

Swingtime

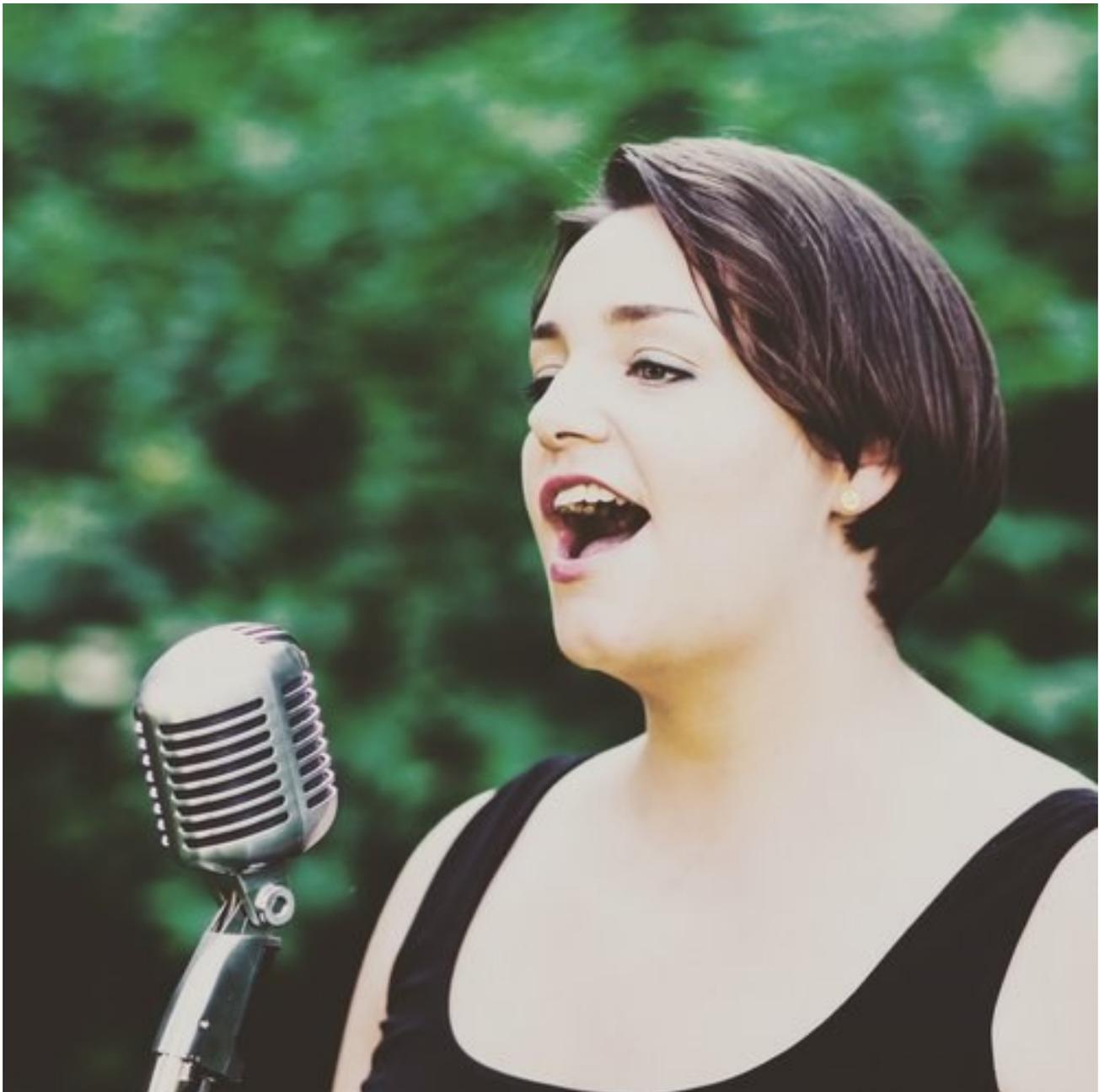
The Region's Only Good Music Magazine!

