

THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
NEW JERSEY JAZZ SOCIETY

# JerseyJazz

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WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## SALUTING SARAH VAUGHAN



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### Nonprofit Organization is Committed to Supporting and Promoting Women Jazz Artists

BY JACQUELINE LENNON



There is an adage that “a woman’s work is never done.” How quaint the quote going back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century that referred primarily to the orderliness of women in the household and raising children. Fast forward to modern times. In addition to the household and raising children, the work by women has expanded to business, politics, the military, the arts, and thousands of other projects that benefit society. In support of this article, let us focus on the art of jazz music. As part of the universal language, it is colloquial, spiritual, and powerful from which the Blues, the mother of jazz, has been around since the sound of the drum from Africa and songs from America’s plantations, transcending to numerous genres of jazz while continuing to thrive as part of the American Songbook.

While jazz continues in its greatness, unfortunately during its histo-

ry not all jazz was great for women who performed jazz. For decades they were either downplayed or left out, and many were not able to record their music for posterity. Whatever the discrepancies, women in jazz rose to the occasion specifically when men went off to war. It was an opportunity for women to step in and step up, address gender inequality, as did the popular International Sweethearts of Rhythm, and other female bands who came out of the shadows. It was a prelude to the women’s movement in jazz.

As President of International Women in Jazz, Inc. (IWJ) I have the pleasure to lead a unique nonprofit organization, formed in 1994 by some of the most active and influential people in the jazz community, to discuss the unmet needs of female jazz musicians. At the roundtable were Pastor Dale Lind of Saint Peter’s Church in New York City—*The Jazz Church*; Cobi

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Narita, Founder of Universal Jazz Coalition; Leslie Goures, a freelance writer and biographer of jazz greats; Lorraine Gordon, owner of the renowned Village Vanguard; Dotti Anita Taylor, musician, and composer; as well as many other women prominent in jazz. The mission was clear: to improve female jazz artists' finances and help them receive fairer hiring practices to increase employment.

International Women in Jazz's role is what our founding mothers have identified in our mission: committed to supporting women jazz artists and related professionals and fostering a greater awareness of the diverse contributions women make to jazz worldwide. Through its programs, IWJ provides information and assistance to its members, thus standing dedicated to actively ensuring a place for women as a vital part of the past, present, and future of jazz.



**Marian McPartland and Carline Ray were pioneer members of IWJ.**

IWJ provides performance platforms and assistance to female jazz musicians. Our programming includes workshops, open mics, career seminars, jazz exhibits, concert performances, honoree and recognition awards, and an annual festival during Jazz Appreciation Month. In 1995, IWJ became a nonprofit 501c3 that has expanded its ties internationally,

resulting in increased diversity with international affiliates in Italy and Germany. Our relationships were strengthened by the Zoom meetings and open mics we had during the pandemic. This type of international networking broadened my perspective and knowledge and was brought back to the organization.

IWJ was fortunate to have pio-

neer jazz members such as Marian McPartland and Carline Ray. Our roster includes Grammy award winner vocalist Catherine Russell (Carline Ray's daughter); Grammy nominated Antoinette Montague; vocalist, blues historian, and IWJ advisory board chairperson, and Harlem's own esteemed vocalist, Ghanniyya Green. We are honored to have legendary

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members such as Bertha Hope, accomplished pianist, composer, bandleader and educator; Emme Kemp our matriarch, Broadway composer of the legendary musical *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, historian and multi-talented entertainer; young adult Mimi Block, an emerging vocalist and violinist; Joan Watson-Jones, vocalist, composer, photographer and producer and promoter of jazz on her longstanding podcast, *The Jazz Room*; and Jane Meryll. Through IWJ, Jane won a worldwide pianist

composer competition and was honored in Rome, Italy. And yes, we do have male members: Mauricio de Souza, renowned Brazilian drummer, bandleader of the Mauricio de Souza Group, pupil of renowned drummer, Joe Morello, who has four albums to date; and Kuni Mikami, legendary pianist, composer, and student of Barry Harris and Norman Simmons. Kuni performed with esteemed orchestras including the Duke Ellington Orchestra, Lionel Hampton Orchestra, and the Cab Calloway Orchestra.



The late Cobi Narita founded IWJ.

All IWJ members, whether emerging, contemporary, or legendary artists, consultants or volunteers, bring their special talents, which are the ingredients that make up the IWJ family.

The year 2023 was eventful and included our popular open mics at various New York City venues, an IWJ Showcase at Goddard Riverside Center, the annual International Women in Jazz Festival at Dimenna Classical Center, and the Weill Cornell Medical Health Fair in East Harlem. We are ex-

tremely proud of our record breaking nine-and-a-half years of more than \$4,000 sales in one month at Stop and Shop's Giving Back Bag Community Environmental program which recognized and awarded IWJ for this unprecedented record. We ended the year with our Holiday Party at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center Plaza where IWJ members and friends renewed relationships and performed.

