



The East Kentwood Jazz Band at Jazz in the Park on June 1, 2026. See more photos inside.

Pg. 2

The Wound That Sings: Jazz and Juneteenth

Pg. 4

Jazz in the Park Information

Pg. 5

Jazz Around West Michigan

Pg. 6

Jazz in the Park Photo Scrapbook

News from the Chair



Shannan Denison

Summer is officially underway, and what a wonderful start it has been for the West Michigan Jazz Society.

Our 26th season of Jazz in the Park kicked off with a fantastic evening at

Millennium Park featuring the East Kentwood High School Jazz Band and the MSBOA District X All-Star Jazz Band. If you were there, you know – the energy in that park was something special. Their talent and enthusiasm set the tone for what I think is going to be a really

outstanding season. We were also thrilled to announce this year's WMJS Scholarship recipients, awarding two \$1,000 scholarships to young musicians who truly represent the future of jazz in our community. That moment always means a lot to me personally.

Education has always been at the heart of what we do. This month I had the pleasure of partnering with our Vice President of Education, Laura Ohman, to lead a Jazz Education Workshop at Camp Blodgett. Nineteen campers, ages 9 to 17, spent the week exploring the history, creativity, and spirit of jazz. One of my favorite moments was helping each student create their own "Royal Jazz Name" – inspired by the legendary titles of jazz royalty like Duke

Ellington, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, and Louis Armstrong. Watching them make that connection, between those historic figures and themselves as young musicians, was genuinely moving. Jazz emerged as America's original art form, and passing that story on to the next generation is something I don't take lightly.

I do want to be honest with you about something, though.

Jazz in the Park remains free to attend because of the generosity of our sponsors, donors, members, and volunteers – and we are so grateful for that support. But this year we're facing a significant funding gap.

Continued on next page

News from the Chair (Cont.)

The costs of presenting live music at this level keep rising, and we really do need additional sponsors and individual donations to keep this tradition going strong.

If Jazz in the Park matters to you, please consider making a contribution. Whether it's \$25, \$100, or whatever fits your situation, every dollar helps us continue bringing live jazz to West Michigan while supporting programs like our scholarships and youth workshops.

We also need volunteers. Specifically, we're looking for people willing to:

- Display a Jazz in the Park lawn sign in a highly visible location.

- Help place and retrieve concert signs throughout the community.
- Assist with our Bucket Brigade during concerts to collect donations.
- Help greet attendees at our information table.
- Support membership, sponsorship, marketing, education, and event committees.

If you've been wondering how to get more involved beyond attending concerts, this is your chance. Even a few hours of your time makes a real difference – I've seen it firsthand.

And the simplest thing? Keep showing up. Bring a friend, introduce someone new to jazz, help us grow. Every person sitting in a lawn chair is another reason we keep doing this.

Together, we can make sure Jazz in the Park and the programs that support young musicians continue for a long time to come.

Thank you for your membership, your generosity, and for caring about live jazz in West Michigan.

See you at the park.

Shannan Denison
President, West Michigan Jazz Society

The Wound That Sings: Jazz, Juneteenth, and the Architecture of Black Freedom

Juneteenth reminds us that freedom never arrives clean. Two and a half years separated Lincoln's proclamation from the moment enslaved people in Galveston, Texas heard the news. That gap – that deliberate withholding – contains the entire logic of anti-Black governance in America. We wrote these words on June 19th, inside that reminder, so that the weight of the calendar remains present as you read this in July.

Jazz emerged from that same structural delay.

Most historians zoom in: they find New Orleans, find Congo Square, find the convergence of Creole and African musical vocabularies around 1900. These things matter. But the macro view reveals something starker. Jazz didn't simply arise from culture. It arose from a system that simultaneously extracted Black labor and criminalized Black assembly. When the state prohibited the drum, the body became the drum. When vagrancy laws made movement dangerous, the blues made movement into theology. When segregation enforced silence in public life, the bandstand became a parliament.

Tricia Rose's *Black Noise* – written about hip-hop but theoretically portable across the full arc of Black sonic tradition – argues that Black music operates as a "condition

of possibility" within impossibility. Jazz functioned identically. The structural genius of improvisation lay not in spontaneity for its own sake, but in what it rehearsed: collective negotiation, radical presence, the refusal of a predetermined script. A Jim Crow society demanded the exact opposite – legibility, deference, and silence from Black bodies.

This matters for those of us in West Michigan who gather monthly around this music. Jazz didn't arrive in our concert halls and listening rooms as pure aesthetic pleasure, though it rewards us aesthetically. It arrived carrying its entire history – the juke joints, the migration north, the union halls, the after-hours rooms where Black musicians worked after white

venues closed their doors to them. Grand Rapids itself held those rooms.

