home in the cab by yourself?

SG: Yes, I did.

JI: Quite the little man.

SG: I guess so.

JI: Where were some of the places that you lived when you were young?

SG: We lived in L.A., we lived in New York. When I was a little older, my father had had it with the drug scene in New York so we moved to Denmark. I was about ten years old, my father, my step-mother, myself and my siblings went to Denmark to live; I was there for about a year. Then my step-mother thought it would be a good idea to cart me off to boarding school in Switzerland which was a great experience but traumatic. We were all over the place.

JI: What age was your Dad at, and at what stage in his career was he when you were born?

SG: Well, he had met my mother Beverly Byrne a jazz singer in Gene Krupa's big band in 1946. He was smitten by the little Irish beauty and I was born two years after in 1948; I'm 66 years young. He was just in the process of starting to form his own quartets and he had just done that famous recording with Johnny Smith called, *Moonlight In Vermont*, which was his first hit. When people heard that, of course Dad had been to the big band scene with Woody Herman—the Four Brothers—Zoot Sims, Serge Chaloff, and Herbie Steward. He also went on to be in Stan Kenton's band but he got tired of the road. He got started with Jack Teagarden when he was fifteen. So I came just around the time when he was starting to feel his own oats, if you will, and was ready to explore being a bandleader.

JI: So you were obviously exposed to the greats in this business growing up around your father. Who were some of the first ones that you recall and who left the deepest impression on you?

SG: Years later, when I had come back from the boarding school in Switzerland, we were in Westchester County in Irvington, New York, I was about fifteen years old then and I put on this record, *Stan Getz/Bob Brookmeyer* (1961) with Steve Kuhn, Ron Nevins and Roy Haynes. When I heard Roy Haynes play the drums, so musical and good, like a dancer on the snare drum, I got smitten with the notion of becoming a jazz drummer, which I am. I've been in retirement for awhile but I had my own groups for about seventeen years when I was at the University of Colorado in the '70s but when I left Colorado and came to New York, someone asked me if I'd be interested in learning the trade of becoming a talent buyer and music director of a jazz club and that's where I ended up at Fat Tuesday's for eight years.

JI: Tell me about your life as a jazz musician.

SG: I enjoyed it so much; I had my own quartets. My father called me one time from Colorado and said, "How would you like to do a tour of South America with me?" I said, "I would love that." So, I went off with his quartet with Joanne Brackeen, Clint Houston and Billy Hart. Billy and I would switch, I'd play percussion, he played the drums of course—the great Billy Hart—and then I'd play drums and he'd play percussion and I learned so much on that tour playing with master musicians. That was a challenge. My father was pleased with my improvements at each and every concert. In Caracas he was off to the side of the stage listening to me play, I believe it was the Chick Corea tune, "Windows" with Joanne and Clint and he got this big smile on his face and so when he came up to me at the end of the tune and said, "You know son, you play pretty good for a White man!" I said back to him, "You play pretty good for a White man too."

JI: How old were you then?

SG: I was about thirty five, thirty-six years old at the time.

JI: Did you have your own groups at that time?

SG: Oh yes, in Colorado I had my own groups. I used to tour for the Colorado Council of the Arts and Humanities—played all the mountain towns and jazz festivals. I sent him George Wein a tape of my quartet and we were the second national runners up to play the Newport Jazz Festival but I got beat out by one other group. However, I got a nice mention. So for a White man, I'm a pretty good drummer. I ain't no Tony Williams, my hero, or Roy, or Elvin Jones but, you know, I can swing.

JI: So you studied and did all that it entails to be good on your instrument?

SG: Yes, but I owe it mostly to the inspiration of two drummers, Roy Haynes first and then Billy Hart.

JI: So with all of these great cats that came over to the house what was it like around your place?

SG: It was wonderful. They'd have rehearsals in the house, Chick Corea would come by, and Joao Gilberto came by during the Bossa Nova years. Baden Powell, Brazilian guitarist, and all kinds of folks would show up at the house, Dad enjoyed that.

JI: How many siblings do you have?

SG: I have a full brother, a full sister, from Dad's first marriage. A half brother and a half sister from Dad's second marriage – there are five of us and I'm the oldest.

JI: I'd like to talk a little bit about your Mom. Tell me your most vivid memories of your mother. I know she was a singer with the Gene Krupa Orchestra—did she give up her career when she married your Dad?

