

I remember in 1970 when I came back to the states from half a year in Spain and was playing at a Manhattan club. Once I came off the stage, this guy came over with this big horn. It was Howard Johnson, who said “you have to check out this band called Substructure with seven tubas.” I replied, “I have to hear this!” It included Howard, Bob Stewart, Earl McIntyre and Joe Daley, which soon became the foundation for my four-tuba band on *The Real Thing* (Columbia, 1971). That was a groundbreaking album, recorded live at the Fillmore East, with contemporary blues connected with some serious jazz cats playing something very different than what most were playing: the tuba. Howard had picked everybody because of their strengths and how well they would work together. The first night when I heard those horns, they sat down and played a half-hour concert of Paul Hindemith for starters. It was amazing. They all played on my next album, too, *Happy Just to Be Like I Am* (Columbia, 1971). When all the horns would come in behind me, it was like a herd of elephants all playing together! And it should be mentioned that it is partly due to that four-tuba band that people finally have been paying attention to all the great marching bands in the South: all of that energy came through with Joe, Howard, Bob and Earl. To this day, I can still hear who it is playing, as each had their signature sound and unique musicality. That said, I had a particular closeness to Joe, as well Earl: all of us had a Caribbean connection with our backgrounds.

Joseph Daley was just an amazing player, fantastic composer and arranger, as well as a wonderful and warm individual. He was very quiet, but when it came time for the notes and the music—he was always there. I’m beside myself he’s taken off so early. He will be sorely missed on so many levels, as a loving friend and an incredible musician.

—Taj Mahal (guitar, harmonica, vocals)

JOSEPH DALEY 1949-2025

Joe was a wonderful person, a wonderful spirit, so humble and so powerful at the same time. I never heard one negative thing coming out of his mouth; he was the peacemaker and always found a positive from every situation. I knew him since 1971, when the four-tuba band went on the road with Taj Mahal. That’s 55 years ago. Of all the musicians I’ve known in New York, he and I were most similar, not only because we played tuba but because we were both full-time teachers. While he was with Sam Rivers and other different musical groups, he taught and, likewise, when I was working with Arthur Blythe and others, I was teaching. He was kind of my inspiration—that this way, was our way. And I was so happy for him that right around the time he decided to retire from teaching in 2005, he was offered a full-time job playing tuba, touring the world with Hazmat Modine. I was just so elated. After all those years, he and I had made it through the last half-century as being musicians, raising a family, being teachers with pension jobs, then he retires and the skies open for him. He was just out there playing and creating to a whole new world of people who loved him. It’s more than just music, though—Joe was family. I’ll miss him.

—BOB STEWART (tuba)

Joe brought to all the music we shared a steadfast commitment to logic and order, and he helped me to understand the special importance of those values to all of us who work the bass clef. I remember him fondly and I mourn his passing.

—STEVE SWALLOW (electric bass)

Joseph was an incredible musician. He played tuba, euphonium and valve trombone. We first played together when I was in the High School of Music & Art and he was already in Manhattan School of Music. We would play together for more than 50 years, on each other’s albums, with Taj Mahal, Howard Johnson’s Gravity and many other projects. Joseph was a big influence on me. I was the band baby, and Joseph, Howard Johnson, Bob Stewart, Dave Barger and Jack Jeffers all played a role in my musical education. Joseph really encouraged me to arrange and write music. He was a quiet, gentle force in musical situations but had a marvelous sense of humor. Once when we asked why he played valve trombone instead of slide he responded: “I play valve trombone because the possibility of being perfectly in tune scares me to death.” His relationship with his wife Wanda proved to me that a musician could still have a meaningful home life and strong family ties. I miss him greatly. May the Creator give him peace and show him light.

—EARL MCINTYRE (tuba, trombone)

I met Joe in the mid ’70s for a brief connection. Between that time and 1988, we played in various ensembles, such as Sam Rivers, Muhai Richard Abrams and the Musicians of Brooklyn Initiative (MOBI). In 1988, he joined the Ebony Brass Quintet (EBQ), a collective of African American performers and composers, which primarily performed music by members of the group. He would become a full-time partner with trumpeter Frank Gordon and myself by the early ’90s. In his 37 years with EBQ, I have many wonderful memories of the speed of his composing and arranging, the last being two weeks before his death.

