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Jazznotes

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SPECIAL EDITION

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!

JOIN Relate
Be Proud Reaffirm SUPPORT
Sustain
Do Your Part
PROMOTE RENEW
MAINTAIN RESTORE Belong Connect
HELP
Be Entertained
Be a Part Of

KEEP THE MUSIC PLAYING!

The year 2020 will undoubtedly be one we will remember forever. There have been hardships, adjustments and changes to just about everything we perceived as “normal”. Many people have become unemployed and disconnected. One of the hardest hits has been musicians who are self-employed and have little to fall back on as the gigs and tips dried up. Some have gotten creative by holding virtual concerts from their homes and their basements, even with virtual tip jars! Check our website for links. Jobs for musicians will be slow in returning as we carefully ease back into being in group situations again.

West Michigan Jazz Society has felt this pinch too as **almost 200 of our members have not renewed** their memberships! This edition will hopefully spark interest in bringing them back and keep our faithful happy. Please enjoy reading this special edition of Jazz Notes to reminisce as we look back at our wonderful past and forward to a great future.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1-2 Jazz in the Park
- 3 WMJS Scholarship Program
- 4 Places We've Been
- 5-6 New member Spotlight
- 7 I Remember Jack
- 7 Silver Lining

JAZZ IN THE PARK, PRESENT AND FUTURE

PRESENT

After twenty-one years without interruption, WMJS is sad to inform you that it does not look good for this year's Jazz in the Park. After finding what seems to be a perfect permanent home for the event at Millennium Park, it looks like the coronavirus is going to force us to cancel the event in 2020. At our April Board Meeting the consensus was as follows:

- 1.) Michigan will not open to large group events before August, best case.
- 2.) When large gatherings are allowed, people 65 and over may still be in lockdown.

- 3.) Considering the age of our membership, we do not want to expose them to large crowds until testing and tracking are in place and the virus is really under control.
- 4.) The bottom line—Jazz in The Park is not worth endangering the health and safety of the audience, performers, food vendors and volunteers.

We are putting together two virtual performances featuring musicians who would have been performing at the Park. We will notify everyone ASAP of the dates, times, etc.

continued on page 2

*"Jazz is not just music, it's a way of life, it's a way of being, a way of thinking."
-Nina Simone*

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JAZZ IN THE PARK, PRESENT AND FUTURE *continued*

FUTURE

As mentioned above, we were really excited about our 2019 discovery of Millennium Park as our venue for Jazz in The Park. It has so many features and options that we've had to experiment to learn how to make the best of the opportunities it has to offer. We have finally found what we feel will become our perfect home for this event!

1. Unlimited free parking with choices for members above the amphitheater on blacktop close to restrooms or at the bottom of the amphitheater behind the stage area and food vendor area.
2. The restroom facilities are great. The park itself, including the biking and walking trails, is beautiful. Many families utilize the area which makes us accessible to a diverse group of people.
3. The amphitheater is perfect for a park. It is an engineered gradual hill that is designed so you can see perfectly over the person in front of you. However, its slight slant gives the feeling that your chair is on a flat surface, making it easy to traverse.

Since there are no chairs, people can bring their own picnic gear or blankets and sit in any kind of grouping they choose.

4. The sun is not a problem for the audience or for the performers. It is an amphitheater, so it has no trees or other obstructions to interfere with sight lines. Because of that, there is no shade. It is like being at the beach, so hats, sun lotion, etc. are needed. If you find the sun to be too daunting, you can picnic under the pavilion where you can still hear the music but not see the performers.
5. Very importantly: The Kent County Parks Dept., Kent County Parks Foundation, and the Millennium Park personnel have been extremely welcoming, helpful and supportive. They feel it is a win-win situation, they want this event there and they want us to succeed.

We will be looking forward to seeing you at fall events and at Millennium Park in 2021.

Please stay safe, friends.

