

The Boston Globe

Making connections



Stanley Sagov is a doctor, a jazz pianist, and a cook, and some of his culinary specialties are dishes he grew up eating in South Africa. (Dina Rudick/Globe Staff)

By [Devra First](#)

Globe Staff / February 25, 2009

Stanley Sagov is a family doctor who practices in Arlington, as well as the chief of family medicine at Mount Auburn Hospital and a teacher at several medical schools. He's also known as a jazz pianist. He plays two sets with the Remembering the Future Jazz Band at the Regattabar March 4, behind a new CD, "Looking Forward to Remembering the Future."

What's less known is Sagov's culinary skill, particularly when it comes to the dishes of his native South Africa. The night of the Regattabar gigs, Henrietta's Table will feature his recipe for "South African jazz curry." (Both club and restaurant are at the Charles Hotel.) We spoke with Sagov about medicine, music, food, and the connections among them.

Q. What do you like to cook?

A. There's curry, and there's also bredie, a kind of a peasant stew that's tomato-based, with or without meat. You can make it spicy. These are dishes I grew up with in South Africa. I've always loved that food. Because of an Indonesian influence, there's sweetness as well as spiciness. Until now, like my grandmother, I just cooked and tasted and never wrote any of it down.

Q. How did curries and bredies wind up in South Africa?

A. They stem from the waves of colonization. The Dutch colonized South Africa because they needed a vegetable source on long voyages. Sailors would get scurvy. They initially put Dutch citizens in the area to grow vegetables, but the fortunes of the Dutch changed, and those people stayed. The Dutch had slaves from colonies in Java, and there was a tradition of Indonesian food from the 1600s on. Then when the British took over, they brought workers from India who brought curry.

Q. What makes your dish "jazz curry"?

A. The mixture of cultures. European traditions couldn't have created it. Neither could African traditions. It's the coming together of European and African cultures. A sophisticated harmony and elaborate melodies are married to insistent, exotic rhythms. These cultures made the curry, just like they made the music what it is.

Q. What do the roles of doctor, jazz musician, and cook have in common?

A. They're sensual. Life would be bland and dull if you ate just for nutrition and didn't include loving the taste of food, having the taste remind you of places and people and events and family. In terms of medicine, if you just do it in a disembodied way, analytical and scientific, you're not going to be connecting with why it's such an important endeavor. To alleviate suffering

is informed by science but works best when it's very alive, when people feel known.

Q. Have you ever cooked professionally?

A. Never. I have a fantasy about being a short order cook in a diner. People come in for breakfast. They tell you what they want exactly, and you give it to them. That seems very enviable. With medicine, people don't want to be there. They're in pain or afraid. Short order cook is really different from being a doctor. You meet a request that's tangible and finite. That's my fantasy for a relaxing, fun alternative. People I know who do that say it's not exactly that way. They say I might be romanticizing a little.

Q. So is this curry worth coming to Henrietta's Table for?

A. The curry is great, but you should really come hear the music. ■



THE SUN CHRONICLE

Wednesday, March 04, 2009

Stanley Sagov

Regattabar



Way back when, South African-born pianist **Stanley Sagov** attended New England Conservatory, in part on the recommendation of one of his heroes, Bill Evans. Since then, Sagov's full-time career as a medical doctor has pushed jazz to the sideline, but he's been bringing it back out front lately with his Remembering the Future Jazz Band (see "Giant Steps," October 10, 2008), whose line-up boasts sax/flute man Stan Strickland, trumpeter Mike Peipman, bassist John Lockwood, and drummer Bob Moses, and he's bringing them to the Regattabar, Charles Hotel, 1 Bennett St, Cambridge | 7:30 + 10 pm | \$20 | 617.395.7757 or <http://www.regattabarjazz.com>.

NOTESTER: Let the doc prescribe something spicy

Wednesday, January 28, 2009 3:28 PM EST

If you like it spicy - and who doesn't, says The Notester - they're cooking up something special for you March 4 at Henrietta's Table at the Charles Hotel on Bennett Street in Cambridge.

On that Wednesday they're serving Dr. Stanley Sagov's special South African Jazz Curry dish as a side order, and the Sagov band will be playing at the hotel's Regattabar.

The dish is a mix of both spicy and sweet flavors combined with fresh vegetables. Think coconut, mango and yogurt, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes and other vegetables, with ginger, tumeric, coriander and garlic.

