

Tri-C JazzFest:**A celebration of the music of Tadd Dameron (June 28)**

by Rory O'Donoghue



The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz orchestra brought a lively set to the Ohio Theatre on Friday, June 28 as part of Tri-C JazzFest. Joined by the incomparable talent of Dianne Reeves and trumpeter Dominick Farinacci, the evening was a joyous celebration of Cleveland-born jazz legend Tadd Dameron.

John Clayton is more than a triple-threat composer, arranger, and conductor. He's also a producer, Grammy-award winner, co-founder of the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, and served as principal bassist with the Amsterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. All of these hats were on display at the concert. Clayton grooved along as he conducted the first number, a trumpet-feature, setting an infectious vibe. The ensemble was tight from the jump, wonderfully synchronized, and Clayton directed an extended section of trading fours all around the ensemble.

Next up was *Lullaby of the Leaves*, in an arrangement by pianist Tamir Hendelman that delightfully reimagined the standard. Starting off with a lengthy drum solo by Jeff Hamilton, Clayton's own "favorite drummer," the piece toured through impressive rhythmic terrain. Hendelman's solo was phenomenal, wandering through far-away keys with a fun sense of direction. The group played a beautiful rendition of Billy Joel's *And So It Goes*, reeling in the tempo for a quiet meditation. Clayton took up his bass for a few iterations of the melody, played straight tone, and uncovered something deeply profound in the music. A self-professed Dameron scholar, Clayton wrote the final piece of this section, *Just a Tadd Bit*, as a peppy tribute, which it was. The group bopped through the tricky music with bristling energy.

Clayton's son Gerald joined the group for a moving take on Henry Mancini's *Days of Wine and Roses*, which featured a fun duet with his father. Following that, the senior Clayton took the mic and introduced "someone who I also consider family" — preeminent jazz vocalist Dianne Reeves.

Reeves's voice alighted atop the complex harmony of *If You Could See Me Now*, which she described as her "favorite Tadd Dameron song to sing." Her expansive voice skipped through octaves like a stone over calm water, and glimmered with pearlescence. Her scat solos were refined and tasteful — she mostly held back her spitfire technique, revealing it only at choice moments to great effect.



Farinacci joined in for the closing number, Mancini's *Moon River*. Reeves and Farinacci ebbed and flowed together, clearly enjoying the beautiful music. When Reeves sang "There's such a lot of world to see / We're after that same rainbow's end, waiting, round the bend," it felt like that glorious rainbow opened up, blooming with promise. There may be much of the world yet to see, but Reeves gave us a lot of it.

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