Volume 31, Number 1

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Swingtime Jazz Society

Spring 2020

*Jeanine Ouderkirk is singing for the
Swingtime Jazz Society on March 8. See Pages 8 & 9.*



This, That, and the Other Thing

A medley of assorted odds, ends, and miscellany related (if somewhat loosely) to the local music scene, compiled by a farrago of folks from our staff and beyond.



Singer/dancer **Patti Melita** has a new CD (she sings on it but doesn't dance). Read all about it on page 10.

Schenectady's Stockade Inn has long been home for some fine jazz, but since their recent ownership change and recent fire (unrelated events, I assume), that is no longer the case. But just a few blocks down (up?) Union Street, the Van Dyck Lounge has a new jazz series on Thursdays. (Jazz at the Van Dyck is certainly not new, but the Thursday series is.)

Capital District Jazz (cdjazz.org) has been around for a few years and their "Jazz at the Spring" series has become quite popular. It's held on the last Thursday of most months at the Spring Street Gallery in Saratoga Springs, an intimate concert setting with wine and cookies available. February 27 will feature a trio comprising vocalist **Teri Roiger**, **Joel Frahm** on sax, and bassist **John Menegon**.

Another series that's been well-received since it started is **Skip Parsons'** Riverboat Jazz Band. They play at McGear's Pub in Albany's Clinton Square on the second Monday (see photo on page 5).

Renowned pianist **Peg Delaney** has put together a 19-piece big band to play her songs and arrangements at a special membership concert for *A Place for Jazz*. It will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, April 3, at the First Reformed Church of Schenectady in the church's new Covenant Hall, an acoustically superior listening venue. Those who take out a membership in *A Place for Jazz* at the \$100 level will be admitted to this concert and will receive tickets for the five fall concerts plus two additional tickets. Speaking of series, this venue is the site of jazz vespers concerts every Sunday from 5-6 p.m.

We welcome reader input for this column, subject, of course, to our high editorial standards. If you've got something you think is appropriate for inclusion, please send it to info@swingtimejazz.org. ☰

IN MEMORIAM

ANITA BERRY

1930-2020

FOUNDER OF THE FIRST
ALL-SHIP JAZZ CRUISE



The Leo Russo Story

By Tom Pierce

Long-time jazz followers in this area would surely include legendary saxophonist **Leo Russo** in any All-Time Capital District band, along with other legends Nick Brignola and Lee Shaw. Although best known for his work on alto sax, he is also a master on tenor and clarinet.

He was born in Albany, NY, and started his 60-plus-year career with the Bobby Sherwood swing band from 1963-65. He eventually moved on to play with various-sized ensembles on the west coast, as well as with Buddy Rich's combo and other bands.

Upon returning to the Capital District to raise a family, he taught music in the Troy school district and played with his own various-sized jazz ensembles as well as other outstanding artists.

Russo led and produced an excellent 2003 CD, "Leo Russo Plays," with a sextet including Lee Russo and other notables. It features an engaging mix of his own original (the surging "Ossur"), well-chosen standards like "Dream Dancing," "Early Autumn," "A Time For Love," and "Four Brothers," as well as lesser-known but compelling compositions by Nick Brignola, Bill Evans, and Cal Tjader.

In addition to earning the respect of well-known players visiting from outside the area, Leo



inspires many local players including his son Lee, one of the area's best saxophonists and teachers.

This respect also includes non-saxophonists, like guitarist Mike Novakowski and drummer/pianist Cliff Brucker, who chose Russo first to be featured in forming his popular 2016 Full Circle band. This observer was especially fascinated with Russo's delightful tone, uplifting swing and phrasing in the timelessly strong saxophone tradition of the many greats who have preceded him through the years

He was influenced by Stan Getz and he also admired Paul Desmond. But Leo always maintains his own sound and delivery, which is based on a low-key but resolutely determined sense of personal expression. He has an effortlessly smooth (but passionate) delivery, along with consistent taste and imagination.