His band is Stanley Sagov & The Remembering The Future Jazz Band. Tickets for the show are 20 bucks and you get a discount at dinner. (617.661.5005)

TAB

NEWSPAPERS

He's driven to music and medicine

By Ed Symkus
Wed Feb 25, 2009, 10:58 AM EST

It was never a matter of having to choose between careers for Stanley Sagov. The South African native knew at a very early age that he had two major interests, and he was going to go after both of them.

"From the time I was about 6, I knew I wanted to be a doctor," says Sagov, who has a family medical practice in Arlington, and serves as chief of the Division of Family Medicine at Mt. Auburn Hospital. "I'd had a lot of surgeries as a child, and doctors were kind to me. And science was always interesting to me."

Sagov also started playing violin when he was 6, and he was immediately grabbed by the power and beauty of music, eventually learning to play ukulele, electric guitar, recorder, oboe and piano, and switching from straightforward classical music to playing in a rock band and eventually falling under the spell of jazz.

Sagov, sticking with the piano, performs two sets at the Regattabar in Cambridge on March 4 with his group the Remembering the Future Jazz Band.

Sitting in his Chestnut Hill home that's filled with books and CDs and comfy chairs and keyboards — I counted six pianos, including the electrics — Sagov, 64, chats about playing guitar and piano in South Africa, about working with his current bandmates,

about deciding not to go out on the road with his music, and about another of his loves: cooking.

But he first wants to clarify his position on medicine and music. He recalls his days at medical school in Capetown, and says, "I found that when there were periods of very intense medical study and apprenticeship, I would need to balance it with playing hard, as well."

Then he adds, "I'm still passionate about both things."

Sagov traces the beginnings of his serious approach toward music to the time he was playing electric guitar in a South African cover band called the High Five Plus two. At the same time, he was hanging out with some jazz players who sort of adopted him into their circle.



"I learned piano just by playing it," he says of his time with the jazz crowd. "I had a natural facility for the piano, without really knowing what I was doing. I was just listening and imitating. And I found myself more and more drawn to the piano and into the jazz thing."

With hopes of being equally successful in music and medicine, Sagov came to America upon completing his studies at Capetown Medical School and, after living in New York for a while, moved to Boston to study oboe and jazz piano at New England Conservatory.

Right after graduation, he was getting gigs left and right.

"We played opposite Gary Burton and Oscar Peterson and Dave Brubeck," he recalls. "We played Lennie's on the Turnpike, the Jazz Workshop, Paul's Mall. I was offered \$400,000 a year for the band, which sounded like a lot of money, but everything had to come out of it — travel, wages, recording. And if you wanted to keep a band together, you had to travel all the time. And I just couldn't do that."

But he did meet lots of musicians, many of whom he still plays with, four of whom — bassist John Lockwood, drummer Bob Moses, saxophonist Stan Strickland, and trumpeter Mike Peipman — will be onstage at the Regattabar gig.

"I've played with John for about 40 years," says Sagov. "And I've played with Bob and Stan and Mike since the '70s. The chemistry between us is my vision of heaven on Earth. There's a spirit of mutuality and serious fun, of being in the moment and representing close listening and responsiveness."

On the night of the gig, Sagov will bring a list of songs the band knows well, and will call out which ones to play according to his own gut feeling.

"As a band we like to keep surprising ourselves," he explains. "We have three new albums coming out, and we'll probably only play things from the most recent, which we recorded a few weeks ago. That's why I call the band Remembering the Future. It's like as soon as we've played something, it's the past, and we're on to the next place."

Upstairs in his home studio, crammed with keyboards, wires, equalizers and speakers, Sagov listens to a playback of some of those new songs — his eyes are closed and he's shaking his head and nodding to the beat.

But then he's back to talking about the upcoming shows, and that they're different from most in that they involve food.

"I've been cooking since I was a boy," he says. "I'm a very functional cook. My wife is an artist and illustrator and writer, and she's ambitious but she's very impractical. So when it comes to getting things together at the same time — so you can eat with

everything hot — that's not for her. But I can just come home and put something together, never look at a recipe. I don't do anything ambitious, I just put things in, and some of the time it comes out good."

His specialty is curry, and the Regattabar show is subtitled "South African Jazz Curry."

"I grew up eating curry as a kid," says Sagov, who has developed a couple of detailed recipes for vegetarian and meat curry.

"I sent the recipes to the chef at Henrietta's Table," he says of the restaurant that, along with the Regattabar, is in the Charles Hotel. "So people will be able to have some curry before the shows."

Stanley Sagov and the Remembering the Future Band are at the Regattabar in Cambridge on March 4 at 7:30 and 10 p.m. Tickets are \$20. Call 617-395-7757. For dinner reservations at Henrietta's, call 617-661-5005.