SG: She did—she got introduced to drugs and alcohol with my father. She had this really kind of musty beautiful voice. I have a recording of her playing with Dad at an after-hours gig when they recorded it, sort of a husky tone in such a

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little bitty woman. She was very sweet and good; I lost her when I was ten. I never would see her again but she was exceptionally kind, loving and spiritual person that just got dragged through the mud mostly by the drugs.

JI: Very painful for you at a young age to be experiencing something like that—it's heavy stuff.

SG: Yes, it was. Then my step-mother Monica showed up because my father had left my mother at some point and we were living with my mother and he met this beautiful blond-haired blue-eyed Swedish woman, Monica Getz, who's my step-mother who now is eighty years old and still alive and doing well. She looked like Marilyn Monroe, this new woman in my father's life, I recall Monica coming to the apartment where we were living in Queens and when she got out of the car—wow she was a knockout, my God she was a beautiful woman, this Monica Getz. My mother was a knock out too, but she wasn't looking so great by then because of drugs. But, I remember Monica had taken me on a trip to get an ice-cream cone and I remember when she brought me back home we went upstairs and my mother was pulling on one side of me with one hand and Monica is pulling on the other, and I remember this sort of a tug-of-war going on between them, because my mother was ticked off that this new woman had shown up and was trying to take over.

JI: That must have been very difficult for you.

SG: I was caught between these two women, my real mother and my step-mother, and my step-mother Monica would be the one who would take over after my mother lost custody of us kids in the court system. The court system, took a look at my father who was a drug addict and an alcoholic and then took a look Monica Getz—the court awarded custody to my step-mother. They awarded my father custody too but he wasn't in the best of shape in those years.

JI: So they ended up marrying after he divorced your mother?

SG: Yes, they ended up marrying in 1956. Donna Reed the actress was maiden of honor—they had a Hollywood wedding, the whole nine yards, that kind of thing.

JI: Your life was like a movie Steve.

SG: As long as it's not a Fellini movie. [Laughter]

JI: So you got on with your Scandinavian step-mother?

SG: Yes, I got along with her. I always wanted to know if she really loved me—she said she did—I didn't trust her, somehow I didn't trust. I guess she did in her own way. She would go on to have children of her own, Nicholas and Pam with my father. We've had our ups and downs over the years, but today the relationship is quite good.

JI: Did she remain married to your Dad until he passed?

SG: No my father divorced her in 1986 in one of the ugliest divorces in New York State history.

"The best advice I ever got was to care about my fellow artists. The best advice I ever gave is for other artists to try and care for other artists. In other words, I want to pass on my kindness, care and love. I want artists to begin to treat other artists who are in need of support, to do the same."

JI: Did he ever remarry after that?

SG: No, he got close, on his death bed, to marrying a gold digger who was forty years his junior, but thank the good Lord, God intervened there and it didn't happen and he never did remarry.

JI: So he was with Monica for some time, about 30 years?

SG: Yes, about twenty-five/thirty years.

JI: When did you move out of the house and become your own man?

SG: I went to the University of Colorado in 1967 and I was out on my own, and that's when I started playing in my own groups and that's where I began my journey to learn something about the music business. There was a gentleman in Denver who wanted to see if I had the chops to become an agent. I used to book Pat Metheny and some people in the mountains through the agency and I got the bug. I had been playing with just my own quartet but now I got the bug to learn something about the music business. I did that and then I got the call to come to New York to do Fat Tuesday's; my father had put in a good word for me. That was 1980, so I would be about thirty two. I had to learn my trade like who draws and who doesn't draw; I was flying by the seat of my pants. It took me about a year to get my bearings but then Fat Tuesday's became the number one jazz club in New York after about a year and a half under my tenure. I was there for eight years. I had them all play there: Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner—Bill Evans played his last two nights of music for me there. I had Tito Puente, Mongo Santamaria, my father, Phil Woods, Ron Carter, they all played there and they loved to play for me because I set the tone to have a relaxed place for artists of that caliber to feel good and feel at home when they were recording. Then I got the bug to be creative in the process, and so I approached people like Ron Carter very gingerly of course, because I'm always in awe of Mr. Carter, because he played with my favorite jazz quintet of all time, which was Miles Davis with Tony and Herbie, Ron and Wayne. I remember one day Ron came down to Fat Tuesday's and he had to rehearse his quintet and I'm sitting there just listening to him and his band and he took a break and came over. I said Ron, "I'm a little nervous about asking you but, what would you think about adding four cellos to your quintet?" He said, "What?" I said, "Yeah, four cellos." He said, "That's a fantastic idea." So the Ron Carter String Nonet was born in Fat Tuesday's and it went on to record internationally and play the Blue Notes and do very well. Ron was always very happy with me that I made that creative suggestion. I did the same thing with McCoy when he came in with his trio or the quintet. I said, "McCoy do you have big band charts?" He said, "Yeah, I got them." I said, "How would you like to have your own big band playing here for two weeks every Thanksgiving?" He said, "I would love that." I said, "How many pieces?" He said, "I could do it with about thirteen pieces." So every Thanksgiving for two weeks, McCoy would come down and there would be a line around the block, because people

