

# Jazz in the Square is back

By Ed Symkus  
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

When longtime Roslindale resident Bob Tumposky first got into discussions with a minister at the Roslindale Congregational Church about presenting some music there, the talk had nothing to do with Tumposky's favorite genre, jazz.

"He had conceived of folk music as the likely kind of music for a church," recalls Tumposky. "I said, 'Well, I can't help you with that, but if you're interested in trying jazz, that I can do.'"

And for the past five years, that's just what he has done, with Jazz in the Square, a series of monthly concerts running from October to May. There are no summer concerts because the church isn't air-conditioned.

This year's series kicks off on Friday with the J.P. Jazz Collective, to be followed on upcoming Fridays by the John Payne Quartet, the Sharp Nines, the Cercie Miller Quartet, the Shimon Ben-Shir Group, the Dueling Divas and two more still to be named.

Tumposky, who plays tenor and soprano saxophones, and has studied at the John Payne School, knew a number of bands to call in order to get things started, and remembers getting a nice boost on the first night from members of Roslindale Main Streets, who coincidentally used the same church for their meetings.

"We linked with a Main Streets annual meeting," he says. "Right after that meeting was the first concert, and they agreed to subsidize it — they paid \$5 for everyone who stayed from the meeting so we could pay the band."

Main Streets still publicizes each concert in their newsletter, but it was up to Tumposky — working with no budget — and the bands he invited to play, to create a buzz.

"We got a rudimentary mailing list out of the first one," he says. "The attendance wasn't really big at the beginning, maybe 35 or 40 people. But we got bands that had a following, so



The Cercie Miller Quartet is scheduled to play the series on Jan. 2.

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they would bring people. Now we have about 150 on the mailing list, and we usually have about 80 people at each concert.

"But it varies," he adds. "We have tables, and people like the tables. But the more tables we put out, the fewer people we can fit. When [saxophonist-singer] Grace Kelly played, there were no tables and we had 120 people. It was hard to get them all in."

Tumposky has seen some changes throughout the years — bands now make requests to play there, listeners have come from as far away as the South Shore — but he'd like to see some younger members in the audience, along with his regulars.

"Younger people have shown up to some extent," he says, "but not as much as I'd like. I'd really like to get the college-age crowd and people in their 20s, but I don't know how many of them

listen to jazz. We do try to book bands from Berklee sometimes. Changing the mix of the bands a little, and getting more younger players might be one route."

One other change that Tumposky has regrettably made is a slight rise in the price of tickets, but it's gone to a good cause: getting some money to the bands.

"It started off at \$5, then \$6, and now it's been \$10 for a while," he says. "I'd be reluctant to raise it again. Most of it goes to pay the bands. They get the first \$200 at the door, and half of the rest of the door. The rest goes to the church."

Tumposky, who has actually grabbed his saxophone and joined in on a couple of occasions, believes that bands enjoy playing there because it's for a group of people who are only coming to listen to the music.

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your jazz tickets**

Roslindale Main Streets has organized a "Night out in Your Neighborhood" program that gives diners at participating restaurants 10 percent off meals between 5 and 7 p.m. on concert nights, as well as a coupon for \$2 off concert tickets. Restaurants include Bangkok Café, Birch Street Bistro, NuVo Kitchen, Salute and Sophia's Grotto.

"They're not coming to eat or drink or for somebody's wedding," he says. "It's a very enthusiastic audience that wants to hear the music, and the bands love that."

*Jazz in the Square happens on the first Friday of the month at the Roslindale Congregational Church, 25 Cummins Highway, Roslindale. Tickets are \$10; shows begin at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call 617-327-4065 or visit [www.jazz-inthesquare.net](http://www.jazz-inthesquare.net).*