

MUSIC REVIEW

Celebrating an Elder Statesman of Jazz

Marcus Belgrave at Jazz Standard for a Trumpet Festival

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Jazz regionalism isn't what it used to be. In an age of instant, endless connectedness, there are fewer compelling reasons for a scene to develop in isolation. Whether you choose to mourn or celebrate that fact, one thing it highlights is the rare intrinsic value of someone like the trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, who received an award of recognition from the Festival of New Trumpet Music at the Jazz Standard on Tuesday night.

Mr. Belgrave, 77, is a figure of peerless veneration in Detroit, his longtime home, where he has variously served as a staff trumpeter for Motown Records, a trusted purveyor of hard-bop verities and a hands-on mentor and educator to several generations of jazz musicians. Five years ago, he was named the city's Jazz Master Laureate, a title he wears proudly.

For the first of two nights that concluded the Festival of New Trumpet Music — a monthlong convocation founded a decade ago by the trumpeter Dave Douglas, with a [preference for boundary-pushing works](#) — Mr. Belgrave presided over a coterie of former students. "You're witnessing and experiencing my family, my big family," he said during his first set, his voice a growly rasp but his face bearing a beatific smile.

He had been booked with a quartet featuring the pianist Geri Allen, the bassist Marion Hayden and the drummer Kassa Overall. Joining them for portions of the set were two players Mr. Belgrave had taught at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, before retiring several years ago: Greg Glassman, a trumpeter, and Arnold Lee, a saxophonist. One tune, "Working Together," featured a pair of prepossessing young siblings, the pianist Samora Pinderhughes and the flutist Elena Pinderhughes, whom Mr. Belgrave had encountered as a guest instructor in the Bay Area.

There was no new trumpet music in the set, which Mr. Belgrave devoted almost entirely to compositions by Lawrence Williams, a drummer revered in Detroit, who died in 2006. ("Working Together" is the title track of an album the two made together in 1992.) Mr. Williams had a taste for soulful post-bop with subtle but non-negotiable twists, and at least one of these tunes, "No. 6," proved a bumpy ride for the band.

But "No. 3," the polyrhythmic waltz that opened the set, was punchy and effective, especially during a harmonically slithery piano solo by Ms. Allen. "No. 4," with its impressionistic prelude, was even stronger, the spiky intervals in its melody eliciting a lustrous gleam from Mr. Belgrave's horn.

His playing throughout the set was unflashy but full of insight, with a logical sense of phrase that occasionally evoked Clifford Brown. He doesn't have the mobility around his register that he did as a younger trumpeter, but his marshaling of notes pointed to a deep engagement with the material. And by spending his shining hour heralding Mr. Williams's music, he showed his selfless dedication: to the spirit of instruction, to the memory of a former colleague and especially to the proprietary claims of his hometown.