"The degree of one's emotion varies inversely with one's knowledge of the facts — the less you know the hotter you get."

– Bertrand Russell, Philosopher

loved it.

JI: What was it like back in those days in terms of marketing, I know the tools were different then, we didn't have the internet, but you were booking the talent, what about the marketing and promotion, were you doing that as well?

SG: In part I did. I always had the New York Times behind me. John S. Wilson, who is a beautiful jazz critic, used to come to my shows—he loved my shows. So we got a lot of press, the *Daily News* would cover us, the *Post* .... so the word got out. We did have a publicist working at Fat Tuesday's also.

JI: The audiences were different back then, right? Did you pack the house?

SG: It was always packed unless I had a week where it was an off week or a holiday, or I'd book an artist, once in a while I'd book an artist knowing full well they weren't going to pack the house but I'd want them so much. I brought in Shirley Horn to come in with her trio because she had not played at a New York club since Miles took her to the Vanguard in the '50s where he discovered her. She didn't do the numbers but I didn't give a sh*t; I wanted her to play because I loved her. I would also bring in up and coming people which is what I'm trying to do now. I would try to bring them into Fat Tuesday's and create a package. I had my personal favorite piano player, Marc Cohen—he changed his name I believe to Copland. Anyway, I paired him with Gary Peacock, and Peacock has a name, so it was that sort of thing.

JI: What about any singers? Did you bring in any singers?

SG: Always, always. I had Helen Merrill, I had Sheila Jordan, I had, Esther Satterfield, I even had Phyllis Hyman before she committed suicide. I had them all—Betty Carter—she busted my chops every time she came. She'd just look at me a certain way out of the corner of her eye, because I had to run the sound too you see, and if the monitor wasn't happening, she would give me the Betty Carter glare, forget about the Getz glare, she would look at me a certain way like..."NOW"....but I always hit the mark with her because I'm a musician and I have sensitive ears, so she was always real pleased with me—I loved Betty, oh my God. She has a song called "Sounds" that's a masterpiece. That is the most creative and best scat I ever heard by any one period, male or female. She recorded that at the Great American Music Hall and that was a big hit for her that record, it's brilliant.

JI: Oh, yes, it *is* brilliant, I've listen to it countless times, it's inspiring to me. Betty was and remains very inspiring to me. When I first heard her live it was in Cleveland, Ohio at Tri-C Community College I believe in the early '80s. When she walked out on the bandstand, there were two things—well more than two—but the initial two first impressions when she came out was that she had the dynamite figure of a young woman, the expression on her face however, looked like she had launched a thousand ships—a real boss—and then she opened her mouth to sing and she swallowed the room. What a sound. Her sound filled every crevice in the concert hall. And, at that point, I was hypnotized and her interaction with her band members was as wicked as they come, yes!

SG: John Hicks—forget about it. John Hicks, Kenny Washington, so alert, because she'd create tempos, you remember "Sounds" where they're going super up tempo where all of a sudden she stops on a dime; unbelievable masterpiece.

JI: Yes, she's one of my favorites her and Jimmy Scott. I maintain, she's the one singer that continued to evolve the instrument. She started off like all of them did singing standards, then because of her improvisational ability got the moniker of "Be-Bop Betty", she could scat her ass off, and then she began with her own groups to evolve the instrument into all of these other possibilities, she *IS* a vocal instrument, she paved the way for singers like Bobby McFerrin and Al Jarreau, but Betty never stopped evolving. What a renowned composer in my opinion. Her re-harmonizations of chordal structures and her obtuse melodies—she was the baddest. And for my money, nobody can touch her today, say what you will, it's not what's up. But, that she set the bar so high for all of us, that is her legacy.

SG: She died of pancreatic cancer. She played for me at one of my last shows at the Blue Note. She was fine and then six months later she's dead.

