JazzNotes

WEST MICHIGAN JAZZ SOCIETY

October 2026 | www.wmichjazz.org

Lafayette Gunter Jr at Horrocks Market on Sept. 25

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News from the Chair

Shannan Denison

What a night we had at Fountain Street Church! Our Musician of the Year celebration brought together friends, family, musicians, and jazz lovers to honor Cherie Lynn Hagen. You could feel how much Cherie means to this community in every conversation, every note of music, and every person who came to celebrate her.

Grand Rapids Mayor David LaGrand made the occasion even more memorable by commemorating the day in Cherie's honor. If you'd like to revisit the celebration, or share it with someone who couldn't attend, check out the video on the WMJS website.

Events like this happen because people generously give their time and talents. Thank you to every volunteer who helped welcome guests, prepare the room, keep the evening moving, and clean up afterward. And a big thank you to Tommy and Ainsley Fitzgerald for providing such wonderful food. They also donated two pizza parties, with proceeds benefiting WMJS. We're grateful for their delicious and generous support!

Kevin Hubbard and I represented WMJS at Camp Blodgett's celebration of a successful summer camp season. It was a pleasure to hear about the campers' experiences and celebrate what they learned. Earlier in the summer, Laura Ohman and I led the jazz camp, giving young people a chance to explore rhythm, listen to one another, and make music together. Camp Blodgett emphasizes STEM activities, and jazz offers a lively way to discover patterns, timing, and creative problem solving. Introducing children to jazz is one of the most rewarding parts of our work.

The music continues this fall. Please join us for Jazz at the Fountain on October 20, featuring Mike and Edye Evans Hyde. Come enjoy the performance and bring someone who might be discovering our jazz community for the first time.

We're also looking forward to gathering at Noto's for our holiday party on December 10th, with a band featuring Cherie Lynn Hagen. To help cover the costs of the party, we'll hold a silent auction—and this is where you can join the fun. Would you donate a stay at your time share or offer an experience another jazz member would love? A dinner, a class, a local outing, or a talent you'd be willing to share could become one of the evening's most memorable auction items.

Thank you for celebrating our musicians, encouraging young listeners, and making room for live jazz in West Michigan. I look forward to seeing you at the Fountain!

Shannan Denison
President
West Michigan Jazz Society

What the Drum Carried

Juan Daniel Castro

There's a map the official history of jazz never bothered to draw.

You can find traces of it in shipping ledgers and passenger manifests from steamships crossing the Gulf of Mexico in the late 1800s. Those ships ran regularly between Havana, Progreso on the Yucatán coast, and New Orleans. They carried cargo and mail and whatever else the trade required. They also carried musicians, rhythms, and the living memory of African sound—sound that had taken root differently in each port and was now, just by the fact of all that maritime traffic, starting to speak to itself across open water.

Alain Derbez has spent decades recovering what that map shows. The Mexican writer, historian, and jazz scholar has worked from the pages of El Jazz en México, from years of radio, from long conversations with musicians all over the hemisphere. His argument is one the standard history of jazz would rather not deal with: the music didn't come from a single American point of origin and spread outward. It converged. The Gulf of Mexico worked as an acoustic basin, and the triangle of Havana, Mérida, and New Orleans is one of the places where African rhythmic traditions—transplanted, transformed by conditions specific to each port—began finding each other again.

That's not a footnote to jazz history instead, It's a different map.

Before we can read that map honestly, though, we have to name something the celebration of Latin jazz tends to soften until it disappears. The Latin world, as a colonial construct, arrived in the Americas under the flags of Spain and Portugal, and later with Italy's cultural imprint layered on top. None of that was passive. These were slaving empires. The same ships that built the trade routes Derbez traces also carried our ancestors in chains. The hacienda owners in the Yucatán, the sugar barons in Cuba, the plantation lords in Puerto Rico—Spanish and Creole masters presiding over African bodies. Latin jazz didn't come out of some harmonious multicultural meeting. It came out of African survival inside a colonial world that enslaved those people and then absorbed their genius without ever fully acknowledging it.

Calling Latin jazz Afroantillean at its root isn't a rhetorical flourish. It's a correction of the record.

The Antilles—those Caribbean islands Spain colonized and populated with the forced labor of Yoruba, Fon, Kongo, and Mandinka people, among others — became the crucible. African spiritual and musical tradition transformed there under pressure into something new, but never cut off from where it started. The clave didn't arrive in Havana as an abstraction. It arrived in the bodies of enslaved Yoruba people carrying their ceremonial drum language, their Lucumí chants, their batá rhythms, as the one form of cultural continuity no master could fully take from them. The drum survived because it lived inside a person. You can't confiscate what's inside a person.

