

WEST MICHIGAN JAZZ SOCIETY PRESENTS



Jazz in the Park 2025 Continues!

For years Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra has been the season closer for WMJS's Jazz in the Park Series. However, this season weather issues cancelled two of Junes' performances. Fortunately, the groups were available to rebook. On August 11th the Mark Kahny Group will be featured, and on August 18th Kevin Jones will present 10th World.

August 4 Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra

As one of the region's premier big bands, Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra has excited audiences with their bold original compositions, timeless swing classics, and everything in between. GRJO will celebrate its 50th year in 2026!



Their high-energy performances, crisp arrangements and brilliant solos have captivated audiences throughout the Midwest.

The impressive list of musicians includes co-leader Bob Nixon on saxophone, along with Mike Lutley, Greg Marsden, Jim Hayward, Craig Hribek, and Gary McCourry on baritone sax. The trombone section includes Dr. Paul Brewer, Dave Collee, Mark Wells and Paul Keen. On trumpets you'll hear David Wells, Dr. James Sawyer, Matt Sumner, Ted Craig and Nate VanderWerf. The rhythm section has Steve Talaga on piano, Tom Lockwood on bass and Eddie Eicher on drum set.



August 11 The Mark Kahny Group

Mark Kahny was voted WMJS's Musician of the Year in 2012. He is a regular solo pianist at The Old Goat, and in a variety of area groups. In the winter he can be heard in a variety of places in

Palm Springs, California. Check out MarkKahnyMusic on Facebook to follow him.

Mark Weymouth is a member of the Blue Water Kings Band, which lures him away from GR much too often. Mark continues to challenge himself. He joined Shed

Camp; he said the club gave the term "high contrast drumming," which he feels is a "power card" of sorts. As a left-handed drummer on a right-handed kit, he continues to amaze audiences with his talent.

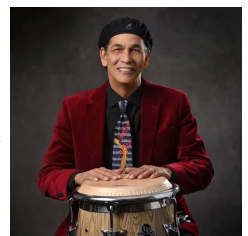
Terry O'Brien plays regularly with The Michael Drost Trio. He has added the electric wind instrument, EWI, to his saxophone collection. EWI can emulate wind instruments like flutes and clarinets, string instruments, as well as synthesized and electronic sounds, percussion, world instruments and even vocal or choir sounds. A very fun addition to his solid saxophone playing.

Guitarist Neil Gordon graduated from University of Michigan. Neil is a veteran of the Lansing and Grand Rapids jazz scenes. He has been a featured guitar performer at the Detroit Jazz Festival, the East Lansing Jazz Festival, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and with the Lansing Symphony Orchestra. Neil's jazz groups appear regularly in Grand Rapids.

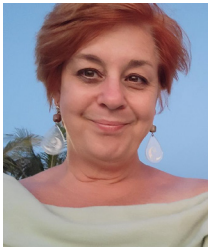
Vocalists Francesca Amari from Palm Springs, Ca, and local song stylist Amy Williams will be sitting in with the group to add their beautiful voices to this performance.

August 18 Kevin Dalton-Jones (Bujo) and 10th World

This collaboration of young talented musicians sees several personnel changes as they continue to develop their creative sounds. Kevin Jones, a practicing Buddhist, views music as a healing force. He says, "There is a parable in the Sutras about ...saving people from their suffering through music. Ultimately that is what I am about...helping others though what I do." In that respect, the album "Tenth World" certainly achieves its purpose. (Excerpt from Budd Kopman, Allaboutjazz.com)." A second recording, "Tenth World Live" has garnered much praise.



Tenth World has played many Michigan cities but also Los Angeles, New York City and Atlanta, Georgia, as well as offshore in places like Uruguay and the Bahamas.



News from the Chair

It's a busy time of year for the West Michigan Jazz Society. We're about half through our

10-week summer concert series of Jazz in the Park.