This year Joe was involved with dental implants and playing tuba was simply not an option. However, on Jun. 6, EBQ started rehearsals (with Bob Stewart on tuba) for an Aug. 8 concert celebrating what would have been Joe’s 76th birthday. At the close of the rehearsal, Joe said that he would have some additional arrangements for the next rehearsal on Jul. 16. And that he did: six new arrangements. On Jul. 22, Joe texted me that he had a kidney stone problem and was going to the hospital. Four days later I received a text that Joe had two strokes. On Jul. 28, Joe returned my call and was very conversational, given with some difficulty. He exhibited concern about the cancelling of the concert. On Aug. 3, he transitioned.

—ALFRED PATTERSON (trombone)

I first met Joseph Daley about 50 years ago. We played in various ensembles together starting with Sam Rivers’ big band. I also played brass quintets with him and later with the Carla Bley band and Charlie Haden Liberation Music Orchestra. It was during the time with Carla and Charlie that I got to know him well because of touring. More recently, I was involved in Joseph’s amazing concert at Roulette last year, celebrating his 75th year on Earth, showcasing 12 French horns and 16 tubas! He was always very quiet but exhibited a lot of strength. If there was ever a saint in my lifetime—Joe Daley was that person.

—VINCENT CHANCEY (French horn)

I’m so sad that Joe Daley is no longer with us. He was a kind, caring person and a great tuba innovator, able to play inside and out with authority in his own, unmistakable voice. He was a powerhouse in the rhythm section and his solos would soar with passion and purpose. His sound was both eloquent and fiery. Joe elevated every band he played in because he understood space and flow within the entirety of music. All these qualities were in his own brilliant compositions too, including recent music for his brass orchestra and the ensemble Dance Clarinets. What originality, imagination and skill! Since the ’80s we’ve played together in many bands, including my own Far East Side Band and Burning Bridge. I am deeply grateful to have known Joe Daley and he will continue to inspire us.

—JASON KAO HWANG (violin)

I had the honor of participating in the recording of Joseph Daley’s masterwork *The Seven Deadly Sins*. It remains one of the most galvanizing musical experiences of my life. As much as this 25-piece ensemble consisted of close colleagues of Joe’s from his illustrious career, I remember the realization in the room of the compositional vision and the expressive splendor of the work as we rehearsed and recorded it. Joe was, is and will be a great inspiration.

—MARTY EHRLICH (woodwinds)

Dear Joseph Daley: You will truly be missed by all who crossed your path—from your fellow musicians to the students you’ve mentored to anyone who’s listened to your compositions. R.I.P.

—EDDIE ALLEN (trumpet)

Joe Daley could sink his teeth into any musical situation. I saw and heard him do it. This world needs more Joe Daleys.

—DAVE DOUGLAS (trumpet)

It was a privilege to perform and record many times with Joe Daley, both at my ScienSonic Laboratories studio and out on the road. Warren Smith and I had many adventures traveling with Joe in his Tuba Trio, riding in a pickup truck pulling a U-Haul trailer loaded with tims, vibes, tuba, euphonium, bass sax, drums, gongs and more (shoulda seen Joe trying to parallel park that thing in Pittsburgh, in the snow!). During at least one of those tours, Warren was writing his amazing autobiography on yellow legal pads. There were many fascinating conversations in the truck about Taj Mahal, Howard Johnson, Janis Joplin, on and on. What an incredible shared history those two had. On one long drive from Erie, PA, Joe played us quite a selection of music: Coltrane, Joe Lovano, Beethoven string quartets, Charlie Haden’s country music...all of it amazing. His tastes ran wide, and deep. Perhaps my most powerful memory of Joe was the time we arrived at a school in Athens, OH, after an eight-hour overnight drive with no food or sleep, to conduct a workshop with the student wind ensemble. Joe plunged right in, full of energy and drive, going around the room dictating parts, getting them to play lines, chords, rhythms...creating a large-scale performance piece on the spot. The results were astonishing. Joe created something incredible in no time at all, got music out of these kids that they had no idea was in them. I knew he was a retired band director but had never seen this side of him. It was a revelation.

—SCOTT ROBINSON (multi-instrumentalist)

I met Joseph Daley during the Loft jazz period in the late '70s and found him to be one of the most even-tempered human beings I have ever met. We were together in the Sam Rivers Quartet and after playing a few gigs and concerts I got to know him well. I admired Joe because in my eyes I saw a man who managed to find a balance between teaching and performing and yet held his family together. He was educated and well-versed in history. His musicianship on the euphonium and tuba were unmatched as he was able to play music that I would have thought impossible on those instruments. Joe was a perfect fit for Sam Rivers because the notes Joe chose to harmonize with Sam gave the band not only a "jazz" sound but also a symphonic one because of the timbre from his instruments. I also admired his kindness and his level-headedness under stressful circumstances: he was always calm and collected. Joe Daley will be missed.

