

# Jersey Jazz

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promotion and preservation of jazz.

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## “Hello, Central, give me Dr. Jazz”

Congratulations to NJJS member Dr. Francis A. Forte who was feted at a special concert on October 25th at the Englewood Hospital and Medical Center. With a musical program organized by guitarist Roni Ben-Hur, the tribute, called *Jazz*, marked the 15th anniversary of the Dizzy Gillespie Cancer Institute and the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund. The medical center provides free medical care for jazz musicians in need, under the leadership of Dr. Forte to fulfill a request made by Dizzy Gillespie when he was in the doctor's care at the time of his death at age 75 in 1993.

Dr. Forte was also honored for his philanthropic work by the Jazz Foundation of America at their annual dinner and concert last May. He is a noted physician, humanitarian and an accomplished jazz guitarist, as well as an occasional contributor to *Jersey Jazz* and *Just Jazz Guitar* magazine.

—Tony Mottola

Story and photos on pages 26 and 27

Dr. Frank Forte.  
Photo by  
Steve Hockstein/  
HarvardStudio.com

Free for members!  
NJJS Annual Meeting  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7 • CONCERT  
see pp 3 and 8

# 1,000 Jazz Musicians Cared For...

By Kathleen Mathieu

Music met medicine in a marvelous way when 15 jazz musicians joined in a tribute to physician and musician Francis A. Forte, MD, in the auditorium of Englewood Hospital and Medical Center on October 25.

Since 1993, Dr. Forte has led a unique program combining the pro-bono services of a network of physicians and the medical center, which has underwritten more than \$5 million of free care over the last 15 years.

The program is fulfilling a promise to Dizzy Gillespie, who was Dr. Forte's patient. The trumpeter was a patient at Englewood Hospital on many occasions. Shortly before he died, the doctor recalls, "Dizzy said, 'I can't give you any money, but I can let you use my name. Promise you'll help musicians less fortunate than I am.'"

His request resulted in the establishment of the Dizzy Gillespie Cancer Institute and the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund at the medical center. Donations to the fund help pay for the cost of the free services.

"Dr. Forte has a reputation in the jazz world, one that precedes him all around the country," says guitarist Roni Ben-Hur, who organized the concert. "Whenever his name comes up, the response is one of love, admiration and gratitude. For many years, Dr. Forte has been working very hard to provide musicians with the health care they need. His success has gone beyond the medical attention he's secured for so many. His noble personality gives each person he helps a sense of dignity, love and sincere care."



Margaret C. Bridge, Executive Vice President, EHMC Foundation; Dr. Frank Forte; Jimmy Owens, Vice President, Jazz Foundation of America; Roni Ben-Hur

Photos by Steve Hockstein/  
HarvardStudio.com



Barry Harris



Jimmy Owens

A *Tribute to Frank Forte*, which was part of the medical center's celebration *Jazz*, opened with words of thanks and praise from Wendy Oxenhorn, executive director of the Jazz Foundation of America (JFA). The JFA assists uninsured musicians in accessing the free medical care. Tuba player Howard Johnson and pianist Danny Mixon provided personal accounts of the help they have received. Trumpeter Jimmy Owens, JFA vice president, was the main presenter of a plaque that reads:

15 Years of Caring for Jazz Musicians

Englewood Hospital and Medical Center and the Jazz Foundation of America acknowledge with gratitude Francis A. Forte, MD for his leadership, humanity and generosity in our efforts to keep our promise to Dizzy Gillespie.

1,000 Jazz Musicians cared for ...and counting!

# and Counting | Frank Forte Tribute



far left: Guitarist Frank Vignola, Dr. Frank Forte, Kate Vignola

left: Bassist Ron Naspo, Dr. Frank Forte, Pianist Bob DeBenedette



far left: Roni Ben-Hur, Barry Harris, Dr. Frank Forte

left: Dr. Frank and Marie Forte



Bill & Claire Wurtzel

The star-studded roster of performers (in alphabetical order) included Roni Ben-Hur, Roz Corral, Santi Debriano, Barry Harris, Jana Herzen, Calvin Hill, Howard Johnson, Amy London, Danny Mixon, Jimmy Owens, Jack Wilkins, Leroy Williams, Steve Williams, Bill Wurtzel and Richard Wyands.

Dr. Forte joined his fellow musicians on stage.

“Frank is a hero,” says Ben-Hur. “It is tempting to say an American hero, but Frank is more than that. He is a world hero. All of us, the musicians who had the opportunity to celebrate him on October 25th, feel very fortunate. If it were up to the jazz world, Dr. Frank Forte would have a national holiday named for him. I’m sure it would be the hardest swinging holiday in the calendar.”