On a sad note, in 2023, IWJ and the jazz community suffered a major loss with the passing of our beloved Founder and President Emeritus, Cobi Narita, who for more than 40 years was one of the most influential jazz supporters of women. She advocated for jazz music and springboarded and promoted many women jazz musicians' careers. When I became President, she was there for consultation and guidance and ready to assist in resolving

**IN THIS YEAR'S GRAMMY AWARD CATEGORIES, WOMEN RECIPIENTS OUTNUMBERED MEN.**

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issues. Her contributions to IWJ are deep-rooted and, we pay tribute to Cobi by continuing to convey her philosophy, philanthropy, and vision. (An obituary on Cobi Narita appeared in the December 2023 issue of *Jersey Jazz*).

Years ago, I remember speaking with the iconic Marian McPartland, who experienced unfairness in the jazz industry with little recourse. As a pioneer in jazz, it was the times she lived in, but she managed to make her mark as a jazz pianist, composer, and writer, entertained troops during WWII, and was host of *Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz* on National Public Radio from 1978 to 2011.

She would be pleased to see how women are moving more aggressively with their careers as instrumentalists, vocalists, composers, songwriters, and bandleaders and are respected in documentaries and included in jazz walks of fame throughout the country. Statistics on female jazz musi-

cians varied in the last 100 years, but not at an increased rate of inclusion compared to male musicians. According to Central Washington University's Jazz Education Network's (JEN), a survey in 2022 revealed that the percentage of female jazz student musicians has risen from 9.2 per cent in 2012 to 26.9 per cent in 2020-2022. Also, in this year's Grammy award categories, women recipients outnumbered men.

Last year, new artist Samara Joy received back-to-back awards—Best Jazz Vocalist and Best New Artist (regardless of category). This is inspiring, so stay tuned for more on our 'sheroes' in jazz.

In closing, we ask the jazz community to continue supporting the music, and our mission supporting women in jazz for future generations during these challenging times. Please visit our website at [InternationalWomeninJazz.org](http://InternationalWomeninJazz.org).

BRIA SKONBERG HOT FIVE  
 ANDY SCHUMM  
 CATHERINE RUSSELL QUARTET  
 JON-ERIK KELLSO & THE EAR REGULARS  
 MONA'S HOT FOUR LED BY DENNIS LICHTMAN  
 ALPHONSO HORNE & THE GOTHAM KINGS  
 HOT TODDIES JAZZ BAND FEAT. HANNAH GILL  
 DANNY JONOKUCHI & THE REVISIONISTS  
 STÉPHANE SÉVA SWING ONDULE 4TET  
 ANDERSON BROTHERS FEAT. MOLLY RYAN  
 CHARLES TURNER & UPTOWN SWING  
 CONAL FOWKES & JAY RATTMAN  
 EYAL VILNER SWING BAND  
 CAIT & THE CRITTERS  
 KAYLA LEWIS TRIO

TICKETS ON SALE!  
 EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT ENDS MARCH 15TH



APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup>  
 60 PINE ST (NYC)  
 1PM - 12AM

MORE ARTISTS TO BE ANNOUNCED  
 SEE WEBSITE FOR LINEUP & SCHEDULE

TERRY WALDO • QUINTIN HARRIS • RAMONA BAKER • DEWITT FLEMING JR  
 NYHJC ENSEMBLES • NYHJC VOCALISTS

NYHJC FACULTY ALL STARS  
 CATHERINE RUSSELL, MIKE DAVIS, DAN LEVINSON, RON WILKINS,  
 CYNTHIA SAYER, ROSSANO SPORTIELLO, TAL RONEN, KEVIN DORN

[www.GothamJazzFestNYC.com](http://www.GothamJazzFestNYC.com)




# NOT WITHOUT YOU!

*Your membership is vital to  
NJJS's mission to promote  
and preserve America's  
great art form—**JAZZ!***

**THANK YOU** and welcome  
to all who have recently  
joined or renewed their  
memberships. We can't do  
what we do without you!

**NJJS.org**

## NEW MEMBERS

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**Ned Heltzer**  
PHILADELPHIA, PA

**Spencer Marsh**  
HOBE SOUND, FL

**Lynn Mellor**  
MADISON, NJ

**Ethel Monk**  
GREEN VILLAGE, NJ

## RENEWAL MEMBERS

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**Salvatore Franchino**  
BRIDGEWATER, NJ

**Kasey Keegan**  
BASKING RIDGE, NJ

**Arthur Markowitz**  
MAHWAH, NJ

**Hal Moeller**  
MADISON, NJ

**Cynthia & Vincent  
O'Donnell**  
MADISON, NJ

**Ellen & Howard Pfeffer**  
NORTH CALDWELL, NJ

**Claiborne Ray**  
BROOKLYN, NY

**Bob Seeley**  
FLEMINGTON, NJ

**Thomas Shutkin**  
BUCKINGHAM, PA

**Terrence Smith**  
MORRISTOWN, NJ

**William & Joan Weisberg**  
FORT LEE, NJ