Some of the other local bands in which I've personally most enjoyed his always swinging melodicism are Empire Jazz Orchestra, Phil Allen's Concert Jazz Band, and Teresa Broadwell Sextet. ☰



The *Six Count* Podcast: A Tribute to the Capital Region's Jazz Scene

By Xara Wilde

Since launching the *Six Count* podcast (sixcount.simplecast.com), I've found myself in the homes of musicians, novelists, and journalists throughout the Capital Region. I've heard firsthand accounts of conversations with Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, and many other jazz greats whose lives intersected with the area's scene.

These stories have informed a deep appreciation for the contributions that our community has made to ensure jazz's survival as a fixture of American culture.

I began the *Six Count* podcast in the fall of 2019 to help promote and preserve our local jazz and swing scene. The first season covered a dozen episodes, featuring musicians whose genres ranged from gypsy jazz to Dixieland to post-bop.

In the pilot season, I would often ask guests why they chose to come and stay in the Capital Region when New York City and a cluster of other major cities were just a hop, skip and a jump away. Was the promise of a larger scene a legitimate temptation? The answers always came down to community and the caliber of musicianship they found here.

After conducting just three interviews, I began running the show based exclusively on word-of-mouth recommendations. While I had suspected that the scene was tight-knit, I was continually humbled by the hospitality I received as a curious stranger.

For one of my first interviews, I contacted clarinetist **Skip Parsons** of the Riverboat Jazz Band following the recommendation of drummer and *A Place for Jazz* president **Tim Coakley**. It was a warm Saturday morning in June, and we spoke on a park bench outside of a Stewart's in Delmar.

Parsons shared stories from his more than 60-year tenure as the leader of the Dixieland band, including what it was like to serve as the main jazz group for the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y. He brought to life for me the music of Doc Cheatham, a legendary trumpeter who Parsons said would often come by The Fountain restaurant in Albany to play during the Riverboat

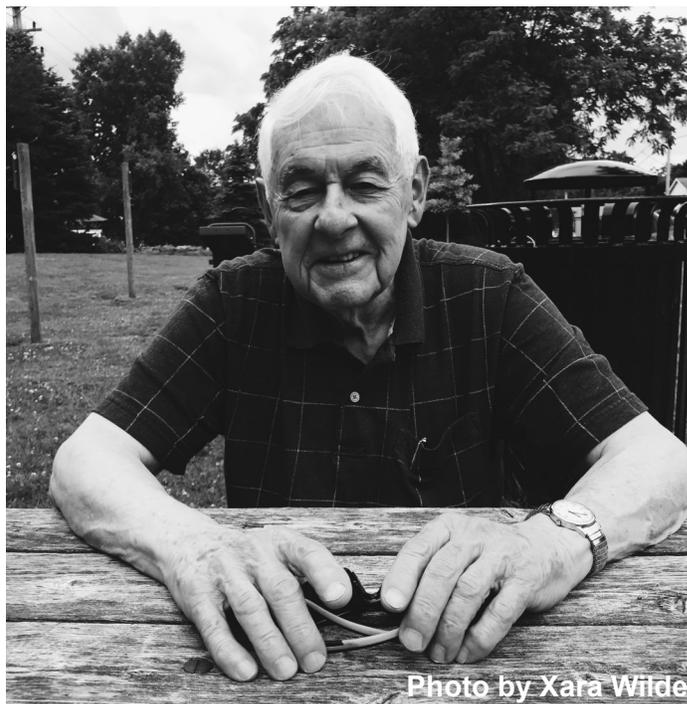


Photo by Xara Wilde

A very relaxed Skip Parsons

Jazz Band's decades-long residency at the eatery.

Parsons and I both lamented the realities of an ever faster-paced and distracted world, yet if I were to distill this project into one takeaway, it would be this: "Things ain't what they used to be," but there is still great hope for the future of jazz.