Giovanni Hidalgo, born in Old San Juan in 1963, is the most direct living transmission of that survival into the language of jazz. They call him Mañenguito. His father was the master conguero José Mañengue Hidalgo, his grandfather a musician before that, and Hidalgo grew up in a house where Afro-Caribbean rhythm wasn't repertoire—it was just how people talked. His first conga was handmade by his father out of a wooden barrel. That detail carries its own history: the drum built from whatever was at hand, the same improvised devotion that kept African sound alive through centuries of dispossession.

In his early twenties he joined Batacumbele, and the ensemble's name declares its allegiance outright. Batacumbele comes from Yoruba —batá, drum, and cumbele, to kneel before it. Angel Cachete Maldonado founded the group, and what they did was take the batá drums that had lived for generations inside Lucumí religious ceremony and bring them into a jazz orchestra. Not to secularize them. To insist the sacred and the musical had never been separate in the first place. When Batacumbele played, the trumpets and the piano were being asked to speak the way drums speak in a Yoruba ceremony. Call that fusion if you want. It's really memory refusing to be put in a box.

Hidalgo carried that into everything that followed. When Dizzy Gillespie brought him into the United Nations Orchestra, something happened that echoed what occurred decades earlier when Gillespie first met the Cuban drummer Chano Pozo—the bebop revolution and the Afroantillean drum in the same room, recognizing each other on sight. Hidalgo has described his own approach as pulling from Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, and African rhythms at once. Not as a cosmopolitan gesture. As the natural expression of a tradition that never drew clean lines between those places, because the people who made it had been moved across them by force and had woven them together out of necessity and genius.

That's what Derbez understood when he traced the steamship routes. Those boats weren't moving influence between separate musical cultures. They were moving people who all descended from the same forced dispersal, each of whom had worked out their own synthesis of what the drum meant and what it remembered, and who recognized in each other the shared African root that no colonial cartography ever managed to erase.

The jazz history most of us inherit does to Latin jazz what European modernity did to everything it touched: it takes the contribution and displaces the origin. It hears the clave and calls it flavor. It hears Hidalgo and calls him a Latin influence on jazz, rather than a direct descendant of the African musical intelligence that made jazz possible to begin with. Enrique Dussel called that operation the covering of one world by another. Cheikh Anta Diop spent his whole life showing that the world being covered was the oldest and most generative one we have.

Those steamships weren't carrying product between markets. They were carrying the Yoruba drum between its own children—

Continued on next page

What the Drum Carried (Cont.)

dressed differently in every port, still speaking the same language underneath, still kneeling before the same source.

Our ancestors built this music under conditions designed to silence them. They built it anyway. They sent it across the water inside their bodies, their rhythms, and the irrepressible knowledge of where they came from.

That knowledge became Latin jazz, among many other things. The pulse underneath has always been the same pulse. It came from where we all came from.

Yours truly,
Juan Daniel Castro

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, Jazz Brunch at The Old Goat, 11am-2pm

Jazz Jam with Tommy Pancy at Speciation, 5-8pm

Live Music (variety) at Testa Rossa, 5-8pm

Every Monday

SOLO piano/vocal at The Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

John Shea Trio, Carolina Low Country Kitchen, 6:30-9:30pm

Every Tuesday

Jazz band & Jam at Moriarty's, Lansing, 7-10pm

SOLO piano/vocal at The Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Every Wednesday

Dutcher Snedeker at The Old Goat, 6-9pm

Jazz 150/Mike Drost, Lucy's, Grand Haven, 6-8pm

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

Every Thursday

John Shea Trio, Legacy Winery & Spirits, 5400 School Ave, Hudsonville, 6-9 pm

Live Music (variety) at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30pm

DUO or TRIO at The Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Every Friday

TRIO or QUARTET at The Old Goat, 6-9:30pm

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

Every Saturday

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

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

Live Music at Testa Rossa, 5:30-8:30pm

October 2026 Schedule

Friday, October 2

Lakeshore Big Band, Woodchoppers Ball (benefit for Grand Haven Salvation Army), D. Baker and Son Lumber, 720 Pennoyer Ave, Grand Haven, 7:30 - 9:00 pm Ticket info (616) 842-3380

Saturday, October 3

Dabin Ryu Trio [Matt Penman/bass, Jonathan Blake/drums], Bell's Eccentric Cafe, Kzoo, 4pm and 7pm, $28 [$10/students] - Gilmore Festival Rising Star 2026

WMU Jazz Orchestra, Duke Ellington Sacred Concert, First United Methodist Church, 212 S Park St, Kzoo, 7pm Purchase Tickets

Bobby Floyd Trio, The Block, 7:30pm, Tickets at The Block $42-62

Monday, October 5

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

Tuesday, October 6

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

Wednesday, October 7

Dutcher Snedeker at The Old Goat, 5:30-8:30pm

Jeff Haas Trio, Faro, Northport, 6-8pm

Thursday, October 8

Kenny Barron Trio at St Cecilia Music Center, 7:30pm, $45-75

Saturday, October 10

Mary Rademacher, Cherie Hagen and Mark Kahny at JW Marriott, 6-10 pm

Sunday, October 11

Robin Connell Trio at The Old Goat, 11am-2pm

Jazz Around West Michigan (Cont.)