To love jazz without that context means loving the sound while unhearing the speech.

Juneteenth teaches us that knowing the truth and living free inside that truth remain two different projects. Jazz understood this long before the holiday did. It never waited for official permission to practice freedom. It built freedom, phrase by phrase, in real time, before an audience that desperately needed proof that such a thing remained possible.

That proof still sounds. We still need it.

Juan Daniel Castro
Board member and editor



Emancipation Day Celebration band, June 19, 1900, Texas

Musician of the Year 2026

Save the date:

**Tuesday, September 8 | 6–9 PM |
Fountain Street Church**

We have our honoree!

West Michigan Jazz Society announces
Cherie Lynne Hagan as our 2026 Musician of

the Year – and we couldn't be more proud to say her name first right here.

Mark your calendar. Dinner, live music, and a celebration forty-plus years in the making.

Ticket information and RSVP details coming in the August issue of Jazz Notes.



A Note of Gratitude: Jordan VanHemert



After six years of dedicated service, Jordan VanHemert steps down from the West Michigan Jazz Society Board of Directors this month. We mark this transition with deep appreciation and a full accounting of what he brought to this organization.

Jordan served not as a passive board member but as a working one – logging countless hours in education outreach, artist booking, event logistics, and strategic consultation, all without compensation and without personal agenda. His only interest was the mission.

What made his contribution exceptional was the depth behind it. Jordan brings to this work a doctorate in music from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, an

active international career as a saxophonist, composer, and bandleader, and a long record of jazz advocacy – including his role as Music Director of the Holland Concert Jazz Orchestra and recognized work in diversity, equity, and inclusion across Michigan's music community. He did not simply lend his name to our board. He lent his expertise, his network, and his time.

West Michigan Jazz Society is a stronger organization because Jordan VanHemert chose to invest in it. We wish him well as he continues performing, recording, and advocating for this music we all love.

With sincere gratitude from the Board and membership of the West Michigan Jazz Society.

- Students** \$20
- Single** \$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** \$_____

Become a member of WMJS

Name		
If a dual membership, BOTH names must be listed		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Email		
Phone		

**Interested in
volunteering for
the WMJS?**

**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**



Jazz in the Park!

WEST MICHIGAN JAZZ SOCIETY PRESENTS

JAZZ IN THE PARK

Each Monday night, our community comes together for incredible live jazz, connection, and summer fun—with attendance averaging 500–1,200 guests weekly and a growing audience year-over-year.

Address: 1415 Maynard Ave SW, Walker, MI

Remaining Lineup

July 6

Tom Allport Band

July 13

Eddy Curtis: Tribute to Chet Baker

July 20

Third Coast Swing

July 27

Sunny Wilkinson Quartet

August 3

GRJO

August 10

Rain Makeup Date

August 17

Rain Makeup Date

Sponsorship Opportunities

Program Sponsor — \$5,000 (2 Available)

Our premier sponsorship level includes:

- Full-page ad in the summer concert program
- Prominent logo placement throughout the season
- Recognition in social media, print, radio, and press releases
- Reserved VIP seating for 25 guests
- Full-season visibility across the entire series

Concert Sponsor — \$1,000 (10 Available)

Includes:

- Featured sponsorship of one concert
- On-site business presence (table/tent)
- Half-page ad in the program
- Stage banner logo placement
- Recognition in promotional materials

Friends of Jazz — \$500

Includes:

- Website recognition
- Half-page ad placement in the concert program



No car? No worries. A ride to the music is available.

Whether you don't drive, can't drive, or simply don't have a car — you can still enjoy Jazz in the Park every Monday evening this summer.

The Rapid's PASS Service (Passenger Adaptive Suburban Service) offers a curb-to-bus-stop shuttle that connects you to the concert and back home again. All vehicles are wheelchair accessible. Fare is just \$3.50, which includes your return transfer.

- Concert hours: 6:30 – 8:30 PM
- Return bus departs: approximately 8:45 – 9:00 PM

How to ride:

1. Register for eligibility at ridetherapid.org or call **616 774-1153**
2. Schedule your ride by 4:30 PM the day before the concert
3. Get picked up at your curb — and brought back the same way

Need door-to-door assistance? Ask about GO!Bus service when you call. **Questions? Contact The Rapid at 616-774-1153**

Jazz Around West Michigan

Venue address is provided the first time it is listed. All events in Grand Rapids are free of charge unless noted. Schedules are always subject to change, so please check with venue or artist. Changes will be noted by date*

Repeating weekly events

Every Sunday

Fred Knapp Trio at the Old Goat, 2434 Eastern Ave SE, 11am-2pm

Live Music at the Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Every Monday