Last Tuesday, I was swing dancing at a packed gypsy jazz jam, hosted monthly by **Peter Fisher's Collar City Guitars**, at the Ale House in Troy. Nearly 4,500 people were expected to attend the annual Flurry Festival in Saratoga Springs for Valentine's Day weekend. Later today, I'll be hearing **Tyler Giroux**, **Matt Niedbalski** and other talented young musicians play some of the finest live jazz I've ever heard.

Other connections I've made for the series have come from being the house jazz dancer for the Speakeasy 518, tucked away on Howard Street in Albany, where I perform every Saturday evening during the first band break.

A conversation with guitarist **Joe Finn** one weekend led me to tap dancer and vaudevillian **Rod Ferrone**. We performed together during

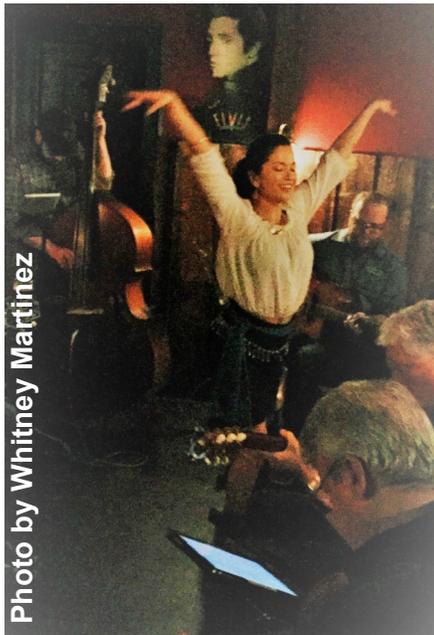


Photo by Whitney Martinez

The author at the Ale House's monthly gypsy jazz jam

one of Finn's sets at the bar, where he stunned the crowd with his intricate footwork, at once commanding and playful, and his vast repertoire of hat tricks.

A week later, we were recording for an episode outside of McGeary's Irish Pub before the Riverboat Jazz Band's monthly gig. Ferrone told me about the time that Gregory Hines "crashed" a two-

hour act that he and his partner Joe Orrach put on in New York City and what it was like to take classes from Henry LeTang. LeTang choreographed "The Cotton Club," a 1984 movie directed by Francis Ford Coppola. The crime drama, which focuses on a famous Harlem jazz club in the 1920s and 1930s, was co-written by **William Kennedy**, a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and journalist.

I chatted with Kennedy at his residence in Averill Park last October about his collaborative work with Coppola as well as his many interviews of famous jazz musicians during his time as a reporter for Albany's *Times Union*. We spoke over glasses of Francis Ford Coppola wine for nearly two hours. I had more questions at the end than when I'd started, but his wife and daughter had finished making dinner,



Photo by Xara Wilde

William Kennedy

and it was time to leave.

My interview with Kennedy was the last episode I produced for *Six Count*. I'm saddened to share that I'll be moving from the Capital Region to take a job in Chapel Hill, N.C., where I hope to eventually pick up the show in covering the city's jazz scene. I know, however, that nothing I find will be quite like the scene that I came to know and love during my time in Upstate New York.

I'm so very grateful for the wonderful guests who were willing to share their stories for the show and to those who are keeping the scene alive through playing and supporting live jazz. Many thanks as well to the *Swingtime Jazz Society* for the opportunity to share about this work and for their continual efforts to preserve the Capital Region's rich legacy of jazz history. It is my hope that *Six Count's* collection of audio recordings can also contribute to those endeavors.



