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Pictured is legendary jazz pianist Monty Alexander, who will perform at the fifth annual Monty Alexander Jazz Festival on Saturday, Aug. 30.

Monty Alexander Jazz Festival marks fifth anniversary

EASTON — Since 2010, the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival in Easton has grown from two concerts to six over the Labor Day weekend.

The festival, presented by Jazz on the Chesapeake, is a program of Chesapeake Chamber Music. The festival kicks off Thursday, Aug. 28 at 8 p.m. at the Academy Art Museum with recording and touring artist Frank Vignola, who's spectrum of music ranges from classical to jazz, rock, pop and even rhythm and blues.

Vignola has recorded and/or toured with Madonna, Leon Redbone, Ringo Starr, famed trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, and has performed with the Boston Pops.

"We look for top notch talent and good will, good taste and positive outlook," says Monty Alexander, the festival namesake and artistic director. "It's like a delectable meal. We

want to be feted with outstanding and varied ingredients."

Trumpeter, composer, educator and bandleader Etienne Charles will charm audiences on Friday, Aug. 29 at 8 p.m. as he headlines the Avalon Theatre with his quintet. With a rich musical history in jazz and the music of the Caribbean, this native of Trinidad brings a Creole flavor to his music that ranges from subtle to unavoidable, weaving a variety of stories with panache.

The event will continue on Saturday, Aug. 30 with New Orleans jazz in Easton's downtown Thompson Park. The band will then lead a second line parade to the Tidewater Inn where a lunch will be served from 11:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m., preceding the afternoon showcase.

This year's Saturday afternoon concert at 2 p.m. at the Avalon Theatre will feature a special salute to the legendary

jazz pianist and composer, Dave Brubeck, who passed away in 2012. The salute will be led by Bobby Militello, who became Brubeck's alto saxophonist after the death of Paul Desmond.

The magic continues on Saturday night. The Avalon Theatre will host the incomparable jazz pianist Monty Alexander and his trio including Hassan Shakur on bass, Dennis Mackrel on drums, and special guest Frank Vignola on guitar at 8 p.m.

Wrapping up the weekend on Sunday, Aug. 31, at 2 p.m., will be returning jazz and gospel virtuoso Dec Daniels, who will bring to her adoring audience a unique blend of spirituals, gospel and jazz. Daniels will be joined by a local choral group led by Jana Leslie.

Tickets are on sale now. For more information or to purchase tickets, go to ChesapeakeJazz.org.