-Jim Reed

AWARDS

In 2000 WMJS began to honor outstanding local musicians with a yearlong reign of being WMJS's Jazz Musician of the Year. They are presented with an honorary lifetime membership to WMJS, a wall plaque of their special edition of Jazz Notes, a desk trophy and a proclamation from the mayor that the day was officially named for them. One of the perks as a member of WMJS is you can submit a nomination of a musician you think worthy to the board musician for consideration to receive this honor.

The list of honorees: 2000 - Curt Purnell, saxophone (deceased); 2001 - Paul Keller, bass; 2002 - Mel Dalton, saxophone (deceased); 2003 - Ray Gill, saxophone (deceased); 2004 - Tim Froncek, drums; 2005

- Elgin Vines, bass; 2006 - Mary Rademacher, vocal stylist; 2007 - Tom Hagen, piano; 2008 - Steve Talaga, piano; 2009 - Dick Reynolds, piano; 2010 - John Shea, piano and vocals; 2011 - Edye Evans Hyde, vocal stylist; 2012 - Mark S. Kahny, piano, left hand bass and vocals; 2013 - Randy Marsh, drums; 2014 Max Colley III, trumpet and drums; 2015 - Mike Lutley, saxes, flute and clarinet; 2016 - Terry Lower, piano; 2017 - Robin Connell, piano; 2018 - Bob Nixon, sax, flute, clarinet and bassoon; 2019 - Fred Knapp, drums and 2020 Dr. Paul Brewer, trombone.

On June 2016 the first Bruce Early Jazz Educator's Award was presented to Max Colley II. In August 2019, the 2nd award was presented to Eric Wendlandt Sr.



As we head toward celebrating WMJS's 35th year in 2021, let us look back at some of our rich history. Concerts, Parties, Celebrations!

Where to begin...how about with a little name dropping?! From 1988 into 2000, WMJS was partnered with radio station WGVU and the St. Cecilia Music Society. During those years it was possible to book both nationally and internationally known musicians and bands. The cost to do so is now beyond our means but we can proudly recall that our stages were graced (in no particular order) the likes of Bill Charlip, Christian McBride, Kurt Elling, Phil Woods, Diana Krall, Russell Malone, The Four Freshmen, Oliver Jones, Jimmy McGriff, Etta Jones, Dave Frishburg, Gene Harris, and the Ray Brown (who was once married to Ella Fitzgerald) Trio. Since then our performances have come from a multitude of our own talented local and regional musicians, with a few Chicagoans added in for good measure.

Backtracking and moving forward...concerts were first held in people's homes until the collaboration with WGVU and St. Cecilia gave us a bigger stage.

Along with and after that there were the picnic performances, Jazz at the Zoo, membership get-togethers, Musician of the Year celebrations and holiday parties. It is almost impossible to have an accurate count of how many events have been held over our 34 years in existence, but I will try! I can account for at least 75 in the early years, plus a holiday party was held every year and since 2000 there have been 19 celebrations held for Musicians of the Year. (Hopefully, we can add Dr. Paul Brewer's party to that number in October of this year!) Every summer since 2010, WMJS hosted nearly ten summertime concerts and six fall and winter Gumbos. There were a few volunteer parties, membership parties, and a lifetime membership recognition. So, at the very least, that adds up to a whopping 437 (and probably more) musical celebrations! Not bad for an organization run by all volunteers and having less than 500 members!

BE PROUD! There is no way all this could have happened without YOU. We accomplished this together and need all of you to remain our members, supporters and friends in order to continue this rich tradition. Thank you!

WMJS's Scholarship Program, A Proud Tradition!



The first scholarship was set up in 1980 by one of WMJS's founders, Betty Forrest to honor her husband, Jimmy Forrest. She partnered with Grand Rapids Junior College and after giving out 22 scholarships, those funds were exhausted. Around 2009 Betty, along with John Miller and Jack Morrison put their heads together and set up what is now known as the WMJS's Scholarship fund. Both Jack and John donated 5 figure amounts to fund it! John's donation was about twice what Jack's was which prompted Betty to say, "what are you, a fu*king millionaire?" (Exact quote!) In subsequent years Jack added more to this fund and John guesses Jack's total donations have now exceeded his.