—THURMAN BARKER (drums, vibraphone, percussion)

The passing of Joe Daley has been particularly hard for me. As I get older, I realize how small the world really is, how interconnected we all are and how quickly time passes. I think Joe understood this deeply. It's how he accomplished so much and touched so many. We first met in 1978 at the Kingsborough Community College band when I was a sophomore at the High School of Music & Art. He befriended me immediately and asked me to sit next to him in the tuba section. He was happy to know that we went to the same high school and I felt like he was always looking out for me in his quiet gentle way. Years later I would meet him again playing in Howard Johnson's legendary tuba ensemble Gravity that included Joe, Bob Stewart, Earl McIntyre and Howard, the original members from the famous Taj Mahal recording *The Real Thing*. My mind was blown to be in their presence. There was Joe, with those knowing bright eyes and that warm smile welcoming me again.

Over the years I would see him every so often. He told me he was happy to hear that I had started a Howard Johnson Ensemble at Berklee College of Music as a tribute to Howard after he had passed. He told me he was preparing for a big concert at Brooklyn's Roulette. He was writing music for a 16-piece tuba ensemble and a 12-piece French horn ensemble, which he wanted to combine for the finale. He asked if I would bring six of the members from the school ensemble. They came, excited and totally prepared. Joe was beaming, full of love and encouragement. I could see how proud he was of a new young generation of tuba players ready to deal with HIS music and concepts. It was a sight to behold and the concert was a huge success.

Joe loved the tuba. He had a legendary work ethic and reputation for not sleeping much. Getting up by 5 am to work out, compose before going to work as a full-time music teacher for over 30 years, as well as playing with so many varied musicians, from Muhal Richard Abrams, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, Carla Bley, Dave Douglas, Bill Dixon, Anthony Braxton, Hazmat Modine and many more. With all of this activity, I never got the sense that he was restless. He always seemed seated in his being. Joe had a very old soul and a deep wisdom. He had a very unique way of playing that was grounded in self-expression and taking chances. A bubbling, dancing, Afrocentric approach steeped in jazz tradition. He created counterpoint more than bass lines, loved to solo on the high-end of the tuba like his mentor Howard Johnson and was adept and not afraid to use extended techniques like multiphonics and trill melodies to get where he was going.

As much as I admired his many musical accomplishments and pored over recordings he played on, especially the Sam Rivers Tuba Trio, my relationship with him was more as friend. He was an advisor and true sage: a sentiment I'm sure I share with many. He was an elder in our tribe of tuba players. I will miss him and only wish I had the opportunity to thank him one more time and let him know how much he was loved...by so many.

—MARCUS ROJAS (tuba)

I met Joe Daley when he was still in high school, and his youthful look never changed. I watched him develop over the next few decades into the polished performer that he became. Joe had a positive effect on any event in which he participated: we always felt his artistic influence and I will never forget his presence and calm, unruffled manner. The only person on the tuba more influential than Joe is Howard Johnson, who was an inspiration to Joe, as well as to the rest of us. Joe was an individual stylist and a distinctive personality in his own right and his contribution to our music won't be forgotten. Joe Daley will always be present in my heart.

—WARREN SMITH (drums, vibraphone, percussion)

Joe Daley was a great musician and a beautiful and sensitive human being. I had the pleasure of making music with Joe when we both had the privilege of working together with the great multi-instrumentalist and composer Sam Rivers. We played in Sam's groundbreaking big band and in his quartet and it was in that quartet that we were given the opportunity and the freedom to fully explore and develop our improvisational skills. The band didn't play any written compositions and night after night the music was completely improvised on the spot. That way of making music requires developing a collective consciousness and recognizing the possibilities that each moment presents. It also requires empathy for each other, generosity and the ability to both initiate and support, all qualities that Joe embodied. When I would switch from bass to cello during the set, Joe would often take over the bass role and play some great bass lines on his tuba.

It was a joy to be on the road with Joe. Touring presents many challenges and Joe's positive energy always helped. He helped create a feeling of family in the band, which then adds to the good feeling on the bandstand. When I heard of his passing, I gave thanks for the opportunity to have known him. Quite simply, his presence made the world a better place.