Monday, October 12

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

Tuesday, October 13

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

WMU Jazz Lab Band, Dalton Center Recital Hall, Kzoo, 7:30pm, $18 [Senior $14, Student $6] purchase tickets

Wednesday, October 14

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

Big Fun Unplugged [Quintet], Faro, Northport, 6-8pm

Thursday, October 15

WMU Jazz Masters Series, featuring George Garzone and Jerry Bergonzi (saxophones) with the University Jazz Orchestra and Western Jazz Collective; Dalton Center Recital Hall, Kzoo, 7:30pm, $18 [Senior $14, Student $6]

Greg Sheer Trio [Outside Pocket], The Old Goat, 6-9pm

Friday, October 16

John Shea Trio, Grattan Irish Pub, 11817 Old Belding Rd. Grattan, 7:30-10:30pm

Sunday, October 18

Greg Sheer Trio [Outside Pocket], Testa Rossa, 6-9pm

Monday, October 19

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

Tuesday, October 20

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

Truth in Jazz Orchestra, Teddy Spaghetti's, 513 W Pontaluna, Norton Shores, 7:30pm, $10 cover/Students free

WMJS at Fountain St Church with Edye Evans Hyde and Mike Hyde

Wednesday, October 21

Jeff Haas Trio, Faro, Northport, 6-8pm

Saturday, October 24

Jeff Haas Jazz Quintet, The Block, 7:30pm, Tickets at The Block $42-62 $42-62

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

Tuesday, October 27

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

Wednesday, October 28

Big Fun Unplugged [Quintet], Faro, Northport, 6-8pm

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

Thursday, October 29

Greg Sheer Quartet [Outside Pocket] Horrock's Market, 5-8pm

Robin Connell Trio at The Old Goat, 6-9pm

Friday, October 30

Gold Company Sneak Preview, with special guest, Alyssa Allgood, Dalton Center Recital Hall, Kzoo, 7:30pm $18 [Senior $14, Student $6] — purchase tickets

Lin Rountree/Isaac Norris, MidtownGR, 123 Ionia Ave SW, 7:30pm show [advance tkts only]

Become a member of WMJS

- ❍ **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** $_____

Name

If a dual membership, BOTH names must be listed

Address

City State Zip

Email

Phone

Interested in volunteering for the WMJS? ❍

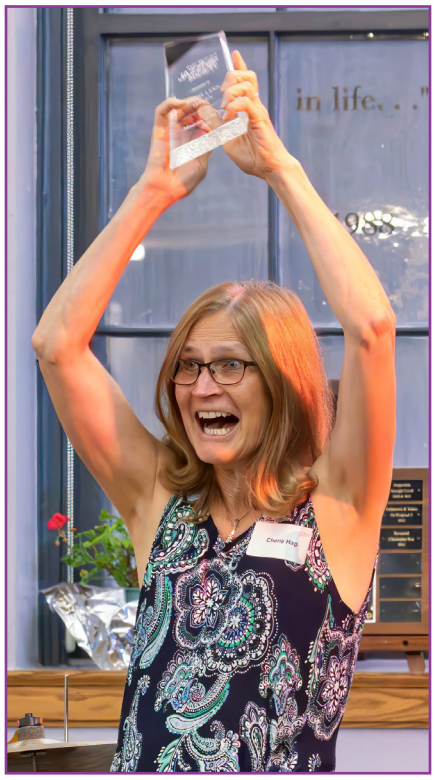
Detach and mail with check made payable to:
West Michigan Jazz Society
P.O. Box 150307, Grand Rapids, MI 49515

616-490-9506
(or join online)
wmichjazz@gmail.com

www.wmichjazz.org
www.facebook.com/wmichjazz

The Backpage Gallery

Musician of the Year Award Celebration 2026 - Cherie Lynn Hagen
September 8, Fountain Street Church



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If you would like your jazz event included in our media publications please send your schedules to:
Kevin Hubbard
nominations@wmichjazz.org
by the 15th of the month

616-490-9506
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