John Shea Trio at Carolina Lowcountry Kitchen, 2213 Wealthy St SE, 6:30-9:30pm

WMJS Jazz in the Park 1415 Maynard Ave SE Walker, MI 6:30-8:30pm (See Pg. 4)

Mark Kahny at the Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Every Tuesday

Mark Kahny at the Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Every Wednesday

John Shea Trio at Social House, 25 Ottawa NW, 6-9 pm

Dutcher Snedeker at the Old Goat, 6-9pm

Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-9pm

Every Thursday

John Shea Trio at Sundance Grill, 151 Ottawa Ave NW, 6-9pm

Live Music at the Old Goat, 6-9pm

Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, 6-9pm

Every Friday

Live Music at the Old Goat, 6-9:30pm

Third Coast Swing at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30

Mark Kahny at Testa Rossa, 9-11pm in Duck's Nest (back room)

Every Saturday

John Shea Trio at Noto's, 6-9 pm

Third Coast Swing at the Old Goat, 6-9:30pm

July 2026 Schedule

Wednesday, July 1

Summer Jazz at The Block, Tim Froncek and Friends, 7:30pm

Thursday, July 2

Keith Hall Summer Drum Intensive final concert at Byron Center High School - Van Single Auditorium, 6:30 pm (Free)

Sunday, July 5

Kevin Cavanaugh & Rick Reuther at Testa Rossa, 5:00-8:00 PM

Mark Kahny at Lucy's, Grand Haven, 4-7pm

Monday, July 6

First Monday Jazz Jam! 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Tulip City Bar & Grill in Holland. First set by Holland Concert Jazz Quartet

Thursday, July 9

Lakeshore Big Band at Mill Point Park, Spring Lake, 7-8:30pm

Mark Kahny at Lucy's, Grand Haven, 12-3pm

Saturday, July 11

Francesca Amari w/Mark Kahny, Dogwood Center, Fremont, 7:30pm, Different Drum: the Music of Linda Ronstadt

Mary Rademacher, Chris Corey and Cherie Lynn at JW Marriott, 6-10pm

Sunday, July 12

GRJO, Friesian Horse Farm, 5:30 - 7:30

Mark Kahny at The Old Goat, 5:00-8:00pm

Rick Reuther at the Holiday Bar Patio, 1-4pm

Mary Rademacher and Hagens at Testa Rossa, 4pm

Monday, July 13

Mark Kahny at Lucy's, Grand Haven, 12-3pm

Wednesday, July 15

Summer Jazz at The Block, Tim Froncek and Friends, 7:30pm

Thursday, July 16

Francesca Amari w/Mark Kahny, Grand Lady Riverboat, Jenison, 6:30-8:30pm cruise

Friday, July 17

Tiffany Gridiron Trio at Red Cedar Spirits in East Lansing

Sunday, July 19

GRJO, Founders Brewery, 5:30-7:30

Michigan Jazz Festival at Schoolcraft College www.michiganjazzfestival.org

Seulah Noh Jazz Orchestra 3:45pm

Andrew Rathbun Quartet, 6:15pm

Tuesday, July 21

Truth In Jazz Orchestra at Teddy Spaghetti's, 513 W Pontaluna, Norton Shores, 7:30pm, \$10/cover, students free

John Shea Trio at Real Seafood Co., 6-9 pm

Friday, July 24

John Shea Trio at Horrocks Market, 5-8 pm

Monday, July 27

Tom Allport Big Band at Off the Chain Brewstillery, 1434 Colfax, Grand Haven, 2-5pm

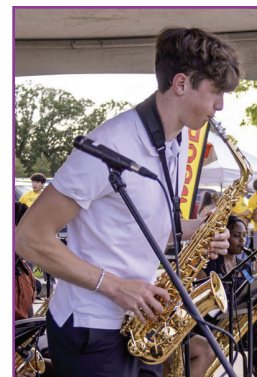
Wednesday, July 29

Summer Jazz at The Block, Tim Froncek and Friends, 7:30pm

Michael Dease with Keith Hall, Blue Llama Jazz Club, Ann Arbor

Jazz in the Park Scrapbook

East Kentwood Jazz Band and District 10 All-Stars - June 1



Jazz in the Park Scrapbook (Cont.)

East Kentwood Jazz Band and District 10 All-Stars - June 1



Jazz in the Park Scrapbook (Cont.)

Cliff Metcalf Trio, June 15, 2026



WEST MICHIGAN
JAZZ SOCIETY

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If you would like your jazz event included in our media publications please send your schedules to:

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nominations@wmichjazz.org
by the 15th of the month

616-490-9506

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