

EVER-EVOLVING

Former Lancaster-area pianist returns to perform in the Club 42 series with the Fred Hughes Trio

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They say it takes a village to raise a child. If you ask Fred Hughes, he'll say the same is true for musicians.

The accomplished jazz pianist got a hearty musical education from the Central Pennsylvania arts community, from performing in local bands to studying under Lancaster- and Reading-area teachers.

It's why Hughes keeps coming back, even nearly 30 years after relocating to the Washington, D.C., area.

The Fred Hughes Trio will perform Saturday at The Ware Center, as part of the venue's Club 42 series. It's part of the trio's "I'll Be Home for Christmas Tour 2018." Hughes will be joined by bassist Amy Shook and drummer Frank Russo.

The group will perform songs from its 2015 album "I'll Be Home For Christmas," as well as selections from its nonholiday recordings.

Hughes, a 1979 graduate of Hempfield High School, performed in his father's jazz and commercial groups as a child. By the time he was 12, he was in the musician's union, playing in different Lancaster-area society groups. He also played in

the New Holland Band and the Bainbridge Band as a tuba player. "There were a lot of great musicians and a lot of great music in Lancaster growing up," Hughes says. "I wouldn't be the musician today that I am if it wasn't for all the great mentors that I had in Lancaster County."

He studied under Ben Iannone, Bill Horn and Elman Anderson, among others.

His early performances on keys were with a Hammond B3 organ, but he shifted his focus to piano after an Army band assignment placed him in Seoul, Korea. Hughes was in the United States Army band program for seven years after he graduated from Hempfield.

"By the time I got back to the states in Lancaster, I was totally a piano player. Although I still had my B3, it was obvious that piano was my voice," Hughes says.

After his time with the Army, Hughes moved back to Lancaster for four years before relocating to the Washington, D.C., area and joining the Jazz Ambassadors, the Army's premier touring jazz

ensemble. The gig took him to all 50 states, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Europe. With the group, Hughes performed at distinguished jazz

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events like the Newport, Montreaux, Nice and North Sea Jazz Festivals.

Hughes has also worked as an educator, presenting workshops at conferences and working as the assistant director of jazz studies at Shepherd College. His work as a session musician can be heard on more than 30 recordings.

These days, Hughes has stepped away from teaching to completely focus on performing.

"I'm enjoying the fact that I'm able to focus on nothing but the piano at this point," Hughes says.

The original incarnation of the Fred Hughes Trio was born in 1989. Russo joined in the mid-'90s, and Shook came on board in 2012.

"The trio, as new people have come into the group and as I've evolved as a musician have kind of become really a three-way conversation. ... We bring in our original compositions, but know full well that probably it's not going to be anywhere close to what it was when we had first wrote it," Hughes says. "It's really cool to have that type of collaboration with two other folks."

Hughes says the group lets its live show dictate what they do in the studio. Songs are typically well-worn in the band's repertoire before reaching the studio. Such was the case with the 2015 Christmas album. After countless live performances with the material, it only took the trio three to four hours to record.

Because the music is always evolving, Hughes says the songs from the trio's most recent album, "Matrix," sound quite different live than on the studio recordings.

"We had been playing those tunes



MICHAEL G. STEWART

From left, Frank Russo, Fred Hughes and Amy Shook of the Fred Hughes Trio.

for a while and then recorded it, but now those tunes have morphed into something different. ... I wish we had waited a year to record it because they're a whole different tune now," Hughes says.

Hughes says he's looking forward to returning for The Ware Center's Club 42 series. The late bassist Keith Mohler asked Hughes to participate in the Jazz in the Sky Series years ago, Hughes says.

"He called me one day and said it's time for you to come home and play," Hughes says.

Hughes took him up on the offer, and returned for a show at the Fulton Theatre. He kept returning for Jazz in the Sky shows at the Ware, and now continues to participate in the Club 42 series.

"I loved the pianos there," Hughes says. "I loved the vibe of the room. It's just a great place to play."

Music calendar

SPECIAL EVENTS

"PIANO MEN"

PRIMA Theatre opens its new theater with this energetic concert celebration of the great music of Billy Joel, Stevie Wonder, Elton John and Ray Charles. Opens Fri. Cont. through Dec. 15. Fri. and Sat. 7:30 p.m. \$44.75, \$60. PRIMA, 941 Wheatland Ave., 717-327-5124. primatheatre.org.

Chowderhead, Sat. 7:30 p.m.; family karaoke, Wed. 6 p.m. 717-Fairview Ave. 717-393-2907. post19amvets.com.

ANNIE BAILEY'S

Concord Street, Fri. 5 p.m.; Baille Run, Fri. 10 p.m.; traditional Irish music session, Sun. 2-5 p.m. 28-30 E. King St., 717-393-4000. anniebaileys.com.

THE BRASSERIE

Karaoke, Sat. 9 p.m. to midnight 1679 Lincoln Highway East. 717-299-1694. lancasterbrasserie.com

BARS, CLUBS, RESTAURANTS

551 WEST

Popscotch, Fri. 9 p.m.; Southside Band, Sat. 9 p.m.; Dead Sunday with High Tied Side show, Sun. 8 p.m.; karaoke, Mon. 9 p.m.; Dr. E and the Invisible Band, Wed. 8 p.m. 551 W. King St. 717-208-3658, 551west.com.

AMERICAN BAR & GRILL

Karaoke, Wed. 1081 N. Plum St. 717-394-8021, abg-lancaster.com.

AMVETS POST 19

Memory Lapse, Fri. 7:30 p.m.;

CHAMELEON CLUB

Weedeater, Aggressor ID, tonight at 7; Whiskey Myers, Fri. 7 p.m.; Thunderstruck, AC/DC tribute, Fri. 7 p.m.; Ashley McBryde, Dee White, Sat. 7 p.m.; P.O.D., Nonpoint, Sun. 7 p.m.; Otep, Illusion of Grandeur, Defiant, Mon. 6 p.m. Parker Gispert of The Whigs, Wed. 7 p.m. 223 N. Water St. chameleonclub.net.

CHANCEY'S PUB

Carmitchell Sisters, Sat. 9:30 p.m. open mic, Wed. 7 p.m. 6049 Market St., East Petersburg, 717-581-5400.

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DINE-IN • CARRY-OUT • EVENTS

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