JI: I never knew how Betty left us. Pancreatic cancer doesn't play around. It's a monster. Thank you for talking a bit about Betty, Steve. I'd like to now go back to the Fat Tuesday years—eight years that was quite a stretch. Those were the hay days, huh?

SG: It ended two times. Once in 1983 because I was interviewed by a critic from the *Daily News* and I said something about the owner of Fat Tuesday's and so he didn't like me and fired me. But ten months later, he's no longer the owner of Fat Tuesday's, there's a new owner and the guy that took over for me, ended up putting my baby at Fat Tuesday's down the toilet, so they called me back to resuscitate it which I did in '84 and then I was there until '88. I was with my father in a Paris hotel room when I got the call from an agent that they had let me go behind my back; that was the gratitude that they had—that's New York club owners, that's what they do to you sometimes; for no good reason by the way.

JI: Yeah, that was just the way the wind was blowing that day, huh? Wow, to me it's always something to do with money. I don't know if that was the case in your situation.

SG: They weren't paying me a lot of money. I made them thousands and thousands of dollars over my eight year tenure. They were only paying me $600 a week, what's the big deal?

JI: So that's where you learned all your chops?

SG: That's where I learned my chops as talent buyer/music director and budding jazz impresario which I am now.

JI: So where did you go from there?

SG: I went to Yoshi's Night Spot in Oakland, CA, I worked for the Japanese folks at Yoshi's which is a famous jazz club in Oakland. I was there for six months until they ran me into the ground and I decided to quit. I was doing everything: the booking, the sound, picking up the musicians, taking them to the hotel, back to the club, back to the hotel. I said, "You know, I'm only one person." I have a serious work ethic but that was ridiculous. From there I went on and on. I was at the Blue Note for six months, and then I was interested in becoming an agent and manager. Jack Whittemore was one of my mentors who had them all, Betty, Ron and then Stan, Phil, McCoy. I went to Jack and asked, "What do you think? Do I have the chops to be a great agent?" He said, "Absolutely, you have the chops, you're one of the most interesting folks I've ever met; you have the chops of a talent buyer and seller." So I went to Abby Hoffer and I worked there for a number of years, and that's where I was representing and managing people like, McCoy Tyner and Phil Woods—booking Stephane Grappelli, Elvin Jones—that sort of

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thing.

JI: What year did your father pass?

SG: In 1991.

JI: So he was out doing his thing while you were out doing all this other stuff, was it only that one time that you worked with your Dad on that tour?

SG: No, I went to Israel with him in 1985. He had asked me again to play drums. And, I went over to do a couple of concerts for the crippled children in the hospital in Jerusalem. We played three concerts over there and I had a ball. We had a party where people dress up as other people and my father had put this wig on and became Ben Gurion—my father loved to do things like that—he had a great sense of humor.

JI: When your father passed, had he been ill for a long time?

SG: In about 1986-87, the doctor told him he had cirrhosis and that he had had it since the 1970s and now he had liver cancer and Hepatitis C. So the doctor told him he had to do chemo but my father refused and instead went on a macrobiotic diet and thought he was going to beat it. About 1990, the cancer came back and that's when he went to Europe with Kenny Baron, to record the masterpiece, *People Time* (Live, 1991) at Club Montmarte in Denmark and he came home in March of 1991 and passed in June of 1991.

JI: Did he die in the hospital?

SG: No he died at home. He had a nurse, in fact he had the same nurse as Miles Davis, because Miles was living in Malibu also, and they had a nurse there who took care of him as he slid into the heavens.

JI: Obviously the psychological suffering must have been immense for him, because he was still a young man.

SG: He was 64.

JI: What was that like for you?

SG: It was very hard for me. I loved him very much. He was sober physically the last five years of his life. He was pulling his act together and he was treating people better. It was very hard on me and it's still hard on me today, But, I have my memories. I have his sense of humor with me; I have his music with me constantly. My father was my greatest teacher. I've had many teachers—Max Gordon, the owner of the Vanguard, he was a mentor, whom I loved dearly. I had Jack Whittemore, I had Abby Hoffer and I had my father. But, my father was the greatest teacher. He taught me about the sensitivities of music. He taught me about supporting artists and going out into the world—to be a mensch—to try and be helpful to people and my fellow musicians and singers. But I took it a step beyond what he recommended because I'm trying to create something now that is *"out of this world"* as you know.

JI: Can you expound a little on your relationship with the Village Vanguard?

