

RAMBLINGS – THE FIRST JAZZ FESTIVAL IN TOWN

When we got to our daughter's place in Jersey City over a month and a half ago for our regular yearly visits, her hubby Will Tatz was very busy. He was at the end-run of organizing a Jazz Festival for Jersey City. The local newspaper later ran a news item about it:

Things will be swingin' this weekend at Riverview-Fisk Park at the inaugural Riverview Jazz Festival, featuring some of the Jersey City Heights' finest jazz talents.

Will Tatz, who has been living in the Heights for eight years, has been dreaming of bringing live music to the park since he first started volunteering last summer with Sunday's Farms in the Heights farmers' market. While Tatz doesn't consider himself a jazz musician, he does like to jam with his friends on the saxophone or clarinet and is a huge fan of the genre.

"I have a vision of getting live music as a regular fixture in the park," he says. "Since then I've been working on bringing in different people, all different kinds of musicians, and getting the support of local businesses."

Headlining the festival is Beninghove's Hangmen (seen below), headed by saxophonist and local jazz fixture Bryan Beninghove. The band also features trombonist Rick Parker, guitarists Eyal Maoz and Dane Johnson, bassist Kellen Harrison and drummer Shawn Baltazor.



"They're just an awesome live band," says Tatz. "They span so many different genres and appeal to so many different audiences. They bring something for everyone."

Also performing are more traditional bands like New Tricks, featuring trumpeter and Heights resident Ted Chubb, and Zone, which plays music rooted in the jazz tradition but adds a dash

of Latin flavor with help from Heights percussionist Yogui Rozario.

Adding some variety to the lineup are festival opener Tracy Stark, a pianist and singer-songwriter who Tatz says is a longtime staple of the New York City cabaret scene, and Pat Van Dyke, who offers jazz with soul from a funky vein.

"We have a lot of jazz musicians in the Heights and [we'll] use this festival as a kicking-off point to sponsor other jazz events in the Heights," says Tatz, alluding to possible jam sessions at the Trolley Car Bar and Grill or concerts at the Distillery Gallery and Artspace.

"We want to have a sunny day, terrific music and develop more of a jazz music audience in the Heights."

The Riverview Jazz Festival will be held on Sunday, June 2, from 11 am to 4 pm at Riverview-Fisk Park on Palisade Avenue, running alongside the Farms in the Heights market. For more information, visit the festival's [Facebook page](#).

I help drop off the two grandkids, Asha and Corey, at their nursery school, driving the car that Will normally would have driven prior to parking it back near the house before he'd take the bus to work in NY city. And on many occasions, he'd ask me to drive to a few more places for a minute or two while he distributed flyers to the various establishments in the commercial area of the neighborhood. See flyer on the right.

The venue for the Jazz Festival was the Riverview Fisk Park of Jersey City, NJ at the Heights area of Jersey City. This is a stone's throw from NY City, It overlooks the Hudson river.



And as far as I understand, this is the first ever Jazz Festival of the City. Below is a Google shot of the park. The dark bands on the left are vegetation growing on slopes of the bluff that separates Jersey City heights from Hoboken (of Frank Sinatra fame) on the left. The road closest to the bluff was closed off by the police.



The arc circumscribes the gazebo which is one of the reasons for the festival. Whatever money raised would be added into the funds of RNA (Riverside Neighborhood Association) which plans to eventually upgrade the gazebo that was damaged by the storm Sandy.

As of now, the gazebo is a mere platform. The picture below shows two tourists from Los Angeles using the platform to get a better view of the Manhattan skyline beyond, especially the new tower that replaced the famed Twin Towers. Actually, that's my son Joey and wife Judy during their recent visit here.



Below is an RNA sketch of the gazebo-to-be



Will and Babette's house is on the same street as where the park is located, about 7 minutes by walking. See photo below. As the June 2 event approached, the house became like a warehouse, since Will collected as much paraphernalia for the event. He borrowed from the City four 4x8 aluminum platforms that fitted together to form (also seen below) a base on which the artists performed. Will wondered whether this platforms could be loaded one at a time on the roof of the car, but with so many of his friends in the neighborhood just as gung ho over the festival, one of them volunteered his truck. Other items were folding tables, chairs, tents, loudspeakers, etc

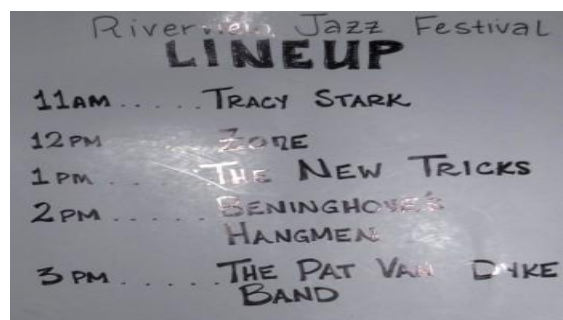


Aside from the professionally printed posters, there were hand drawn ones. The photo below shows the performer's schedule, starting at 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.

On the next page is a poster drawn by Babette which she placed on her bicycle.

Since I also play the part role of baby-sitter for the two grandkids, we very well couldn't stay the entire 5 hours at the park. So I walked/drove them back and forth from the park to the house.

There were many other activities and attractions at the park that day, and so there were lots of other people who witnessed the festival. There is the farmer's market for one, and the children's playground, and regular Tai Chi club.





Babette's bicycle.



Farmer's market tents, and mainly organic foodstuff.



The playground. Asha is under the slide.



Really good pizza on wheels.



At 11:00 a.m. sharp, Will started it off.



Above, the stage. Seats were set on the road. Below, the first performer, poetry about jazz. Note Gazebo platform and poster on side.





The first jazz performer was our next door neighbor Tracy. I must admit that I don't know much about jazz, but the beat was great, and the audience obviously loved it, especially as the afternoon wore on and other bands went on stage to play, and more jazz enthusiasts drifted in, plus of course friends and family to Will. Many spread blankets on the grass to enjoy an afternoon of music.

Below are Babette's friends from NYC,



Below, Babette and Corey with another friend.



Soon after the band started playing, Will had to rush to the house to get the living room rug. The percussion drums have a tendency to move about when placed on a smooth surface, and the rug acted as a damper.



Will's dad came over all the way from Long Island together with family. They congregated in the house after the last band did it's performance.

I was unable to get more photos of the other performers as I was moving back and forth to the

house, with grandkids in tow.



Above photo shows Will with some of the friends who helped out in the festival.

There will be another like it next year.

Danny Gil (ferngil@aol.com) 10 July 2013