The scholarships have been given to one to three students each year in amounts of \$1,000 and frequently \$2,000. That's more than \$30,000 awarded to help jazz students to pursue their educations in the past 11 years!! This fund has managed and reinvested to maintain a decent balance, but donations have dwindled over the past few years. The only funds raised by WMJS are from the 50/50 drawing held at the gumbos, and from many of the generous winners who donated their prizes to the fund. Our hope is that we get an infusion of contributions so that WMJS can expand their efforts!



**"We cannot always build the future of our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."
– Franklin D. Roosevelt**

Oh, The Places We've Been!



Multiple outdoor performance venues have been utilized by WMJS over the years. Do you recall the jazz picnics that were held on the banks of the Thornapple River? How about those that took place at Caledonia's Lakeside Park on Emmons Lake for 18 years? Many of our favorite memories were made on Grand Rapid's west side at John Ball Zoo's Bandshell where we enjoyed 14 glorious years. When we were forced to move, downtown Grand Rapids at Ah-Nab-Awen Park situated on the banks of the Grand River was ours for 3 years. Having to once again move, we were fortunate to be welcomed to the beautiful Millennium Park Meadows in Walker, Michigan, our newest and hopefully permanent home.

Special membership and volunteer get-togethers happened at the Grand Rapids Ballet's Wege Theater and the SpeakeEZ Lounge. The private homes of Jim Gould, John Miller, Mark Kahny, Jerry Scott and Marcia Vandervoude have hosted memorable events.

Our Jazz Gumbo concerts have been held at The Guest House at the Kopper Top, Bobarino's in the B.O.B., Knickerbocker Brewing, the Old Goat Brewery and most recently at the Casino Club.

Although I may have missed a few, WMJS has certainly done its part to support local business!

WMJS has held events all over western Michigan in many, many indoor establishments. Search your memories for concerts that took place at Pockett's, the Harley House, Fountain Street Church, Wealthy Street Theater, Rembrandts and St. Cecelia Music Center. Do you recall being at Centennial Country Club, or the Charlevoix Country Club?

Holiday parties and Musician of the Year celebrations have happened at The University Club, Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, the Penn Club, Club East, Sayfee's, Central High School's auditorium, The Grand Ballroom, Thousand Oaks Country Club, Aquinas College's Donnelly Center, Noto's Old-World Restaurant and the Watermark Country Club.

WMJS's Progressions Jazz Series concerts took place at New Vintage, New Holland Brewing at the Knickerbocker and the Nomad Gallery.





Education in Action!

“In the Blue Jazz Ensemble” has joined WMJS under the newly added membership category of “jazz band”. They recently performed at the WMJS Holiday party and the WMJS membership drive at the SpeakEZ Lounge. The current members are Tim Grieme (sax), Steve Rothstein (guitar), Jarret Holtslag (keys), Carl Kaczmariski (bass), and Andrew Witter (drums). The band is managed by founding member and current WMJS board member, Jake Vanderheyden. They are all current GVSU students and alumni.

In the summer of 2016, they began creating music and playing gigs in the Detroit area. Jake was inspired by his peers and professors at Grand Valley State University to start the band. GVSU Jazz Studies professor Michael Drost noted, “At some point in their career, every jazz musician realizes that they have an obligation to pass on their love of music to the next generation. The West Michigan jazz scene is full of willing and talented jazz mentors. In response to this mentorship, “In the Blue Jazz Ensemble” has grown within the confines of GVSU and without.” Michael is known for the jazz jam session he hosts weekly on Tuesdays with his trio, “The New Standard”, at the Dee-Lite Bar & Grill in Grand Haven where students and professionals alike sit in. Critical to their development, members of “In the Blue” collaborated with musicians at those sessions.

