

Hubert Laws' Portland Jazz Festival Feb 2023-Rob Mullins Keyboards

"The festival saved the best for last with seemingly immortal flutist Hubert Laws, who brought along several flutes, a piccolo and a superbly polished band that he called "family." At 83, the Houston-born Laws has no peers in ability to navigate several musical genres: he plays jazz, classical, pop, blues, soul and anything else. He remains quite the onstage entertainer, coffee in hand, introducing his songs (for once!). For starters, he told us about his wife whom he says left him and followed up with a sweet rendition of "Stay with Me."

He mentioned his work with fellow musicians (Sonny Rollins on "Airegin"—that's Nigeria spelled backwards—which he played on piccolo), and the late Chick Corea, with whom he attended Juilliard in the '60s and collaborated with on a recent classical album called Ultimate Classical and Improvisation Collaboration. He played Corea's "Windows" ("I always want to memorialize Chick"), John Beasley's arrangement of "Lida Rose," Bobby Timmons' "Dat Dere," and late trombonist J.J. Johnson's "Lament" (recorded by Miles Davis, among others). The quintet played for an hour and 45 minutes, no breaks, Laws occasionally whispering to his musicians and leading them in new directions.

His pianist, David Budway (a classically-trained tireless improviser who uses scores), merged with John Leftwich's

driving bass (at times he looked like he was riding a thoroughbred), Houston-based drummer Land Richards and synthesizer genius Rob Mullins. They were pitch perfect. They played at an almost full Newmark, to fans skewing over 50 years old. Younger folks could find a lot to appreciate about this straight-ahead 2011 NEA Jazz Master and tightly stitched quintet. When I was a 25-year-old youngster, I heard Laws at a tiny Chicago-area jazz club, Amazing Grace, and never forgot him, and probably never will."-Angela Allen

For the rest of the article, you can find it at [Oregon Arts Watch](#) online.

Photos of Rob Mullins courtesy of PDX Jazz