SG: Well, I loved Max so much. He was a sweetheart; Ukrainian like I am. So we had this in common on my father's side and on my mother's side, of course, Irish. But, I'd leave Fat Tuesday's after a busy night and go out and hang out with Max Gordon and he would be in the back of the room; at the time he was in his mid eighties. He was pretty tired and beat up then but he was so cute; you never wake up the master. I'd sit by him at the back of the Vanguard and wait until he woke up and he would wake up suddenly and say, "Hi kid, how're you doing?" I'd say, "Hi Max how's everything?" He'd say, "What's this about McCoy Tyner's big band you had in your place?" I'd say, "What do you mean Max?" He'd say, "You got him in your joint, how much did you pay him?" I'd say, "$12,000.00 versus 75% of the door." He'd say, "Too much, man, too much!" Then he'd fall asleep again. Then ten minutes later he'd wake up. "Ron Carter's String Nonet—what in the 'F' is that?" I'd say, "Max, it's a quintet, piano, bass, drums, percussion, piccolo bass and four cellos." He'd say, "What, four cellos, whose idea was that?" I'd say, "It was my idea." He'd say, "What! You did that?" I'd say, "Yes." He'd say, "How much?" I'd say, "$7,500 versus 75%." He'd say, "Too much," and fall back asleep. That's my Max Gordon story.

JI: That is a scene right out of a movie. He sounds like he was such an amazing man, quite a character.

SG: When he got sick he was in Mount Sinai Hospital and I went to visit him. I brought him a box of prune Danish, a Stan Getz cassette and a box of Cortez cigars, and he turned around and looked at me as I was coming into his hospital room and I thought I was looking at my grandfather, Alexander. He loved me very much, he wanted me to replace him when he died but you know the rest.

JI: I never met the man, I wasn't in New York then, but I can tell you I've interviewed so many musicians who knew him and whenever they get to talking about the Vanguard or Max Gordon, they all say such positive and glowing things about him. I feel like I missed out on knowing a wonderful human being.

SG: He was a sweetheart but he could be very tough if he didn't like the way you were playing.

JI: What a story. The Vanguard is synonymous with jazz in New York, that's it. That's why people from all over the world come here to go there. The atmosphere in those days surrounding the music, what was it like compared to now?

SG: Night and day; the real deal. More audience participation, more vibrancy—today, well, you know the story better than I do, you're a professional singer and musician and you understand what is going on out there today. When I was at the Blue Note, the *New York Times* interviewed me and they wanted to know what my feeling was about the jazz business in particular and I said, "Well you can't just book the old warhorses, you have to make an investment in the up and coming people or there will be no music." That was nineteen years ago when I made that comment and it was right on target. Yes, there are of course great artists, and I mean great, like yourself, and others that are still on the scene but the club scene is very unhealthy. You know, there are people working for the door, they are not paid a flat guarantee and nothing is changing, and it's getting worse.

JI: It's getting worse and what will the final outcome be? Do you think that something can turn this around? What suggestions do you have? A lot of people believe that jazz is dead and we

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have a lot of young ones that are coming out of the schools but the scene itself is not that healthy in the city that is synonymous with jazz.

SG: The clubs are dumb.

JI: I feel for anyone trying to make a living in this business now. There are so many talented young musicians out there, and they are keeping it positive and putting out the energy, but it is so competitive and there really aren't that many opportunities by comparison to get paid. What do you think about America versus Europe in terms of the appreciation of the music and opportunities?

SG: It's better in Europe and, it's better in Japan.

JI: Moving on, I'd like to know, who is Steve Getz? What motivates and drives you?

SG: Well, what motivates and drives me is that I am first and foremost a musician, I am an artist, and I'm a spiritual being. I genuinely care for my fellow artists. So given the vast knowledge that I have, that God gave me through the mentoring I received from these masters: Max and my father, and Jack Whittemore, I've always cared for the artists and want to support them. At my core, is a love, a certain degree of wanting to nurture, wanting to explore with artists what their full potential is and their art, because I'm always interested in that, I'm interested in pushing the envelope a little bit. When an artist comes to play for me, I'm always searching, I'm always in the process but I don't want to make all of the decisions. I want the artist to be involved in the process of creativity along with me. My feeling is that I'm trying to create a certain force field of goodness to allow artists to come perform for me in this future endeavor of mine so that their music soars, because that's my goal. I want everyone who comes, to feel so relaxed, loved and nurtured that their music is going to soar—that's it, end of story.