The Grand Rapids Symphony is kicking off the return of their Picnic Pops concert and will hold them at the Meadows at Millennium Park. Although their 3 concert dates are not on Mondays, I wondered how logistics would work and if it would impact our series at all. Where our concerts are free with donations encouraged, theirs is a ticketed event with prices starting at \$49 per person. Turns out our concerts will be affected but not too badly. My partner in crime and fellow board member, Kevin Hubbard, dashed over to the park and was able to speak with the event leader of the Picnic Pops. Although there is a huge fence bordering a big portion of the grassy area where most attendees park, we were assured we could use the remainder with no ill effect to them. YAY! Community collaboration at its finest! I also learned that their attendees have paid a premium to park in the paved lots near Meadows and that most of the attendees will be parking across the street and walking over. So, this minor inconvenience won't be so bad, now, will it?

Our last board meeting saw the end of two terms, both for our Secretary, Jake Vanderhyden, and our treasurer, Jim Reed. Both have served the organization tirelessly and with great vigor. Jake's stayed with us virtually despite being on California time. He's been making our 9:30 EST board meetings on Saturdays which are 6:30 AM PST. Now that's dedication! Jake's helped a great deal with social media marketing and communications. Jim Reed's service as treasurer has also been invaluable. Board members get "termed out" after serving two 3-year terms. Then a mandatory 12 months off is required before we begin begging and pleading for your return, Jim! I'm not sure how many terms he's completed but we're sure glad to be celebrating him and Peni as our 2025 Jazz Ambassadors of the Year!

25 years of Jazz in the Park and 25 years of celebrating a renown Jazz Musician is a BIG DEAL. So, mark your calendars for Tuesday, September 30th, held once again at the magical Riddle estate as we celebrate this year's award winners, Rick Reuther and Jim and Peni Reed. We'll enjoy a delicious buffet by Chef Tommy Fitzgerald, and we'll also be awarding previous MOY award winners a special name badge with their name and the year they were honored. A fine night of music is guaranteed with John Shea trio as chosen musicians for Rick Reuther. We expect others will sit in and we'll encourage them to do so. Members will receive a discount rate to attend, so reserve your spot right away.

Expect a pivot in the Fall, as we will not be hosting Jazz Gumbo at the Casino club and may not return even in 2026. These events have mostly been a losing financial proposition, and we seriously need to rethink how the WMJS will be keeping jazz alive in the non-summer months.

Until then, thank you for your continued support of WMJS and for helping us maintain our mission to Advance, Uphold and Sustain LIVE JAZZ through PROMOTION, PERFORMANCE and EDUCATION.

Shannan Denison
President West Michigan Jazz Society
Cell: 616.329.3143

*"Jazz washes away the dust of every day."
~ Art Blakey*



Board members present at Jazz in the Park for celebrating Jake's last day on the board.
Past president Michelle Needham, Jake Vanderheyden, President Shannan Denison, Kevin Hubbard, Jan Basham and Jordan VanHemert.

WMJS Jazz Ambassadors for 2025, Peni and Jim Reed

It is difficult to recount the many ways that Peni and Jim have shared their time, talents and resources with WMJS.

Both have served on the Board of Directors. Many board meetings were held at the building in which Jim rented his office. Peni served two terms, and Jim held the position of treasurer for the last 16 years! This important and time-consuming duty included filing both Federal and State tax forms and paying any fees. He made deposits and kept detailed records. He wrote checks for the various venues, the musicians, the sound man, and media, which included the web master, the graphic designer, the editor and the printer of the Jazz Notes. His monthly statements were presented at each board meeting. Arriving early at most events, he made sure the cash box, and the needed checks were there. He and Peni often helped at the check-in tables.

The summer series at Millennium Park would not be without Jim's relationship with the county board members. He set the dates for the concerts, secured the tent, the port-o-potty, hired the parking attendants and checked in with the ground keepers. Many evenings they spent counting the donations.

Jim also served on the Scholarship Committee and picked up WMJS's mail from the post office. Jim ordered and picked up the awards for Musician of the Year and Jazz Ambassadors. He acquired our various venues, drew up the contracts for them and secured the catering. The Reeds have not only attended but helped plan most of WMJS's events. Being a great organizer, Peni picked the menus and the decorations for events for many years, always arriving early to help set up.

