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News from the Chair



Shannan Denison

The West Michigan Jazz Society is heading into one of the most exciting times of the year as we launch the 26th season of **Jazz in the Park at Millennium Park** on June 1st.

We're thrilled to kick off the summer with performances by the **East Kentwood High School Jazz Band and the MSBOA All-Star Jazz Band**, showcasing the incredible talent and future of jazz in our region. It's always inspiring to see young musicians take the stage and continue the rich tradition of jazz in West Michigan.

We also recently concluded another successful season of **Tuesday Night Jazz at the Fountain**. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all of the musicians, volunteers, members, and audience supporters who made the series such a success. We closed the season in style with a wonderful performance by Rick Reuther, our 2025 Musician of the Year.

One of the highlights of the evening was announcing our **2026 Musician of the Year**, selected by WMJS members: **Cherie Lynn Hagen**. Cherie's dedication, musicianship, and contributions to the West Michigan jazz community make her a truly deserving recipient of this honor. Congratulations also go out to all of this year's nominees, whose talent and commitment continue to strengthen and enrich our local jazz scene.

June 1st will also bring another exciting announcement as we introduce our 2026 WMJS Scholarship winners. Supporting young musicians remains one of the most important parts of our mission, and we look forward to recognizing these outstanding students.

On Juneteenth, WMJS will once again partner with Camp Blodgett for a special jazz concert along the lakeshore. This event continues to be a meaningful celebration of music, community, and culture, and we warmly invite all WMJS members to join us for the festivities.

Looking ahead, we're already planning a special celebration honoring Cherie Lynn Hagen as our 2026 Musician of the Year this fall. More details will be announced soon, so stay tuned.

Continued on next page

News from the Chair (Cont.)

Thank you for your continued support of the West Michigan Jazz Society. Your membership, attendance, volunteerism, and enthusiasm help keep jazz thriving in our community. We look forward to seeing you this summer at Jazz in the Park!

Thank you for being part of this remarkable community. Whether you attend a concert, renew your membership, or simply share your love of jazz with others, you help keep the music alive.

With gratitude and swing,

Shannan Denison

President, West Michigan Jazz Society

Letter from the Editor



Juan Daniel Castro

The jazz world lost one of its last true giants last week.

Sonny Rollins, the legendary tenor saxophonist known around the world as the “Saxophone Colossus,” died on May 25 at his home

in Woodstock, New York, at the age of 95.

Born in Harlem in 1930, Sonny came up in a neighborhood soaked in the sounds of Coleman Hawkins, Thelonious Monk, and Bud Powell. He started on piano, switched to alto, then found his true voice on tenor by his late teens. Before he was even out of his twenties, he was already trading ideas with Charlie Parker, recording with Miles Davis, and cutting tracks alongside Monk. That raw fire and curiosity never left him.

By the mid-1950s, he was in full bloom. *Saxophone Colossus* (1956) remains one of those records that every serious jazz fan owns for a reason — it captured a player who could swing with authority, dig deep into calypso rhythms on “St. Thomas,” and stretch a simple melody into something profound. Around the same time came *Way Out West*, where he ditched the piano for a sax-bass-drums trio and showed everyone how much space and freedom you could find in that format. His originals like “Oleo,” “Doxy,” and “Airegin” quickly became standards that we still call on jam sessions today.

Sonny was never content to coast. He walked away from the scene more than once — most famously in the late ’50s and early ’60s — to woodshed on the Williamsburg Bridge, searching for something deeper in his sound. When he came back with *The Bridge* in 1962,

it was clear the time away had only sharpened him. He kept evolving through the decades, always chasing new ideas, whether it was engaging with the avant-garde in the late ’60s or blending in elements that kept his music alive and breathing into his 80s and beyond.

He leaves behind more than sixty albums as a leader, a stack of honors that includes the Kennedy Center Honors, the National Medal of Arts, and multiple Grammys. But more than any trophy, Sonny gave us a model for what a jazz life can look like: restless, honest, and utterly committed to the moment.

In West Michigan’s jazz community, his influence has always been present — in the way we approach improvisation, in the respect we give the tradition while refusing to freeze it in place. He was the last living link to that golden generation captured in the famous 1958 *A Great Day* in Harlem photo.

We’ll miss the man, but his sound isn’t going anywhere. It’s in every bold chorus, every time someone steps up on the bandstand and decides to tell their own story. In West Michigan, that spirit shows up every Monday



Sonny Rollins

night at Millennium Park, every Tuesday at the Fountain, every time a young musician finds the nerve to stretch a melody past where they planned to stop.

Rest in power, Saxophone Colossus.

Juan Daniel Castro

Jazz in the Park Returns!



We're excited to continue one of Grand Rapids' favorite summer traditions at Millennium Park!