JI: Let's now talk about your spiritual mission through the music; your new endeavor.

SG: It's lengthy title is the Steve Getz Music Hall and the Stan Getz Memorial Jazz Workshop but it's basically the Steve Getz Music Hall and it's going to debut on September 11, 2015 at Lehman College in the Bronx.

JI: How did you decide on the Lehman College?

SG: I'd been searching to find a home to present the music somewhere and I thought wouldn't it be kind of neat to associate with a university or college. Originally, I tried it at SUNY New Paltz but the Dean didn't get it, he thought it was too ambitious and too complicated, so I said, "Next!" I have a friend who is also my partner in this, Lou Ramirez, who has contacts at Lehman so we took a meeting at Lehman and they said, "Yes, it sounds great, we love it."

JI: And, it's in the Bronx where your father grew up.

SG: That's right, it's where my father grew up, so it's almost coming spiritually back home.

JI: What is your vision for this endeavor?

SG: My vision is very simple. My vision is for great artists, or good artists, or people that want to strive to be good, to come to me, submit their materials and for me to give them an opportunity to work the music hall, to be supported, to be nurtured, to be loved, to feel more of a sense of spirit and direction, and to do it under my umbrella where they feel that somebody genuinely cares about them. I'm not stupid, I'm very intelligent and I understand that I will never be able to change the character of the music business, *never*. My father warned me about the music business; he said it was a terrible business. But, I'm just trying to create something, plant a little seed, do something right, just like in the *Field of Dreams*—when you build it, they will come. They will come because in the jazz community in New York there is no one who genuinely cares for them as I do—no one, that's all.

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JI: With regard to the various kinds of jazz music, are all genres/styles welcome?

SG: All styles are welcome. I'm not big on avant-garde jazz, sometimes it's OK but I'm into people who play mostly lyrical good music, great singers and great instrumentalists. I'm open though. My ears and my instincts will tell me if something is going to fly and will be appropriate for the music hall. I just try and pay attention to that. If I hear someone who is struggling but who I feel has potential, I'm going to book them anyway because that's what I do. I like to give someone an opportunity, a lift in their own life, to come in and perform.

JI: So that includes musicians who need the opportunity, the exposure and the experience.

SG: I'll go a step further than that. I'm going to have a concert series for children.

JI: That's wonderful and so important.

SG: For young artists, it's called my, Young Artist Series. They are going to play and the place will be packed with parents who will be able to see their young child up there on the stage, that's another thing I'm going to do.

JI: What about some of the people that you have already booked and others that you have in your artistic sites…"cross hairs."

SG: In the first three weeks I have the great pianist, Andy LaVerne who used to play with my father. His show is called, "Andy LaVerne Plays The Stan Getz Song Book and Originals." He'll be there with his quartet Billy Drewes on tenor saxophone, and vocalist, Alexis Cole. Then I have a great young pianist, Sarah Jane Cion and she's coming in with her quartet. I have the great Harry Allen who is a Getzian tenor, he'll be coming with something I call Tenor Madness. It will be three saxophones, Harry, Ralph La-Lama and hopefully Grant Stewart. Singer Marion Cowlings will be hosting a Jazz Vocal Workshop with Audrey Silver and Roseanna Vitro. *And,* then I have, you may have heard of her, this incredibly divine singer, her name is Nora McCarthy. Have you heard about this gal, she'll knock you on your ass! [Laughter] She's coming in with something I call, Divine Vocal Duets, with Nicole Pasternak, who is another very fine singer and pianist John diMartino—two shows on the same evening. Then, I've got a package that I used to book at Fat Tuesday's called Modern Guitar Masters with Vic Juris and Dave Stryker. I've also got a great jazz bass player, whom my father said was the greatest jazz bass player alive, and that is George Mraz he'll be performing with his trio and all of this happens beginning September 11th.

JI: Oh, that's great, really wonderful. And you're encouraging people to contact you, submit their materials for consideration so they get a chance to be a part of this wonderful new endeavor that you're putting forth with all your love and expertise.

SG: It's real simple. Usually a musician or singer will have to bang on the club owner's door and say here's my CD and the club owner will either throw it in the trash or bury it on his desk. I'm asking people to simply write me at my email address: stevegetz7@gmail.com. If they communicate with me, I will communicate back and give them my mailing address and just ask them to send me their CD. I'm an old fashioned guy. I love to listen to the music in my car and I like to study it so I know what I'm talking about. It's really that simple.

