

A Musical INHERITANCE — By Beverly Shay

Music runs in the Marantz family's DNA. Sara Marantz grew up on St. Simmons Island in Georgia surrounded by woods, history and wealth. She remembers water ballets on nearby Sea Island set to music like "Moon River." Sara studied piano with Helen Morgan Lindsay, organist at the famous Christ Church. Sara's husband, Bart, grew up in Brooklyn, New York. His grandparents were immigrants of Polish, Russian and Austrian descent. His father was a retail business owner and opera buff. Bart was 8 when they moved to Florida, where his maternal grandparents had retired. He recalls how the influx of Cubans altered the musical culture of Miami.

Bart took up trumpet at the age of 10, after hearing an Al Hirt album. "I was taken with the trumpet, telling people the trumpet found me. I was stunned with the sound and the style and what could be done with a trumpet," Bart recalled. From his first elementary concert together with instrumentalists from the University of Miami onward, Bart quickly made his mark — playing with the high school band while in junior high school and a nine-month season in Miami Beach clubs while in high school. "I played for such people as Marlon Brando and Tiny Tim. It was surreal!

I learned from some of the best — like Frank Biringer, and became friends with the likes of Sam Palaphium, who now teaches at the University of Arizona," Bart stated.

Sara credits her mom, who, as a pianist/organist, taught Sara and her seven siblings "to become musical in the truest sense. She arranged



us in trios, quartets and quintets to sing sacred music.” After she left the Island to attend Georgia College, her parents moved to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where she and Bart married. “I taught piano lessons to about 70 students during our three years there,” Sara stated. “Our home in Hattiesburg was a three-bedroom — our bedroom, my piano room and Bart’s studio,” she recalled.

The two met while they both studied at the New England Conservatory of Music from ’75-’77. Sara was studying piano on the third floor with Veronica



Jochum, who now teaches their son Luke, and Bart was working on a degree in Afro-American music in the basement. If Sara had not worked in the mailroom, the two might not have met. “I was copying material there while Sara was on duty. I saw her, liked her and asked her to coffee. She refused me! Our first date was the worst ever, but our second date was the best ever,” Bart admitted. They’ve been married for 34 years now.

“Veronica Jochum, a grand dame of piano, is still very energetic — she simply vibrates. It’s as though she plays through you. Learning from her is both intimidating and inspiring. She requires everything to be executed to perfection, but I learned to set the bar high under her direction” Sara commented. “We are so thrilled that Luke is now studying with her.”

Bart began a weekly column called “The Jazz Corner” in the *Hattiesburg American*. This developed into a radio

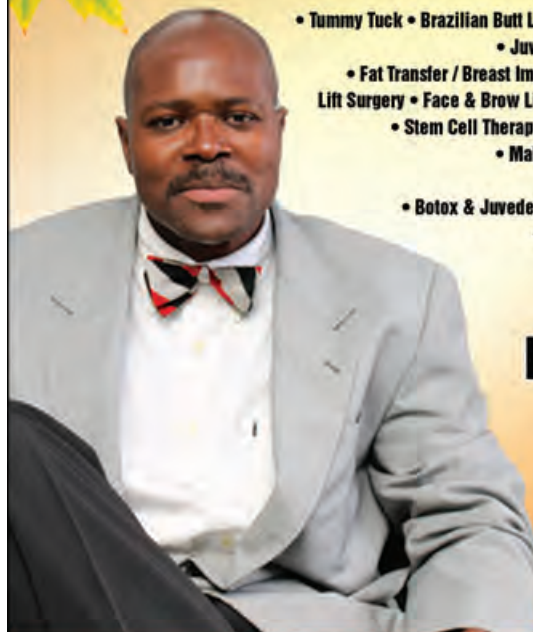
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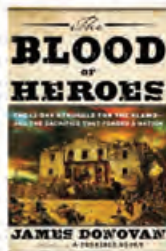
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program at the University of Southern Mississippi, which led to Bart becoming an assistant to the band director of Jones County Junior College in Ellisville, Mississippi. "I started out tuning up the marching band, but ended with sponsoring several jazz festivals with such jazz greats as: Woody Herman, Mundell Lowe, Lenny White, George Duvivier and Bill Berry," Bart said.

In 2010, Bart became the 18th recipient of the International *DownBeat* Jazz Education Hall of Fame. He also became the seventh recipient of John LaPorta National Jazz Educator of the Year given by Berklee College of Music and presented by Jazz Education Network in 2012. To chronicle all the forays into music which have filled Sara and Bart's lives would be encyclopedic, but with all their love and wealth of music, it's no



surprise at all that their two sons followed in their footsteps, becoming musical wonders themselves. Matt took up the saxophone in sixth grade with greater talent than Bart. "By seventh grade, I could not believe how good my son was. He is the most decorated student Booker T. Washington High School has ever seen. While in high school, Matt has played at the White House with the National Endowment of the Arts. Quite an accomplishment for an 18-year-old," stated Bart, who teaches at Booker T. Luke, the younger Marantz son, started his musical endeavors singing and was voted best jazz music vocalist twice while in junior high. He found piano in 10th grade and was playing in the jazz ensemble in his junior year. Luke opened for Herbie Hancock in his senior year, as well as B.B. King and George Duke.

Both boys were awarded scholarship



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funds for collegiate-level jazz studies — Matt from Manhattan School of Music and Luke from New England Conservatory of Music. Recently, they formed a band. Both write music, and they have just released their first album — an eclectic mix of jazz and country called *Matt and Luke Marantz and The Primary Colors*. Matt also has a solo album called *Offering*. “It’s very fulfilling to watch the boys enjoying each other as musicians,” Sara remarked.

Music just flows in this family — their dog is even named Schubert! Their home is a veritable collection of all things musical, from the grand piano in the front room to the boys’ rooms, plastered with musician posters and their collections of *DonnBeat* magazine’s student musician awards — Matt has 26 and Luke has 17. “They’re not gold mines — they’re diamond mines of talent, due to so many hours spent perfecting their craft,” Bart remarked.

“We made an incredible effort to envelop and immerse our children with all kinds of music. It’s vital to provide the very best teachers you can for children who exhibit the kind of talent our sons have. And then, you have to let them find their passion, their instrument and give them every opportunity to improvise and interpret what is within them,” Sara advised.

Without a doubt Sara and Bart have contributed much to their entire family and well beyond through the concerts and lessons they give. Their insight into classical and jazz music provides both balance and enlightenment. “Classical music is a predetermined composition that is interpreted and shaped by the performing artists. Jazz is composed extemporaneously, not only by ear, but by all the artists playing based on form and chord structure. This is true whether they are playing romance, blues or beat music,” Bart explained. “Initially, 95 percent of developing jazz musicianship comes via emulation and transcription. Later musicians find their own voices.”

“To play well involves passion, as well as technical ability,” Sara added. “What we are drawn to is a musician’s joy in the music. That’s what moves our hearts and souls.” **NOW**



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