

Local vocalists to join Jazz greats at 2013 Monty Alexander Jazz Festival

EASTON — The 2013 Monty Alexander Jazz Festival will open at the Avalon Theater in Easton on Friday, Aug. 30, with a skyrocketing young saxophonist, Sharel Cassidy, and close with a command performance by Dee Daniels singing jazz and gospel with a local vocal ensemble on Sunday, Sept. 1.

In between an intriguing reunion on Saturday afternoon, the Fest will bring back the music of Dizzy Gillespie as Festival-goers anticipate Monty Alexander's signature concert on Saturday night, Aug. 31.

If it's Labor Day Weekend in Easton, it's the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival. Legendary jazz pianist Monty Alexander, the Festival's artistic director and namesake, headlines the Festival on Saturday night, Aug. 31, at 8 p.m. with his electrifying music, which crisscrosses and fuses jazz roots, the American Songbook and the sounds of his native Jamaica.

Alexander has performed and recorded with artists from every corner of the musical universe and entertainment world: Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Ray Brown, Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, Quincy Jones, and Bobby McFerrin, among others.

The Festival, in its fourth year, is also known for introducing rising stars in the jazz scene. Saxophonist Sharel Cassidy, who performs on Friday, Aug. 30 at 8 p.m., with her quartet, is no exception. She tours the world performing jazz and original music and is quickly making waves on the New York jazz scene, including entertaining audiences at Dizzy's Club Coca Cola, Blue Note, NBC's



Monty Alexander pictured

PHOTO COURTESY OF AAM

Rainbow Room, and the West Village boop stop Smalls.

The tempo continues on Saturday afternoon as the Festival salutes John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie — one of the great American jazz trumpeters of all time, bandleader, composer and arranger. The concert on Saturday, Aug. 31 at 3 p.m. includes performances by bassist John Lee, who played with Dizzy, and returning percussionist Chuck Redd, who toured with him in Africa, as well as renowned jazz artist Greg Gisbert, who will take the master's turn on the trumpet.

Wrapping up the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival is returning jazz and gospel vocalist, Dee Daniels, who will be joined by a local vocal ensemble on Sunday,

and Ministries in Preston, Christ Church in Easton, and the Redemption Church in Owings Mills.

Leslie comments, "It was a true honor to be asked to pull together a vocal ensemble to backup Dee Daniels at the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival. We saw this opportunity as a way to feature some of the talented vocalists in our region — Terri Key, who won the Billie Holiday Vocal Jazz Competition in Baltimore several years ago, and a very well-known and loved local talent, Terron Quales. We are excited about working with Dee Daniels for what we know will be a memorable jazz-gospel concert on Sept. 1."

The Festival is presented by Jazz on the Chesapeake, a program of Chesapeake Chamber Music, and will be held at Easton's historic Avalon Theatre. The Avalon Theatre's intimate setting and the lineup of world-class artists make The Monty Alexander Jazz Festival an Eastern Shore destination for Labor Day weekend. Weekend packages are available at Easton's Tidewater Inn and the Tidewater Inn will once again join in the festivities by offering a Jazz Brunch on Saturday, Aug. 31 at 11 a.m. (<http://www.tidewaterterinn.com/>).

A Festival Pass will be available for \$140 for premium seats, \$110 for orchestra seats, and \$65 for balcony seats. All Festival Passes include entrance to the Sunday concert. For further information or to purchase tickets for the Festival visit www.chesapeakejazz.org or call the CCM office at 410-819-0380.

Sept. 1 at 2 p.m.

Daniels, whose international presence is growing, is a unique talent who transcends musical borders when she brings her jazz styling, infused with gospel and blues flavoring, to the stage. This year, she will perform with a local vocal ensemble put together by Jana Leslie, Contemporary Music Minister at Christ Church in Easton, performing two of her own choral arrangements — one of which she co-wrote with her mother. Included in the local vocal ensemble are Terron Quales, Terri Key, Sam Martin, Matthew Sevon, Laura Spies, Earle Kirkley, Brenda Wood and Jana Leslie. Churches represented in the ensemble include the Greater New Hope Church