JI: It's so refreshing because so many of these clubs seem almost anti-artist; you can't get past the gatekeepers. You can't get them to even listen to your work or return a call or an email.

SG: It's funny you would use the term "gatekeeper." That's what Roseanna Vitro said to me the other day that I am a wonderful gatekeeper because I am open. I took her in, back in the '80s for three nights, at Fat Tuesday's. I hired her because I love her.

JI: The fact that you are open and presenting with the kind of fairness we so desperately need in this business is very promising. With regard to financing are there any organizations or groups of people helping you to raise money for the Steve Getz Music Hall and what plans, if any, do you have to insure that this effort that you're putting forth, gets the support required to flourish and to become a long standing institution.

SG: Well eventually I hope to have my own club one day, right now that's not going to be possible. I don't have any financial support behind it—the artists are going to be paid simply from gate receipts, the ticket prices. I'm going to guarantee people a minimum amount of money. If we do well, they will get a little bit more—I have to split the gate with the college. The college gets one half of gate receipts because they are giving me the hall for nothing, you see. They get one-half and I get the other half and that half pays the artists.

JI: Maybe the music community can also help fund this. There are so many ways to go about raising money for these kinds of things such as the fundraising sites Indiegogo and Kick Starter who offer entrepreneurs a way to reach out to the global community vis a vis various campaigns to help launch their dreams. There are many of these kinds of sites available out there and they actually work. Many, many, people have financed their CD projects this way. Would that be something you might consider? I know you said you weren't into the technological aspect of things, but perhaps someone could come forward who is reading this that would be able to assist you in that effort.

SG: I am certainly open to any and all help.

JI: In a perfect world how do you envision your idea and concept expanding, you were talking about the children's concerts and opportunities for lesser known artists and of course the eventuality of having your own club, please talk a bit more on what the future holds for you.

SG: One day, I will have my own club and it will be built on a firm foundation and it will be there until I kick off of this planet and then my son will take it over from L.A., Christopher Getz. God's leading me every step and I'm just getting out of the way. The Holy Spirit has entered into me and I'm being guided, day by day by day, what to do next. I'm just trying to do what we call in AA, as I am a member, just trying to do the next right thing. That's my philosophy of life, "Just try to do the next right thing, Steve. Get out of the way and listen to God and try to do the next right thing."

"Get out of the way and listen to God and try to do the next right thing."

JI: What audience are you looking to reach and what groups are you looking to help?

SG: All groups. From seniors, young people, anyone who is really interested into listening to really fine music and appreciating it in a concert hall setting.

JI: What is happiness to you Steve?

SG: Doing this.

JI: What do you look for in an artist in order for them to get the Steve Getz seal of approval?

SG: Just to have some talent, have integrity, to see that they've studied their craft, they've done their homework, they have a heart, they perform either on an instrument or vocally with heart, something that moves me—which is what your music does—moves me to tears; someone who

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has courage, some guts as an artist, someone who is a risk taker in music. Yes, I'm not interested in listening to someone who is just going to send me a CD of standards that's been played umpteen million times by other artists—I want to hear their originality—I want to hear their original tunes—I want to study it and I want to get behind it.

JI: What do you think about the jazz education today because you are talking originality, do you see that there is a lack of individuality and originality today? And if so, what's its impact on the whole scene?

SG: Yes, there is and it's devastating because the funding for music programs is dwindling, dwindling, dwindling to a standstill and meanwhile the young people are listening to crap on their iPads; they don't listen to good music and a lot of them don't even know who Stan Getz was today.

JI: That's very true. What, if any, advice would you offer to a young aspiring musician so that he may develop his own voice? What would you tell him to do?

SG: Study. Develop great ears, great instincts, constantly try to improve, constantly be searching for the betterment of their art, that's it. I don't care if you're an unknown and I hear something in your music that I find personally inspiring they are going to be booked. I'll package them with known players and give them an opportunity to be heard.

JI: Some musicians and singers are living off of the association to other great and famous artists and the careers they made for themselves by making tribute albums, doing tribute shows, playing verbatim licks, they're playing what was already played, even dressing a certain way. What would you say to them?

SG: Show me something original of your own, stylistically, I want to hear something that's a little different. If you're a singer for example, and your singing a Nancy Wilson rip off, or you're trying to emulate Nancy, I'm not interested in you, no, I pass, because that has already been done.

JI: Do you have any favorite tenor saxophonists on the scene or any other instrumentalists that you especially like?