Typical of every second Monday at McGeary's Pub: (L-R) Ken Olsen, Tim Coakley, Ron Bill, Skip Parsons, Pete Toigo

Special thanks to guests Skip Parsons, Zach Cohen, Jeanine Ouder Kirk, Peter Fisher, Tyler Giroux, Joe Finn, Tim Coakley, Graeme Francis, Jeff "Siege" Siegel, Andre Peterson, Rich Syracuse, Frankie Bailey, Wayne Hawkins, William Kennedy, Rod Ferrone, Colleen Pratt, Peg Delaney, Jody Shayne, and Teresa Broadwell, to Alan Bramwell of Giants of Jazz Radio, to Patrick Dodson of Albany Proper, to Emmanuel Treski of the Speakeasy 518, to my dear colleague Vinny Reda, to Jessica and Tom, and to Brian Carroll for his mentorship and unending support. ☸

Swingtime Snapshots



Swingtime Jazz Society's January 12 concert at the Wishing Well featured (L-R above) Joe Finn, Steve Lambert, Andy Hearn, Dave Fisk, and Mike Lawrence. (Photo by Jerry Gordon)

The jam session at the concert included (L-R below) Jack Speraw, Tim Coakley, Howard Lester, and Steve Horowitz. Joe Finn is hiding behind Jack. (Photo by Eileen Mack)



Dick Hyman

By Tim Coakley and dickhyman.com

Sunday, March 8 marks the 93rd birthday of **Dick Hyman**: pianist, organist, arranger, music director, and composer. He has been a versatile and swinging performer for these many decades. He gave a memorable concert for *A Place for Jazz* in Schenectady in 2012, preceded by an afternoon clinic for area pianists and other interested fans at Union College. Local pianists Paul Mastriani and Tom Shields were especially knocked out by that event.

Hyman's versatility has resulted in well over 100 albums recorded under his own name. He has delved into ragtime and the earliest periods of jazz and has researched and recorded the piano music of Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton, James P. Johnson, Zez Confrey, Eubie Blake, and Fats Waller.

Other solo recordings include the music of Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, Cole Porter, George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Duke Ellington. Some of his recordings with combos are *From The Age of Swing*, *Swing Is Here*, *Cheek to Cheek*, and *If Bix Played Gershwin*, plus duet albums with Ruby Braff, Ralph Sutton, and others.

In 2004, after serving as artistic director for the acclaimed Jazz in July series at New York's

92nd Street Y for twenty years, he stepped down. In years past, Hyman was music director for Arthur Godfrey, and orchestrator of the hit musical "Sugar Babies." He has served as composer/arranger/conductor/pianist for several Woody Allen films.

He received an Emmy for his original score for "Sunshine's on the Way," a daytime drama, and another for musical direction of a PBS Special on Eubie Blake. He is a member of the Jazz Hall of Fame of the Rutgers Institute of Jazz Studies and the New Jersey Jazz Society. ☐



Jeanine Ouderkirk Quartet

Jeanine Ouderkirk celebrated a decade of life as a jazz singer in 2019. Music became her life at age ten with her first piano lessons. These were followed by lessons in clarinet, saxophone, and flute. Ultimately, she majored in music on the bass clarinet and moonlighting as the baritone saxophonist of the Crane Jazz Ensemble for all four years as an undergraduate.

Singing became the next contraband musical pursuit. Finally, with zeal, it became the answer to continuing life as a performer and a member of the jazz community at large. Ouderkirk favors teaching as her main career, a K-8 general music teacher at Saint Gregory's School in Loudonville, NY, and as a private instructor of piano, voice, and woodwinds in Saratoga Springs. Whether as the singer in a jazz combo, solo pianist/vocalist, or woodwind doubler of a pit or big band, Jeanine has nothing but gratitude for the opportunities to express, emote, and connect through the art form that is music and the elegant philosophy of jazz. For a full schedule, please visit www.jeaninemariamusic.com

Shaun McCarthy has been playing guitar since high school, where he was first introduced to jazz through his guitar teacher. Soon after beginning to play, he decided to pursue music more seriously, which led him to study music at Schenectady County Community College. He

holds an associate degree in music from SCCC and a bachelor's degree in music education from The College of Saint Rose. Shaun has studied with Jack Fragomeni, Cary DeNigris, Rob Cohen, and Sheryl Bailey.