*Kathleen Mathieu writes about jazz, healthcare, good people and other things that are near and dear to her heart. [kmathieu@trwg.com](mailto:kmathieu@trwg.com), 201-939-1844.*



Dr. Frank Forte

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## And More on the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund at Englewood...



### Roni Ben-Hur/Gene Bertoncini Quartet: Jazz Therapy

Photos by Frank Sole

The Roni Ben-Hur/Gene Bertoncini Quartet played a very special gig in honor of their new CD *Smile* at Dizzy's Club Coca Cola on Monday, November 3. Sales of this CD will benefit the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund at Englewood Hospital. Joining Ben-Hur and Bertoncini were Rich DeRosa, drums; Santi Debriano, bass; special guest Gilad, African talking drum. Read more about the CD below. **JJ**

*Frank Sole is an NJJS member and occasional contributor to Jersey Jazz.*

### Debut Duo Recording Featuring Roni Ben-Hur and Gene Bertoncini Will Benefit the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center

This November, Motéma Music, the Harlem-based record label that is home to Rufus Reid, Marc Cary, Lynne Arriale and Roni Ben-Hur among others, released the first in their new *Jazz Therapy* series of charitable fund raising CDs produced in association with the Jazz Foundation of America. *Jazz Therapy, Volume 1: Smile*, featuring master guitarists Gene Bertoncini and Roni Ben-Hur, will benefit the Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center which, under the leadership of Dr. Frank Forte, has been responsible for providing millions of dollars of free care to jazz musicians.

The impetus for this new series came earlier this year from Ben-Hur and the late great jazz bassist Earl May, who once played with Ben-Hur regularly in the lobby of Englewood Hospital as part of a Jazz Foundation of America program. The two proposed to Motéma founder Jana Herzen that they collaborate to release a benefit CD to repay the hospital for its generosity to the Jazz community. Unfortunately May passed away suddenly in January 2008 before the disc could be recorded. At that point, Bertoncini generously stepped in to volunteer his talent as Ben-Hur's recording partner, resulting in the formation of what award-winning jazz critic Ira Gitler is now calling "an eminently special guitar duo."

"The combination of two guitars is more than the sum of its parts," writes Gitler in his liner notes for the project. "The chordal aspects are many; there are percussive possibilities; and, of course, the singing melodies of the single lines. When you factor in two such en rapport artists as Bertoncini and Ben-Hur the results are sublime."

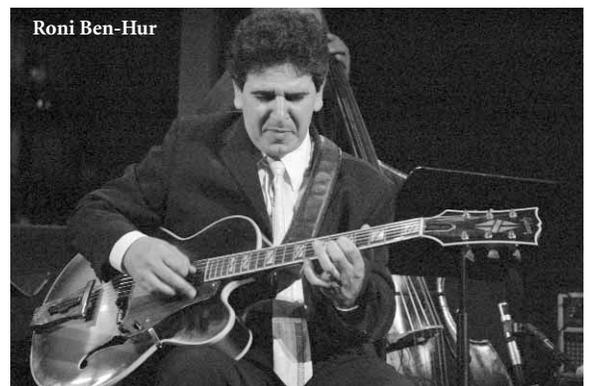
Bertoncini, known as the 'Segovia' of jazz guitar, has a thriving solo career and has played on hundreds of recordings by such artists as Tony Bennett, Nancy Wilson, Benny Goodman and Hubert Laws. For Israeli born Ben-Hur, a first call NYC player known for his work with Barry Harris and for his singular Sephardic-tinged jazz style, *Smile* will be a second Motéma release and his sixth as a leader.

Bertoncini describes the recording process: "It was like getting together with an old friend and talking about life. From the first time we played together it was instant conversation." Also key to the deeply peaceful vibe at the recording sessions was the quiet presence of engineer Dae Bennett, who not only donated his prodigious engineering chops to this project but also donated recording time at his world class Bennett Studios in Englewood, NJ. "Just about my whole family was born or has died at that hospital," said Bennett, who was glad to have this opportunity to donate his services to the cause.

"The Motéma label, named after a central African word meaning heart, exclusively promotes master recording artists who care about making a positive difference in the world. Explains Jana Herzen, "Roni and Gene perfectly exemplify what I'm referring to. This music will be healing to anyone who listens to it, and for those of us who play guitar, it's also a master course in guitar arrangement! Personally, I'm in awe of what they've created. These are extraordinarily generous musicians in every sense of the word." **JJ**



Gene Bertoncini



Roni Ben-Hur



Gilad