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The Finale: The love for Jimmy Heath and Tommy LiPuma overflowed at this year's WBGO Champions of Jazz gala. It was palpable all evening, but came to a crescendo during the evening's musical finale, as all the musicians returned to the Jazz at Lincoln Center stage. Photo by Fran Kaufman.

WBGO's Champions of Jazz Benefit Rocks JALC

Jersey Jazz contributing photographer Fran Kaufman takes us behind the scenes and on stage at the 2011 WBGO Champions of Jazz Benefit Gala held at Lincoln Center on November 2.

Story and photos on page 28.

**2011
Annual
Meeting**
SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 4

Shanghai
Jazz
Madison

see ad
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WBGO's Champions of Jazz Benefit: Before and After (Ready, Set, Go!)

Story and photos by Fran Kaufman

This year's WBGO Champions of Jazz Benefit honored the great saxophonist Jimmy Heath and renowned, revered and beloved producer Tommy LiPuma. Both men have received numerous honors in their careers, but this was a very, very special evening, as their musical friends paid them tribute before a sold-out house in the beautiful Allen Room at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

I thought it would be fun to show you what the show looked like during sound check on the afternoon of November 2, and how it looked once the stage lights were on, the audience was packed, and it was show time!



Trumpeter Roy Hargrove came by for sound check and tried out his solo, "These Foolish Things" with bassist James Genus.



Danilo Perez reviews his arrangement of "Till Then" before the empty house.

The rehearsal outfit worn by the beautiful Natalie Cole was as "unforgettable" as the song she sang.

And when she followed "Unforgettable" with her rendition of Shirley Horne's "Here's To Life," I wept.





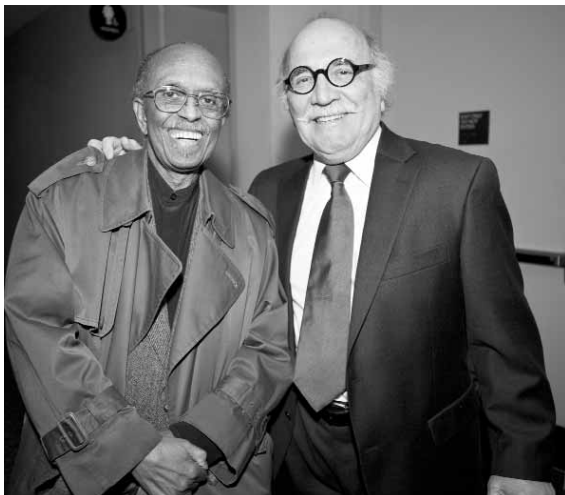
Pianist Michael Wolff, musical director for the event, reviews 15-year-old bassist Darryl Johns's "Sound for Sore Ears" with Englewood resident Johns, who is a member of the NJPAC Jazz for Teens program.



Rehearsing the Finale: Todd Bashore, James Genus, Gary Smulyan, Antonio Hart, Joe Lovano, Natalie Cole and Lizz Wright.



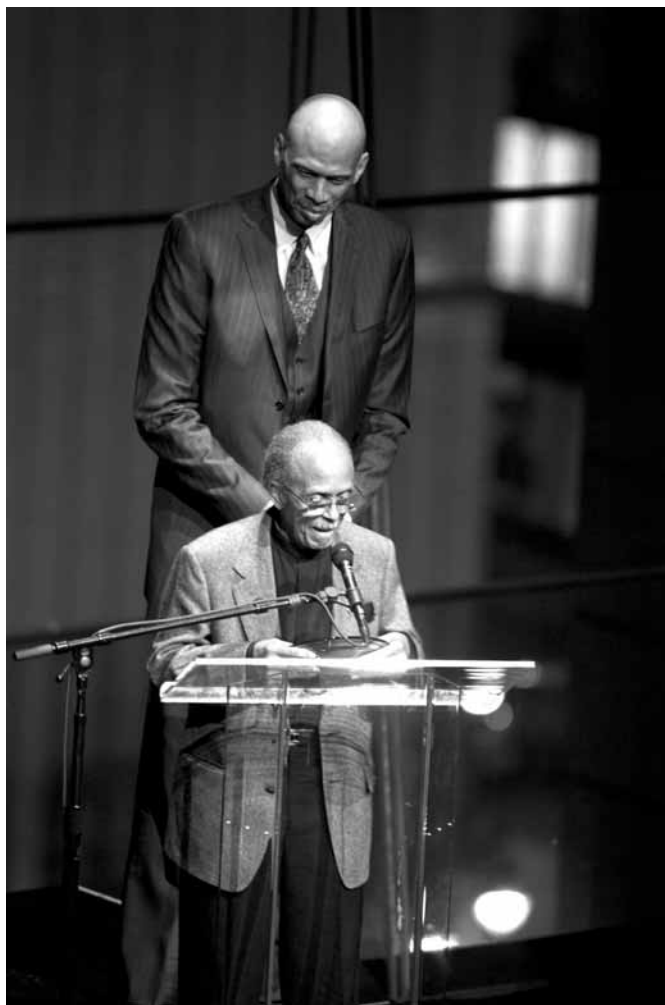
Antonio Hart, Roy Hargrove and Joe Lovano play "What is this Thing Called Love?" at the gala.



Honorees Jimmy Heath and Tommy LiPuma arriving for the gala.

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CHAMPIONS OF JAZZ *continued from page 29*



Jimmy Heath's autobiography, *I Walked With Giants* could have been the title of this photo, as Kareem Abdul Jabbar, who presented the Champions of Jazz Award to Jimmy, looks on.



Tommy LiPuma accepts the Champions of Jazz Award. Ben Sidran presented it to Tommy and spoke of how much he means to the musicians with whom he's worked.



Lizz Wright sings from her album, *Salt*, produced by Tommy LiPuma.