"Their loyalty and commitment to the people and projects around them have been impressive, and their creativity notable," says former WMJS president Pete Proli. When we first met, "I had little inkling of the passion, thoughtful commitment and staying power that they both came to demonstrate. As remarkable as their talents are, it is their love of others that inspire. They are humanists in the best sense of the word."

WMJS is extremely grateful for all Jim and Peni have done to promote jazz and to help our organization to continue with the joy of sharing the music of jazz with the West Michigan community.

-Donna Kahny



In This Issue

- 1 Jazz in the Park**
- 2 News from the chair**
- 3 Jazz Ambassadors**
- 4-6 Jazz in the Park recaps**
- 7 Member Connect**

facebook.com/wmichjazz



twitter.com/wmichjazz



instagram.com/wmichjazz

Save the date!

Featuring the John Shea Trio!

WEST MICHIGAN JAZZ SOCIETY PRESENTS

JAZZ HAPPENS!

FEEL the magic

A fundraiser for WMJS to honor our Jazz Ambassadors, Jim and Peni Reed, Musician of the Year Rick Reuther, and our scholarship recipients!

RIDDLE ESTATE
SEPT 30 5:30-8:30 PM
[HTTPS://WMICHJAZZ.ORG/](https://wmichjazz.org/)

Help us make **JAZZ HAPPEN** at the Magical Riddle Estate as we honor our 2025 Musician of the Year Rick Reuther and our Jazz Ambassadors of the Year, Jim and Peni Reed.

Music provided by the legendary John Shea Trio! It's our 25th year of honoring renown Jazz Musicians and as such we'll be presenting previous award winners with a special commemorative name badge.

Tickets include a delicious dinner buffet by Chef Tommy Fitzgerald. Bar Snacks on Arrival

Get your tickets today!

Check on www.wmichjazz.org, for link for tickets and more information.
<https://westmichiganjazzsociety.wildapricot.org/event-6259300>

June 2 - NORTHVIEW HS

What is black, red and white, has 40 legs and enough talent to ensure that Jazz Music will flourish in West Michigan for many years to come? The Northview High School Jazz Ensemble, of course.

It is a tribute to instructor Greg Wells that these young musicians play far beyond their years. The mature understanding of their craft, musical knowledge and technical ability is astounding. As individual soloists (too many to name), they are all standouts. I do want to mention Marie Tyler.

Hearing a high school student "scat" was a surprise and well done. Experience certainly helps, and Northview H.S. has afforded this group plenty of it as they have traveled the USA and even as far away as Switzerland. Well done, Northview Jazz Ensemble.

ALL STAR JAZZ BAND

This collection of young musicians is made up of some of the best school instrumentalists West Michigan has to offer.



When the Festival of the Arts ended, The All-Star Band lost an important place to perform. But WMJS welcomed them to Jazz in the Park.

With limited rehearsals, they are amazingly “tight;” their sound rivals that of professionals. The brainchild of Dr. James Sawyer of Kentwood

HS (now retired) and Greg Wells of Northview HS founded the All-star band in 2016. The musicians are nominated by Band Directors from MSBOA District 10.

-Chuck Piccard



June 16 - Seulah Noh Jazz Orchestra

The West Michigan Jazz Society’s “Jazz in the Park” series featured a relative Michigan newcomer, AND first-time Jazz in the Park(er) Seulah Noh and her NohMad big band. It was such a treat to hear a tremendous, big band that was entirely unshackled from traditional swing and grandiose horn and reed arrangements, to present compositions of delicate color and light. Seulah’s classical influence of impressionism and nuance was on display this night. Her arrangements were thoughtful and inspiring. The folksy Fred Hersch composition “Heartsong” and the Buddy Rich/Horace Silver collaboration “Nutville” were impressive in scope and interpretation. Dave Holland’s “Quiet Fire” and Pat Metheny’s “Have You Heard” made my heart soar! Both are personal favorites of mine that are rarely covered.