Drummer Brandon Pratt, a student at Grand Rapids Community College, is also a regular at the session. “Being a part of the West Michigan jazz community has really impacted my growth as a musician. It has served as a great outlet to play and connect with others,” Brandon said. “In the Blue” now regularly plays gigs around town. “As individual musicians, they have done an amazing job studying the music and the rich tradition of jazz. As a group, they have also done a fantastic job of finding various outlets (venues, sessions, events) that offer them the opportunity to perform and hone their craft.

The theme of the stage being a “classroom” is a common one and has proven to bear much fruit for these gentlemen,” Michael Drost said. This type of education is necessary to continue the mission of WMJS in our community. GVSU alumni trombonist, Logan Vanderlaan, a past recipient of WMJS scholarship, has performed numerous times with “In the Blue” off-campus. He is going to continue his jazz education at Indiana University.

Pianist Dutcher Snedeker, an alumnus of the jazz program at GVSU, also credited similar influences in his career. “Jazz education and collaboration has been a part of my growth as a performer and my confidence as a music professional. At GVSU, I worked with professors and students on various tunes and compositions, building a repertoire of music that allowed me to go out and earn a living performing. I took my education, inspired by my work at GVSU, to Western Michigan University to pursue a master’s degree in Jazz Performance, where I was introduced to a really impressive school of music.”

Jake said that none of this would have been possible without the educational influence of another GVSU Jazz Studies professor and current WMJS Education Chair, Tim Froncek. Jake noted, “My professors were great mentors to me. I am able to continue to play jazz in my community, and now serve on the board of WMJS thanks to them” Please visit www.inthebluejazz.com for more information about In the Blue Jazz Ensemble.

WMJS educational programs directly benefit the promotion of jazz music in our community, which creates opportunities for all musicians to share their art with audiences throughout West Michigan.

-Jake Vanderheyden

The last two months the board has held their meetings on the live feed ZOOM. With technology we can do most anything.





Holland Concert Jazz Orchestra is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization formed in 2018 by Dr. Jordan VanHemert (an Associate Professor of Music at Hope College) and Jake Vanderheyden. HCJO is also a new jazz band level member of WMJS. Jordan and Jake met in 2012 while Jordan was an instructor at Jake's alma mater, Clarkston High School. Today they work together in the West Michigan jazz scene. Since its inception, the organization has developed a three-pronged approach to promoting jazz in the lakeshore region of West Michigan identified by the pillars of advocacy, education, and performance. The realm of education is critical to their mission. In addition to promoting education by performing clinics and masterclasses, the organization's

key educational initiatives include a school assembly program presented in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation of West Michigan (be nice) and an annual Jazz Soloist Festival, which was recently the recipient of a Michigan Council of Arts and Cultural Affairs grant. Previous grant winners include Judah Guerra and

Samuel Avendano, both of whom performed featured solos with the band last year. HCJO is committed to public performances of well-rehearsed, high-quality music. Committed to support up-and-coming writers, the band performed a concert of commissions by the Millennium Composers Initiative. The band frequently performs repertoire by Maria Schneider, Thad Jones, Bob Brookmeyer, Jacob Mann, and staples of the Basie and Ellington orchestras, among many others. They recently recorded with saxophonist Derek Brown (also known as 'Beatbox Sax') on an album due out this June. Please visit their website: www.hollandcjo.org for more information about their mission.

-Jake Vanderheyden



Dr. Rick Holland is a native of West Michigan who has recently returned to the area. He is a new jazz musician level member of WMJS. Rick has many jazz ensembles that have played across the nation, including the Rick Holland Quartet, the Rick Holland Little Big Band, and the Uptown Society Orchestra. Over the years he has performed with many familiar names in our area, such as John Shea, Randy Marsh, Tom Lockwood, Paul Brewer, and many others!

