

REVIEW: Bill Warfield Big Band powerful, lyrical in tribute to Lew Soloff of Blood, Sweat & Tears at Zoellner Arts Center



Bill Warfield presented a tribute to Lew Soloff of Blood, Sweat and Tears with his big band at Zoellner Arts Center Sept. 8 (JOHN ABBOTT / CONTRIBUTED FILE PHOTO)

By **Dave Howell**

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Nothing matches a big band's combination of power and lyricism. The Bill Warfield Big Band proved this to more than 100 people Saturday night at Bethlehem's Zoellner Arts Center.

The program was "For Lew," a tribute to the late Blood, Sweat & Tears trumpeter Lew Soloff, who was a mentor and friend to Warfield. Much of the program included songs from the CD of the same name that the band released earlier this year and that featured Soloff.

That included the iconic "Spinning Wheel," which included an orchestration of Soloff's iconic trumpet solo.

The band started off in full force with "Duff's Blues," which was reprised as the encore of the two-hour show. Lee Morgan's "Totem Pole" began more sedately, but it built up to another strong conclusion featuring a intricate trumpet solo by Colin Brigstocke.

The group had 16 members: five trumpets, four trombones, four woodwinds, grand piano, electric guitar, standup bass and drums. Warfield's arrangements appeal to traditionalists, but he does not hesitate to move into rock, Latin, modern jazz, or even a hint of experimental techniques.

"Everything that ever happened to me is embedded in this music," Warfield announced. An example was "Scootzie," which he said came out of hanging around with the wrong class of people in the Bahamas. The piece was mostly upbeat, however, capturing his experience of a festival there.

Another tone poem was "Street Corner Supermarket," inspired by a New York City neighborhood Warfield moved into. He later discovered it was drug infested. Beginning with a cymbal-based drum solo by Scott Neumann, it mixed the excitement of the vibrant city jazz scene with the dramatic tension of criminal activity.

The band changed pace with "A Window that Shows Me the Moon." It began with slow piano by Cecilia Coleman. The woodwind section played flutes and clarinets instead of saxes, and the piece featured a melodic Warfield flugelhorn solo.

"In Your Own Sweet Way" was also mellow, with three flutes and solos by trombonist Clarence Banks and Ricky Alexander on baritone sax.

For "Salsa En Mi Alma," the only song not arranged by Warfield, he recreated Soloff's searing trumpet from the original recording. "The Three Marias," arranged from a Wayne Shorter composition, was a more modern sounding piece with no solos.

And "Dorham's Epitaph" was a short piece Warfield arranged for Soloff's 2015 memorial concert.

Dave Howell is a freelance writer.