

April 2022

One for the ages, one for the books!

By “CP” Christopher Peppas • Photography by Keith Watling

Well, another successful JU Scholarship audition is in the books. And it proved to be one for the ages. Considering that Jazz Unlimited of Greater Milwaukee is in its fifty-first year of existence, that’s saying a mouthful.

Not only did it set a record eclipsing more than ten thousand dollars in awards and lessons, but the talent level was stratospheric. From top to bottom and beginning to end, these young people belted out their performances, vocal and instrumental, with the aplomb of savvied veterans.

The audience, packed with parents, relatives, friends and many fans of the genre were left gobsmacked. And the outburst of applause at the conclusion of each piece, was genuine and needed no prompting whatsoever.

If there were any thoughts that JAZZ was headed for the endangered species list, they were unceremoniously erased on Sunday afternoon at Joe’s K Ranch in Cudahy.

If there were any jitters or butterflies or self-doubt among the twenty participants, then they were kept under wraps in an undisclosed location.



The competition was as fierce as it was intense. And Judge Sue Russell iterated that, in several instances, the margin of victory between first and second was a single, solitary point. There was a wide variety of criteria that the panel of four judges based their decisions on. No one wanted to be in their shoes

as they repaired to the basement to deliberate after the last competitor exited the stage.

The event ran like clockwork which was largely due to the hard work and many hours put into staging it by Scholarship Chair Mike Mecha. He also donated \$50 K Ranch Gift Cards to all

those who threw their hats in the ring and left an indelible mark on this competition.

As per the rules of the audition process, participants can win multiple awards. And the particular brand of lightning struck four times this year.



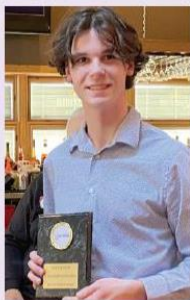
LUKE MURRAY, jazz guitar, took home a \$250 Theodore "Ted" Peppas Memorial Youth Award and \$500 in lessons from the legendary Dick Eliot after giving us his take on "Lonnie's Lament."



YISHAYAHU LEVIN nabbed a \$750 Best Instrumentalist Award and the \$1,000 Wayne "Zim" Zimmermann Showmanship Award after wowing the crowd with Chick Corea's "Spain."



ARIEL MARKS sang and scatted her way to the \$750 Best Performer Award and the \$1,000 Augie Ray Best Jazz Vocalist Memorial Award with "Lullaby of Birdland."



ELI MILLER played All the "Things You Are" and racked up the \$750 Best Guitarist Award and \$1,000 in lessons from Dick Eliot.



LILLIAN ALBURG took home the \$1,000 Mike D'Amore Vocalist Live Performance Memorial Award "One Note Samba."

LIAM JAKUBOWSKI: \$1,000 Douglas M. and Eleanor M. Gmoser Best Reed Player "On the Sunny Side of the Street" pictured with Diane Byrne (Gmoser's daughter).



LILYAN KUNSMANN: \$250 Theodore Peppas Memorial Youth Award "Autumn Leaves" on flute.



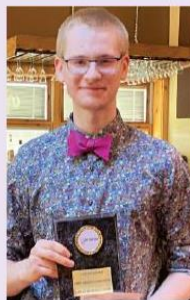
CHARLIE WHITE: \$500 "Taps for Veterans" Bill Seaman Best Horn Player Award "Take the A-Train."



CHRISTIAN MAXWELL BIRD: \$500 Best Drummer Award "Yes or No," Wayne Shorter.



JACK MONAGLE: \$525 Jane Giliberti Drummer Award "Caravan."



FELIX KOCH: \$750 Frank DeMiles Dominguez Memorial Piano Award "Red Clay," Freddie Hubbard.

The \$50 gift cards went to:

AIDAN WILLIAMS-BRUSUBARDIS, ZACH FITZGERALD, TONY AUSTIN, MACK TOSON, FLORA MIROSLAW, LEAH KUNSMANN, HEINRIC KUNSMANN, JOE LORENZ AND CASSIUS KASZA.

Many seniors will move on but there is a solid core of performers who will be eligible and back next year. Thanks to all the JU Board, members and those who contributed to making this the most successful competition yet.

We'll do it all over again on the third Sunday in March, 2023.