Seulah’s band included some well-known local musicians... Allain Sullivan, AnthonyStanko, Keith Hall to name a few. They did not disappoint. It was obvious from the downbeat that these players truly believed in what Seulah was reaching for and played from the heart! Thank you WMJS for a wonderful show, a well-rehearsed big band and some very progressive arrangements. Please invite them for an encore performance next season!

-Mark Kahny



June 30 - Tom Knific Quintet

It was a sultry evening for Jazz in the Park for the wonderful world tour that Tom Knific and his band took us on. Our tour guides consisted of Tom on bass, Lisa Sung on keys, Jeff Shoup holding down the drums, and Jordan VanHemert blowing the tenor sax.

show, so I can only add, that at the very least all four of these jazz musicians are among some of the best in the state. If you get a chance to experience them and join in on this amazing musical journey, don’t hesitate.

-Kevin Hubbard

Tom’s group presented a few originals along with many wonderfully arranged tunes. We explored Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and our continent through the eyes, ears, and stories of Mr. Knific and his far-flung musical ministry. Something ate my notes from that





July 7 - Benje Daneman & Kanola Band

Millennium Park shook off its sleepy suburban veneer when the Kanola Band unleashed its brass-fueled charm for the West Michigan Jazz Society's Jazz in the Park series. This wasn't your grandmother's

Sunday concert, it was a full-body experience. With call-and-response antics as tight as their harmonies, the band didn't just play to the crowd, they played with it. A tribute to Louie Prima became a swaggering stomp through NOLA's alleyways, channeling that infectious blend of swing, sass, and second-line strut that only Kanola can summon.

Their hip-bone-connected-to-the-funk-bone energy transported a few hundred wide-eyed park dwellers

to a place far richer in humidity, horn solos, and sheer musical mischief. If transgression means poking holes in passive listening, Kanola's guilty as charged—and graciously absolved.

It was a communal dance disguised as a jazz set, and no one walked away unchanged (or entirely upright). Bravo, Kanola: long may your crescendos defy the lawn chairs.

Cheers.

It's Juan Daniel. I'm not the Juan!



July 14 – Olivia Van Goor Quartet

If the gorgeous evening with warm, gentle breezes weren't enough, this skillful quartet provided us with the perfect way to relax and start our week; with innovative arrangements, excellent solos, and of course, the smooth, velvety voice of Olivia Van Goor! Her talented trio included Mike Harrison on piano, Alex Hoberty on bass and Yuriana Sobrino Garcia on drums. You know you're in for a treat when the first song is "Lady Be Good," complete with playful scats, a slick bass solo by Alex, and Olivia 'trading eights' with Yuriana on drums!

This adventurous group was not afraid to break out of the expected genre, evidenced by their cover of Michael Jackson's "Human Nature." Arranged in a very challenging meter, 5/8 or 7/8? Which had some of us guessing! She took a Bacharach tune, made famous by the Carpenter's, "Close to You," and unequivocally made it her own, wrapping it in a romantic, bass-driven, jazzy blanket.

Also, it was obvious that she is no stranger to Musical Theater as she made a place for them in this jazz set. The showtunes included Wizard of Oz's "Over the Rainbow," Music Man's, "Til There

was You," and "Almost Like Being in Love" from Brigadoon. They even turned the iconic "The Sound of Music" into a Bossa Nova!!

She did a heartfelt shoutout to a fellow vocalist, Junghwa, whom she met in South Korea, by singing her lovely original, "What Love Feels Like." I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that they gave us a smooth rendition of the Cannonball Adderly tune "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy." Which reminded us that "Mercy is for all mankind," and that when we forgive, we all are free. What a nice message to set the tone, as we gathered to share this music on this magical summer day. We are thankful to the entire band for sharing their talents with us.

-Amy Abramajtys



Member Connect

Let us celebrate your special days with you. Send your birthday and anniversary dates to grjazzzer@gmail.com, by the 15th of the month before your celebration days. Let's celebrate together!