—DAVE HOLLAND (bass)

Joe Daley, the consummate musician-composer. Like the capital D in his last name, DETAIL was his game! Consistently over decades, every move, every groove precise. His vision and skill set is so apparent in the extended compositions for small and large ensembles that he has left us with. These compositions are examples of that DETAIL to multiple forms able to produce a music full of life and feelings. The perfect DETAILED imperfection. Peace on to you joDa.

—CRAIG HARRIS (trombone)

With Joe Daley's passing we've lost a true prince. Madly talented but gentle and unassuming, he was deeply compassionate and unafraid to act on it. Although we didn't get to spend a lot of time together, Joe was always looking out for me. He would even call me up out of the blue regarding my various health challenges. I will be forever grateful to him. How sadly ironic that I'm still here and Joe is suddenly gone. And what an amazing body of work. After he retired from teaching, he composed and recorded *The Seven Deadly Sins*, a superb, stunningly creative big band recording that we all need to hear.

—RAY ANDERSON (trombone)

I first heard Joseph Daley on a recording with the Sam Rivers Trio with Warren Smith on percussion and Sam on saxophone and piano. I had never heard someone playing tuba with that kind of drive and flexibility. Over the years, I had the good fortune to play music with Joe. He was also a wonderful, creative composer and arranger. More than just a good musician, he was a kind human. Being around him was always an uplifting experience. He will be missed.

—WILLIAM PARKER (bass)

Joseph was a very close person to me from the first time we met in 1977, when Sam Rivers introduced us at my *John Coltrane* book release celebration at Sam's Studio Rivbea loft. We would play together on so many different projects, including at least ten of my albums. He was a very unique and beautiful individual, plus a great musician who was wonderful to work with. Joe was never the kind of guy that looked back at anything: he was always moving forward. He was the perfect individual to be in my ensembles. Once I got him, that was it—I wasn't going to let him go: if I had a gig, he was on it, period. He played the instrument as low and as high as it could go and just loved being a musician and worked extremely hard to be the best musician he could possibly be.

Joe was twelve years younger than me, and I saw him as a younger brother. His death has been a very hard thing for me. Just to realize that I am never going to be able to play with Joe Daley anymore, or to be around the man and having him as my friend. He was a saint, someone who was so pure in terms of how he approached life. When I heard that he died, I couldn't believe it, I couldn't move, I didn't know what to do. He and I had had such a wonderful relationship, both professionally and as two men going through life together. There aren't any words that could possibly describe him. Anyone who knew him talks about how gentle he was, how specific he was—always ready to play, always ready to encourage and to help. I'm just really going to miss him.

—BILL COLE (multi-instrumentalist)

Joe Daley was one of the most remarkable people I have ever known. His capacity for joy and positive affirmation of life seemed limitless. His loyalty and kindness was a beautiful thing in a world that cries out for both. His work ethic, self-discipline and talent was simply remarkable. He was just so elegant in so many ways, a person who made the world so much better with him being in it. All this from a man who had seen real tragedy and hardship, yet overcame it all with modesty, generosity and graciousness. In close to 30 years of working closely together, I practically never heard Joe complain. He also was never orthodox about creativity. He loved all kinds of music and all kinds of musicians. He never dismissed anyone or any kind of music. I was constantly astonished by how open he was musically—he always found something to like in what everyone did. His musical world involved jazz, world music, classical, avant garde, roots, you name it. He was encyclopedic and he didn't see or believe in musical boundaries or snobbery in any way.

For me, Joe was a friend, mentor, collaborator, comrade and family. I learned to be a better person by watching how he made his way through the world. We met almost by chance some 27 years ago, when I called him to do the second gig we ever did with my group Hazmat Modine. 26 years later we had traveled to over 40 countries, through thick and thin, day and night. I will miss the warmth of his smile and the twinkle in his eye, and his voice...One of his favorite words was "Outstanding!" And that absolutely he truly was.

—WADE SCHUMAN (vocals, harmonica)

I met Joe Daley in the early '70s when we were both members of Sam Rivers' big band. He was a young, quiet unassuming man and already an accomplished musician. Over the years our paths would cross, and we would hear each other in various contexts but we had not had a chance to perform together. Fast forward to 2004, when I formed my quartet IBMC and thought right away of Joe, who fortunately agreed to join. Not only was he a consummate musician, but a pleasure to work with. The last time I heard from Joe, he called me just to ask how I was doing. He was that kind of caring and compassionate person. I am honored and thankful to have known him and to have had the pleasure of making music with him.

—TED DANIEL (trumpet)