

Memories of working with, and knowing Pete Douglas

by Larry Vuckovich , July 15, 2014

It can be safely and most assuredly said that presenter Pete Douglas was ahead of his time. Today, jazz house concerts are happening all over the place and have become a routine presentation. Pete started this format going back over 45 years. When I first returned from a two year stay in Europe, from '68 – '70, around the Fall in 1970, I found out about Pete's living room concerts, which were happening in his home, (it was located where his living room and kitchen are now). Pete had a small stage with a Chickering grand piano. I started played there with two great, legendary West Coast tenor players on various occasions. They were Hadley Caliman and Noel Jewkes. Right after that, during the 70s, due to the popularity of these concerts, Pete built his current concert hall and bought the beautiful 9 foot Steinway concert grand, which is still there.

A number of presenters, especially today, seem to favor only certain areas of jazz –areas that are receiving a lot of hyped-up press, featuring musicians who are getting a lot of notice, not necessarily for their authenticity and creativity, but for marketing reasons. Pete's range of jazz presentations totally stood out. He felt that the history, legacy, and the whole spectrum of jazz, should be brought to the audiences. He presented jazz going back to the New Orleans style, authentic swing, authentic bebop, hard bop/post bop/contemporary jazz and even avant-garde musicians, at different times. This also included some top vocalists. He also made sure that the resident Bay Area groups and musicians, the ones with national and international reputations, performed there. To complete the music picture, Pete started presenting top classical music artists, the concept that rounded out what he was about: bringing culture and total enjoyment to the audiences.

I'm happy to say that I am one of those. As I suggested certain groups and combinations to Pete (which included Bay Area legendary musicians, plus the national and international traveling musicians), Pete began to trust my choices, seeing that they brought excellent results, both musically and businesswise. He stood for what he believed in. He was strong-willed, and like many artists and visionary presenters, often showed a fiery temperament that was true to his beliefs, but always ended positively. However, the overall picture of Pete was one of true dedication to music of the highest quality. The Bach was definitely his place and all he wanted was an inspiring performance, full of creativity and fire. Money was secondary to him – music quality was first. He was one of the very few presenters, who after having a very successful day and a packed house, would give some extra money to the cats in appreciation of their performance.

Thank you Pete.