Lou Smaldone is a seasoned bassist and in-demand sideman in the Albany area and beyond. His formal education included time at Schenectady County Community College and The Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam. Inspired by the bass stylings of greats Paul Chambers and Charles Mingus, Smaldone relishes the opportunity to provide the foundation for the group's forays into musical storytelling. His effortless time-keeping and always-in-the-pocket propulsion are hallmarks of this active listener and inspired sideman.

Originally from Florida, drummer **Blair Purdy** has been performing in the Capital Region for the last 10 years. He has a foundation in orchestral snare drum performance from an early age and has since grown into a contemporary approach to jazz. His biggest influences are not limited to his instrument and he has a profound appreciation for both exploration and tradition. He is often referred to as a creative player and credits some of his creative inspiration to drummers including Chris Dave, Eric Harland, and Mark Giuliana. ☰

Lee Shaw Scholarship Fund

To honor the memory of jazz pianist **Lee Shaw**, a scholarship will be awarded yearly to a high school senior planning to pursue music studies in college.

This fund is under the umbrella of the not-for-profit Swingtime Jazz Society. Contributions to this fund should be made payable to SWINGTIME JAZZ SOCIETY and mailed to Colleen Pratt, Treasurer, 119 Brian Crest Ct, Schenectady, NY 12306-3449 with "Lee Shaw Schol-



arship Fund" in the memo line.

Swingtime Jazz Society is a 501(c)(3) organization. This means your donation is tax-deductible and it should qualify if your employer matches your charitable contributions. General Electric employees should register their donations for matching to SJS at gefoundation.com/matchinggifts.

For information about the scholarship, contact Chairperson Peg Delaney at 518-237-

3129 or pegjazz1@gmail.com.

SWINGTIME

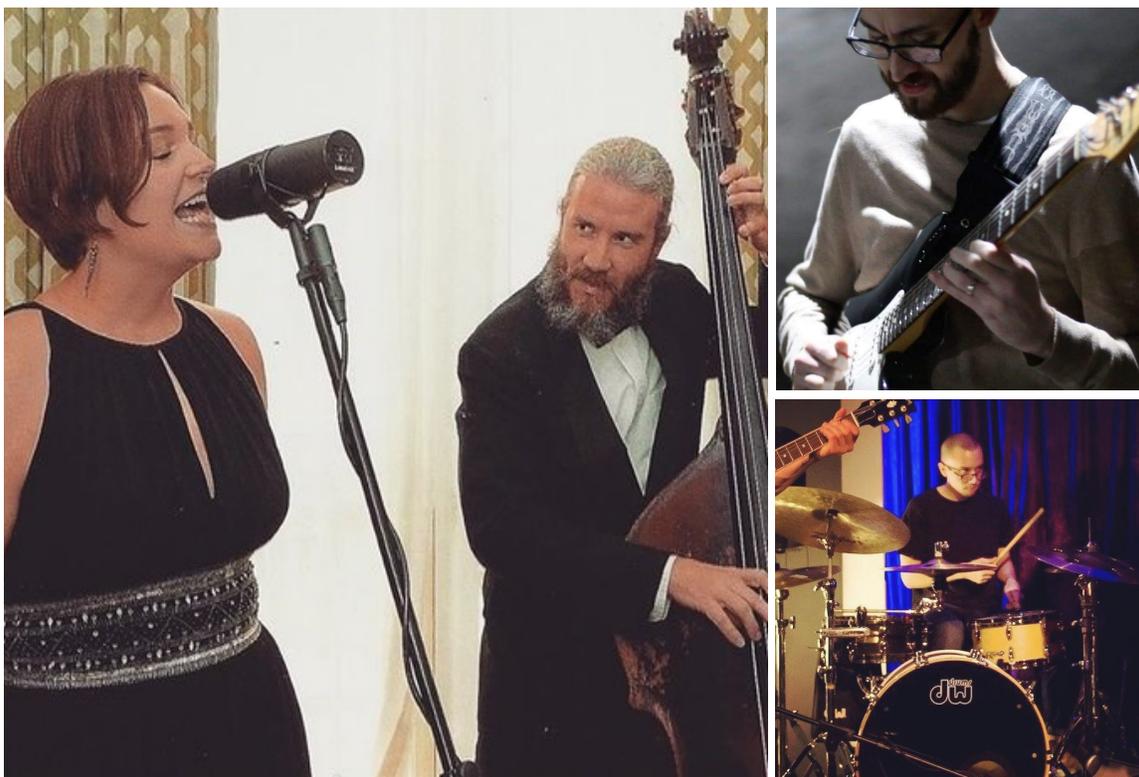
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Proudly Presents