Each Monday night, our community comes together for incredible live jazz, connection, and summer fun—with attendance averaging

2026 Concert Lineup

June 1

East Kentwood +
MSBOA All Stars

June 8

Jeff Shoup Quartet

June 15

Jordan VanHemert
Band + Featured
Guests

June 22

Grupo Aye

June 29

Big Band Nouveau

July 6

Tom Allport Band

July 13

Tribute to Chet Baker

July 20

Third Coast Swing

July 27

Sunny Wilkinson
Quartet

August 3

GRJO

August 10

Rain Date

August 17

Rain Date

500–1,200 guests weekly and a growing audience year-over-year.

We are now welcoming sponsors, advertisers, and community supporters for the 2026 season (see below).

Address: 1415 Maynard Ave SW, Walker, MI

No Car? No Problem.



A ride to the music is available for everyone.

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 PASS 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

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

Jazz Around West Michigan

Venue address is provided the first time it is listed. All events in Grand Rapids and 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

Jazz Jam starts June 14 at Speciation

Every Monday

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

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

Every Tuesday

Live Music 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

Robin Connell or 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

June 2026 Schedule

Monday, June 1

Robin Connell at The Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

First Monday Jazz Jam! at the Tulip City Bar and Grill in Holland, HCJQ 6:30-8:30pm

Tuesday, June 2

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

Wednesday, June 3

Walt Gutowski and the Bridge Street Band at the Bostwick Lake Inn, 6-8:30pm

Mary Rademacher and Chris Corey at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30pm

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

Thursday, June 4

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

Friday, June 5

Robin Connell at Testa Rossa, 9-11pm

Tiffany Gridiron Quartet at Urban Beat in Lansing, 7pm

Holland Concert Jazz Orchestra [HCJO]

at Jazz for Justice, All Saints Church in Saugatuck, 5:30 p.m. Free admission

Sunday, June 7

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

Mary Rademacher & Hagen's at Testa Rossa, 4-7pm

Monday, June 8

Keith Hall Grad Student Super Group and Jam Session, Apoptosis Brewery, Kzoo, 6-9pm, Free Admission

Robin Connell at The Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Tuesday, June 9

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

Robin Connell at The Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Wednesday, June 10

Neil Gordon and Tiffany Gridiron at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30pm

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

Thursday, June 11

Mary Rademacher & Mark Kahny at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30pm

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

Friday, June 12

Mark Kahny at Testa Rossa (back room), 9-11pm

Saturday, June 13

Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra at Saugatuck Women's Club, 303 Butler, 7:00 – 8:30pm

Sunday, June 14

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

GRJO, Friesian Horse Farm, 10388 Kalamazoo Ave, Caledonia, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Mary Rademacher & Hagens at Testa Rossa, 5-8pm

Jazz Jam at Speciation, 928 Wealthy SE, 5-8pm

Monday, June 15

Robin Connell at The Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Tuesday, June 16

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

Robin Connell at The Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Wednesday, June 17

Sears and Sears Quintet at Wenger Pavilion, Baldwin, 7-9pm

Neil Gordon and Tiffany Gridiron at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30pm

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

Thursday, June 18

Holland Concert Jazz Orch and the Holland Symp Orch, Pops at the Pier concert at the Eldean Shipyard, 6pm HCJO, 7pm HSO

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

Friday, June 19

Robin Connell at Testa Rossa (back room), 9-11pm

Saturday, June 20

Mary Rademacher, Mark Kahny & Cherie Lynn at JW Marriott, 6-10pm

Sunday, June 21

GRJO, Founders Brewery, 235 Cesar Chavez Ave SW, 5:30-7:30

Jazz Jam at Speciation, 5-8pm

Rick Reuther and the Tom Hagen Trio on the Grand Lady Riverboat, 1-3 PM, reservations at www.grandladyinfo.com

Monday, June 22

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

Tuesday, June 23

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

Wednesday, June 24

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

Neil Gordon and Tiffany Gridiron at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30pm

General Assembly Big Band at Village Green, Pentwater, 7-9pm

Thursday, June 25

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

Rick Reuther and Chris Corey at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30pm

Friday, June 26

East Lansing Summer Solstice Jazz Festival, <https://www.eljazzfest.com/>

Keith Hall Brazilian Jazz Trio, 5:30-6:30pm

Mark Kahny at Testa Rossa, 9-11pm

Saturday, June 27

East Lansing Summer Solstice Jazz Festival, <https://www.eljazzfest.com/>

Neil Gordon and Tiffany Gridiron at JW Marriott, GR, 6-10pm

Sunday, June 28

Mark Kahny w/Francesca Amari, at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30pm

Jazz Jam at Speciation, 5-8pm

Monday, June 29

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

WMJS Around Town

Jazz at the Fountain, April 28, 2026: Mary Rademacher and Friends (Cherie Hagen, Tom Hagen and Tommy Davis).



The Back Page Gallery

Jazz at the Fountain, May 26, 2026: Rick Reuther (With Cherie Hagen, Tom Hagen and Chris Corey).



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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

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