

WMJS Gumbo 2/17/25

On Monday, February 17th, WMJS held Jazz Gumbo, despite the mid-winter Michigan weather! Jazz enthusiasts came out to give a warm welcome. We were honored by three past Musicians of the Year performing; Mary Rademacher (vocalist) 2006, Tom Hagen (keys) 2007, Elgin Vines (bass) 2005, and Cherie Lynn on drums & vocals.

We left our troubles at the doorstep and were taken on a jazz journey. Mary greeted everyone warmly with a smile, and thoughtfully prepared the set lists with jazz tunes from dozens of composers, musicians and singers over many decades, paying tribute to Black History Month in music.

After opening with Nat Cole's "Errand Girl for Rhythm," the next tune, "Button Up Your Overcoat," (1928) by Ray Henderson had the crowd singing along. Long standing jazz standard "Robbins Nest" (1947) by Illinois Jacquet and Sir Charles Thompson featured Elgin Vines on bass. Mary and Cherie Lynn had fun singing harmony on "Women Be Wise, " (Don't Advertise Your Man)" from 1967 by Sippie Wallace and Jimmy Foster. Tom played a touching solo on McCoy Tyner's "You Taught My Heart to Sing" and Cherie was a hit, singing "What a Little Moonlight Can Do" and "Loverman," both Billie Holiday favorites. Mary recreated Ella's famous scat on "Lady Be Good." After 11 great tunes in the 1st set, the band took a short break to say hello to so many dear friends.

WMJS President, Shannan Dension had a member draw the winner of the 50/50 raffle; the money donated goes to support jazz scholarships for students interested in attending jazz camps or college. This month, winner Bruce Robey donated most of his winnings. (classy move!). Next, came the announcement of the Musician of the Year winner for 2025. Tom Knific, Lisa Sung, and Rick Reuther were nominated by WMJS members. Members voted, and the 2025 MOY is crooner Rick Reuther! Congratulations!

The 2nd set flew by starting with lush harmonies on " I Can See Clearly

Now”, (1972) by Johnny Nash. “Watermelon Man” (1962) by Herbie Hancock featured the entire band having fun playing funky blues. Mary sang and the audience loved her fun, funky dance moves! Another entertaining tune was Sanford & Sons Theme - “The Streetbeater” from 1973 by Quincy Jones, where Mary got to give a little cowbell. Tom Hagen told a story about purchasing his first saxophone in 8th grade for \$50, but since then purchased a much more expensive quality saxophone from WMJS MOY 2015 winner Mike Lutley. Mary and Tom then skillfully traded vocal and sax lines on “Basin St Blues.”

Mary asked Elgin to talk about his musical journey, and the crowd was treated to a special moment of Elgin sharing his acclaimed past; playing with a touring show group that made guest appearances on television programs including The Tonight Show, The Mike Douglas Show, the Ed Sullivan Show, and the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon. While performing in The Borsht Belt and more, he backed up performers including Martha & the Vandellas, Leslie Uggams, both Frank Sinatra Sr. and Jr., Ruth Brown, Connie Stevens, Bobby Darin, and Hines, Hines, & Dad (Gregory, Maurice, and Maurice Sr.). Elgin is going strong and will be 90 this May, 2025!

Our jazz journey came to an end with Ray Charles’ “What a Wonderful World,” with Tom playfully adding a bit of Satchmo to the vocals.

We are so fortunate to be able to enjoy an evening with gumbo or chicken and live jazz. I am thankful for all the time, effort, and passion put into researching jazz greats and putting together this thoughtful, well rounded, educational, entertaining and amazing performance. Applause to Mary, Tom, Elgin and Cherie!

Respectively submitted,
V.P. Laura Ohman,
edited by Mary Rademacher