

—Slug:.....COMM-0844.arts.VJC_BigBandGala
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—Dateline.....Brattleboro
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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Notes from editor (not for publication):Could not confirm the Grammy wins, but likely that's because they're not headlining on the album.

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 A gala raises money for students of jazz at VJC

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2 The VJC Big Band performs on Dec. 12 with special guest
3 vocalist Peter Eldridge

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 THE 18-PIECE Vermont Jazz Center (VJC) Big Band, which
6 marks 21 years of performing big band jazz, will celebrate the
7 legacy of Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, and other world-class
8 male vocalists in a swing-dance performance featuring acclaimed
9 vocalist Peter Eldridge on Friday, Dec. 12 at 7:30 p.m. All profits
10 from this concert will subsidize VJC's educational programs.

Eldridge is best known for his work as a founding member of the internationally celebrated vocal group, the New York Voices. He recently headlined the Northampton Jazz Festival with the Voices. He has performed at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, the Kennedy Center, and festivals around the world. The New York Voices, with Eldridge, have received two Grammy awards for their work with special guests Paquito D’Rivera and the Count Basie Orchestra.

As a soloist and band leader, Eldridge has released five albums. His most recent recording, *Somewhere*, is a collection of lush ballads for voice, string orchestra, and jazz trio with the iconic pianist and composer Kenny Werner.

Other notable collaborations include performances and recordings with a spectrum of diverse musicians, among them Bobby McFerrin, Fred Hersch, Becca Stevens, George Benson, Michael Brecker, and David Byrne.

As an educator, Eldridge was head of the jazz voice department at the Manhattan School of Music for 18 years and now serves as a professor at Berklee College of Music in Boston.

* * *

THE VJC BIG BAND is made up of area professional musicians who come together to enjoy the rewards of playing invigorating, challenging, and historically significant repertoire while raising money for the VJC’s Scholarship Fund.

December’s Annual Gala is the primary source of the scholarship fund, which grants over \$10,000 to students annually on average, offsetting fees for ensembles, private lessons, and numerous educational programs. All proceeds from this event will benefit students who otherwise wouldn’t be able to pursue their musical objectives.

VJC Big Band celebrates its 21st year thanks to the decade-long leadership of Musical Director Rob Freeberg and to the organizational acumen of baritone saxophonist Sherm Fox. Each year, the VJC Big Band performs a dance concert on the first Friday of December that features a special guest artist. Past

46 headliners have included Eldridge, as well as Carmen Bradford,
47 Evan Arntzen, Alexis Cole, Amanda Carr, Samirah Evans, Mark
48 Anagnostopoulos, and Houston Person.

49 Members of the VJC Big band include Matt Steckler,
50 Donna Morse, alto sax; Michael Zsoldos and Bruce Diehl, tenor
51 sax; Sherm Fox, baritone sax; Rick Anderson, Donald Anderson,
52 Haneef Nelson, and Bunny Saranita, trumpet; Dave Sporny, Ben
53 Barnett, Taylor Hughey, and John Wheeler, trombone; Wes
54 Brown, bass; and Steve Rice, drums. I play the piano.

55 The VJC Big Band is fortunate to have Freeberg's
56 guidance as musical director. Freeberg moved to Vermont after 30
57 years as director of bands at New Rochelle (N.Y.) High School.
58 He also directed a professional big band, a community jazz band
59 and the Iona College Pep Band, and performed as a freelance
60 trumpeter in the metropolitan New York City area.

61 Freeberg directs VJC's Big Band and the VJC Sextet, serves
62 as vice president on its board of directors, and has taught in its
63 Summer Jazz Workshop. He also performs with the Windham
64 Philharmonic and Winchendon Winds, coaches jazz and
65 chamber ensembles at Brattleboro Union High School, and
66 teaches private lessons at The Putney School.

67 The VJC's longevity is thanks in great part to band
68 manager and baritone saxophonist Sherm Fox. His continued
69 persistence and organizational efforts have provided the glue that
70 has held the band together since 2004.

71 The VJC Big Band was originally a collaborative project
72 initiated by Fox with me and Howard Brofsky (aka Dr. Bebop),
73 the VJC's mentor and former board president who died in 2013.

74 The VJC is especially grateful for the long-term
75 sponsorship of this event by Dianne and Steve Lieberman, dear
76 friends who have demonstrated their belief in the music and the
77 VJC community. For this big band show, they are delighted to
78 connect with the audience by serving as charismatic bartenders.

79 This concert will be a hybrid event with both livestream
80 and in-person components. The livestream for home viewers can

81 be accessed on the Vermont Jazz Center's website (vtjazz.org) or
82 via its Facebook Live page.

83 * * *

84 Admission is \$40–\$100, general admission (sliding
85 scale). Tickets can be reserved at vtjazz.org or by phone at 802-
86 254-9088, ext. 1. Handicapped access is available by emailing or
87 calling 802-254-9088, ext. 2 to schedule a time for one of our
88 staff to meet your party.

89 Livestream viewers are encouraged to make an online
90 donation to the Scholarship Fund in lieu of purchasing a ticket.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

91 **EUGENE UMAN** is director of the Vermont Jazz Center.
92 *The Commons'* Deeper Dive column gives artists, arts
93 organizations, and other nonprofits elbow room to write in first
94 person and be unabashedly opinionated, passionate, and
95 analytical about their own creative work and events.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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