

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL



Weekend piano concerts keyed on variety

By IRWIN BLOCK
of The Gazette

There was something for every taste in jazz in separate concerts this weekend by four pianists, with influences as varied as calypso, Debussy, Coltrane and gospel.

The impeccable Jamaican-born Monty Alexander, 42, sparkled in a solo performance that featured sev-

eral compositions based on island folk tunes. Alexander's technique is perfection itself, a clean, percussive always swinging style that glistens like morning dew in Montego Bay.

Alexander's scope was obvious, with a jazz version of *Gymnopedie* transformed into blues.

The reception for Michel Petrucciani, 23, at Théâtre St. Denis Satur-

day was close to ecstatic.

This is the first performance since December by the tiny French-born piano marvel who is only three-feet tall because of a calcium deficiency.

He broke his arm following a 32-concert tour last December and hadn't performed until Saturday.

Petrucciani again dazzled his legion of Montreal fans.

Petrucciani's music is a celebra-

tion of life and romance, delivered with brio from the man with brittle bones, but hands of steel.

Eliot Zigmund was on drums, Ron McClure on bass.

For Jean Beaudet, the Coltrane inspiration appeared to motivate those hard-driving piano solos as he led a powerful quartet in the Jazz Sur le Vif series Friday night.

Beaudet leads a dynamic group playing free-form improvisations and he may well be the most talented young pianist in the city.

Opening the pianissimo series Friday was Amina Claudine Myers, whose Gospel roots in Little Rock, Ark., are a strong element of her style. Myers affects a simulated walking bass line in her left hand. She also sings — well when interpreting Bessie Smithe, less successfully when on her own tunes because her lyrics tend to be vapid.

Nothing contrived about sax great Carter

By LUCINDA CHODAN
of The Gazette

This year's jazz festival has a Pianissimo series, a Jazz Beat series, a Jazz dans la nuit series — and after the weekend, there's probably a good case for an Old Masters series.

The first reason, of course, is the

REVIEW

Benny Carter with the Reg Wilson Trio at the Spectrum Saturday night, Jazz Beat series.

73-year-old who started the festival ball rolling. But the second is the sublime 78-year-old saxophonist Benny Carter, who performed with

Carter is simply one of the most respected tenor players in the history of jazz, and has been since the early 1930s. Saturday's show demonstrated why. Carter plays saxophone and trumpet the way a wave ripples, naturally, gracefully, elegantly.

And in an inspired bit of pairing, he was teamed with the Reg Wilson