Rick is a versatile musician and veteran performer with musicians and organizations such as the Louie Bellson Big Band, Jimmy Dorsey, Hendrik Meurkens, Buddy De Franco, Natalie Cole, and the Terry Gibbs Big Band. Holland has now recorded seven albums as a leader and co-leader with national and international labels. His ten-piece ensemble, the Little Big Band, plays existing contemporary-mainstream jazz. While smaller than a traditional big band, the experience is similar, from the remarkable energy and wall-to-wall sound, to the awesome charts. Robert D. Rusch, President of Cadence Records remarked that: "Rick Holland's music is certainly not radical or innovative but is some of the best group playing in its genre of Jazz Bop". Rick has over 40 years of experience teaching and performing in public schools and colleges. He currently is an instructor at Maple Valley, Marshall, Northview, and Portland school districts. He has also served on the music faculties of Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College. Rick looks forward to working with upcoming students of the jazz art form and playing for audiences again soon throughout West Michigan. Please visit www.rickhollandmusic.com for more information.

-Jake Vanderheyden



I Remember Jack

I first met Jack Morrison in 2004 when I joined the Board of Directors of the West Michigan Jazz Society (WMJS). Jack was the president at that time and was riding herd over a 'contentious' board. Along with our leader, Betty Forrest, he did a remarkable job in keeping things running smoothly and believe me, that took talent and patience.

Throughout the years Jack was not only a loyal member of the WMJS, but he contributed to many of the activities. When a popular musical group proved to be above our budget, Jack subsidized the difference – many times. He was a generous donor to our scholarship fund and served on the committee choosing our recipients.

Jack's love of jazz extended beyond WMJS. He was a loyal fan of the Four Freshmen. This quartet, founded shortly after World War II, not only sang but also played the instrumentation. Throughout the years, musicians retired and were replaced by new performers with no loss of talent. Jack and his wife Mary were prominent in a national organization of Four Freshmen fans. They arranged for the group to perform here in Grand Rapids.

I will not get into Jack's business life (which was quite notable) with Morrison Equipment Co. I prefer to emphasize his love of music, and his many contributions to the WMJS. It was a pleasant surprise to see in his obituary that the first group to be mentioned for memorial contributions was the WMJS. Since our coffers are getting reduced because of the virus, this might give us a welcome boost.

All of us who knew him are enriched by his memory. And those who did not can be grateful for his contributions to the world of jazz in West Michigan.

RIP Jack, Respectfully,
John Miller, Director WMJS



Jack and Mary Morrison at one of the countless WMJS events they attended

Does Covid-19 have a silver lining?



Because most people are currently working from home, we use less plastic, print less, travel less and shop less. All these aspects have contributed in a positive way to the environment. The world has clearer skies, less pollution and our waterways are cleaner. Maybe there will be more working at home in the future so we can keep our planet healthier.

We have deepened our appreciation for people; we see teachers, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, grocery store workers, garbage collectors, bus drivers, janitors, mailmen and others, in a different light. We have a deeper understanding of community responsibility and individuals' responsibilities to community. There has been some magnificent generosity and people seem friendlier. There are phone conversations, and video chats with family and friends that we have not connected with in a while.

We have cleaned out closets and purged possessions making us think about what we truly value and how much stuff do we really need? Improvisation and creativity have suddenly become especially important. We have found our inner genius's as we have become creative in how we get things done. We are cooking more, reading more and we have learned to make masks!

Closed doors have opened our families to possibilities. Families have reconnected; family meals and game night are again a thing! Putting puzzles together and reading books are helping us appreciate this step away from the hustle and bustle of the world. Take a deep breath, be grateful you can. We will get through this, together, but six feet apart.



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If you would like your jazz event included
in our media publications please send your
schedules to jlbasham@i2k.com
by the **10th** of the month.

West Michigan Jazz Society Board Members

Board meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of each month, 6:00 pm, Cooper's Landing.

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REMINDER: ALL MEMBERSHIPS WERE DUE FOR RENEWAL ON JANUARY 1, 2020

If a dual membership, BOTH names must be listed

- Students** \$20 ☐
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