SG: Let me just start with the people who have already passed: first, my father; number two, Michael Brecker; three, Wayne Shorter, who is still with us thank God. Of the younger people coming up, or the people who are approaching middle age, I love Harry Allen, who I used to manage and book; I love Grant Stewart, I like Jason Rigby who has fire in his belly when he plays; I love Ralph Lalama, the way he leans into a tune, he's beautiful; I like Ravi Coltrane—certain things that he does; I like, Jorge Sylvester; [Oh, yeah, I've heard of him, (laughter)]; there's a saxophone player who sounds remarkably on ballads like my father and his name is David Sills—he's great too—he'll be coming from California to perform.

JI: What made Stan Getz so great Steve? What was it about his sound, or his playing, what was it that made this man so great that he has stood out in the company of giants—your Dad is one of them—what made him *that*?

SG: He was an ultimate story teller on ballads; a man who knew how to find focus and concentration especially when he performed ballads; the haunting lyrical beauty of his instrument that no one even comes close to and probably will never come close to.

JI: He seemed to have been larger than life, there are just some people who are blessed with this presence and it seems like he was one of them; like a movie star.

SG: Yes, he had a certain aura about him and yes you could say he was like a movie star. However, it was an interesting juxtaposition of who he felt he was—he had very low self esteem—because my father was an alcoholic and drug addict for so long. Then when he got sober at the end of his life, he started to believe in himself and started to think, "Yeah, maybe I can play the saxophone." That's how crazy that is. He was a master; the guy was at a genius level playing. But there was another side to him as well, he knew he was a big star, but much to his demise. Because when you get that kind of ego, which was pretty big in his case, and also he had narcissistic tendencies, because that's the way he was, he was a complicated cat, very complicated. What can I say? I learned the lesson of what *not* to be from him. I learned to treat people with kindness, care and love, where he sometimes did not particularly during his drug and alcohol years. He could be pretty ruthless and harmful to people, let's get that right.

JI: There's always a dark side, but that wasn't who he really was probably. That was the drugs and alcohol talking.

SG: Right.

JI: What have you learned in your own lifetime about the importance of values and character and how important are having good values and character to you?

SG: Extremely important. I am the embodiment of integrity. I am the embodiment of sincerity. I am the embodiment of honesty. I am the embodiment of just being a compassionate human being on this planet, in this modern chaotic world. I am trying to go back to an earlier time, like the '40s and '50s where people treated each other a little more gently and a little kinder. I'm trying to emulate that kind of behavior.

JI: Where do you think you'll be in the next five years? What do you see for yourself?

SG: I'll be on the mountaintop looking down on all these young artists who are now in full blossom of their art. I will never be a rich man—I don't care about becoming rich—I want to be rich in artist appreciation. It makes me so happy, when an artist such as yourself, moves me to such tears, which you do, that is my payoff. I see myself as being content, creative, continuing to explore my impresario talents, trying to be continuously working on myself to have more patience, have more compassion and go to the deeper well of love.

JI: It's all rooted in spirituality—you're a very spiritual human being from all of your painful experiences in life that have led you to this place.

SG: Experience through pain. I came through the tunnel of pain into the hall of bliss.

JI: What's the best advice you ever got and what's the best advice you ever gave?

SG: The best advice I ever got was to care about my fellow artists. The best advice I ever gave is for other artists to try and care for other artists. In other words, I want to pass on my kindness, care and love. I want artists to begin to treat other artists who are in need of support, to do the same.

JI: Steve, is there anything that I haven't covered here or prompted you for that you'd like to say, add, or speak on?

SG: I sincerely invite people to come to this special place where I'm trying to present some really great music and create a place to relax and enjoy themselves and to find some fulfillment in their life. Because people who are living in this modern world have a pretty stressful time of things and so I'm thinking now about the general public at large. I would just like to offer them the opportunity to hear something blissful and good and leave the music hall feeling a lot better about themselves and the world. That's all.

JI: Steve, thank you so much for your honest, candid and uplifting interview. I hope that this is only the beginning of more greatness to come. I love the direction that you are taking your music hall in and what's motivating you so I'm inviting everyone to visit your website: http://www.stevegetzmusic.com and to get in touch with you, mailto:stevegetz7@gmail.com, submit their CDs, buy tickets and support the upcoming series, bring a friend, refer a friend, forward your website information…and help make this thing a success for the greater good of us all.

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"What looks like a loss may be the very event which is subsequently responsible for helping to produce the major achievement of your life"

- Srully Blotnick