Grateful volunteers

On a gloriously sunny summer afternoon, volunteers and potential volunteers were treated to a beautiful party on the decks of Marcia Vander Woude. Kudos to her for opening her home, allowing us to enjoy the sweeping vistas of Lake Michigan.

We were entertained by one of the most promising young jazz piano trios in west Michigan. Judah Guerra played bass and sang, (who knew? Last I heard him, he was playing trombone) Chris Corey Jr. on drums and Cormack Avila on keyboard.

Judah has just completed an album, "Student of the Way", with an unbelievable lineup of musicians, coming soon.

The evening was complete with a champagne toast from President Shannan Denison where she repeated the words of West Michigan Jazz Society's mission "to advance, uphold and sustain live jazz in west Michigan through promotion, performance and education."



Stephanie Hicks, and
Dr. Dan Olman



Shannan Denison, Kevin Hubbard,
Laura Ohlman, Jan Basham, Kurt Ehinger



The CJC Band

Our condolences go out to the Tim Froncek family on the passing their wife, mother and grandmother. She departed this world with a sense of calmness surrounded by the family. RIP Mary Beth Froncek.

New and Renewed Members

Dave & Kelly Arganbright
Jim & Gini Cooper
Camille Donnelly
Madeline Heibel
Regina Johnston

Murray Leshner
Wilbert & Gloria Russau
Jim & Nancy Walters
Lee Westervelt
Bruce Young

**Attention! The music schedules will now only be posted on line at www.wmichjazz.org
Make sure to read "News from the Chair", which contains important information.**



WMJS Member Lynn Greening with
Ravi Coltrane (son of John) in NYC.

Remember to notify
wmjasmembership@gmail.com
of any change of address by the
first of the month BEFORE the change will
take place so you don't miss out
on any issues of Jazz Notes!



MOVING?

P.O. Box 150307
Grand Rapids, MI 49515



NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT # 953

Jazznotes

Newsletter for members of the West Michigan Jazz Society

August/September 2025

If you would like your jazz event included
in our media publications please send your
schedules to Donna Kahny,
grjazz@ gmail.com
by the **15th** of the month.

West Michigan Jazz Society Board Members

Board meetings are now held virtually on Google Meet. 4th Saturday
of each month, 9:30 am, If anyone wants to view them they can ask for the link

WMJS main number . . . 616-490-9506

Email . . . info@wmichjazz.org

Shannan Denison – President, Laura Ohman – Vice President

Other Staff: Michelle Needham, Sam Needham and Jake Vanderheyden

Kevin Hubbard, Jordan VanHemert, Jan Basham, James Sawyer

This Issue of Jazz Notes
was produced by:
Editor: Donna Kahny

Staff:
Donna Kahny, Lynne
Gorman Biernacki,
Jan Basham, Kevin
Hubbard

Photography: Bruce
Robey, Michele
Needham, Laura
Ohlman, Donna Kahny

Writers: Donna Kahny,
Mark Kahny, Juan Daniel,
Amy Abramajtyts, Chuck
Piccard, Kevin Hubbard

LK Creative Design,
Graphic Design and
Production

Printed by Storr Printing

Website Design and
Maintenance by Van Wyk
Technology Consulting
LLC.

If a dual membership, BOTH names must be listed

- Students** \$20 ☐
- Student Musician** \$20 ☐
- Single** \$35 ☐
- Individual Jazz Musician** \$35 ☐
- Couple** \$50 ☐
- Donor** \$100 ☐
- Jazz Band** (2-4 members) \$100 ☐
- Patron** \$250 ☐
- Featured Jazz Venue** \$250 ☐
(\$250 or equivalent product donation)
- Benefactor** \$500 ☐
- Sponsor** \$500 ☐
(\$500 minimum donation
or equivalent product donation)
- Donation Only** \$ _____ ☐

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

Phone _____

Interested in volunteering? ☐

Receive JazzNotes by e-mail ☐ or by mail ☐

Detach and mail with check made payable to

West Michigan Jazz Society

P.O. Box 150307, Grand Rapids, MI 49515

616-490-9506

(or join online)

wmichjazz@gmail.com

August/September 2025