2010 Gail Rich Award Winners: RAY & SUE BROWN

By Wallace Baine - Santa Cruz Sentinel
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Between them, Cabrillo College music instructors Ray and Sue Brown have seen literally thousands of students coming through their classes over the years. Sue Brown has taught generations the finer points of strings — at Cabrillo, in her instruction books that are used in schools all over the country, and as the founding director of an enduring program for would-be musicians as young as 5. Her husband trumpet, songwriter and band leader Ray Brown has been a beacon of excellence in the improbably rich jazz community in Santa Cruz County, and both Browns have inspired their students not only with their know-how and professionalism, but with their energy — each leads a musical group outside their duties at Cabrillo and each is a central figure in such giant local institutions as the Kuumbwa Jazz Center, the Monterey Jazz Festival and the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. Sure, they’ve had plenty of professional musicians under their guidance over the years. But the Browns’ bigger contribution might be those who didn’t become musicians but instead became the sophisticated audiences that has sustained Santa Cruz County’s musical culture for 30 years.

A NEW ERA FOR THE GAILIES: The Gail Rich Awards have enjoyed a marvelous run at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center. But the popularity of the annual event has meant the demand for a change of venue to larger space. To that end, the event is moving to the 700-seat Rio Theatre in Santa Cruz. This year’s show takes place at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 26 at the Rio. As in past years, it's free.