Jeanine Ouderkirck Quartet



Sunday, March 8, 2020, 4-6 p.m.

Followed by an open jam session 6-7p.m.

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Patti Melita's New CD

By Beverly Elander

I recently talked to singer Patti Melita about her new CD. Here are the highlights of our conversation:

BE: Why did you name your CD "Holiday"?

PM: Because of my love for Lee Shaw. I knew I wanted to honor her on the CD with one of her originals. "Holiday" was written by Lee with lyrics by another memorable musician, Stan Marsden.

BE: Is this your first CD? What makes it different from your other CDs?

PM: Although I've backed up musicians on their CDs, my only other CD is "Swing It," arranged and produced by Peter Ecklund, a renowned cornet player from New York City. At that time, we had two separate recording sessions: One in Ithaca, where some of the musicians lived, and one in the Catskills, which included Jay Ungar and Molly Mason.

BE: What other musicians are featured on "Holiday"? Why did you invite them to join you?

PM: The CD was not just a jam session. Peg Delaney wrote all my arrangements, besides playing piano. Jim Corigliano played tenor saxophone. Bill Delaney filled in on bass and Tim Coakley kept the rhythm on drums. I don't think I chose them to play—they chose me. We had worked well together previously.

BE: When/how did you start singing?

PM: From the time I was a little girl in Boght Corners, New York, I sang with my family. My dad sang bass, Mom sang tenor, my sister Gail sang soprano, and I sang alto (and still do). Both of my parents belonged to the Society for the Preservation of Barbershop Quartets in America. I still sing with a doo-wop group that meets weekly, picking out the notes in the chords that nobody else is singing. And of course, I do gigs in the Capital District area periodically.

BE: What singers have influenced you throughout your career?

PM: That's a hard one because there are so many: Rosemary Clooney, Julie London, Sarah Vaughan, and Nancy Wilson, to name a few.

BE: What is your favorite cut on the CD? Why?

PM: Peg's arrangement of "Let There Be Love/I Saw Stars" was fun to sing, in part because it is upbeat and filled with promise.

BE: I'm guessing that producing a CD is, to a degree, a labor of love. How long did it take to produce "Holiday"?

PM: It took at least nine months for Peg to write the arrangements, and for us to have rehearsals and complete the CD. Jim hiked in from the Helderbergs. Although the rest of us lived closer to the Delaneys where we rehearsed, we still had to find a common time in our crazy schedules.

BE: For those of us who have never made a CD, what are some of the stumbling blocks?

PM: I can't say that we had any stumbling blocks. Peg made all the steps of CD-making run smoothly for the rest of us. She's an angel in disguise.

BE: Have you had to make sacrifices to pursue your love of music?

PM: Because I wanted to spend time with my family (I am the proud parent of three adult daughters), in order to be home most of the time until my youngest daughter was 15, I purposely avoided music as a full-time career. But I began to realize that I could combine family, my day job as a paralegal and my love of music and dance into a life rich with friends and the activities I love.

BE: Will there be another CD in the future?

PM: I don't know. But until then, "Holiday" is available on CD Baby or from any one of the musicians on the recording. ☺

Bill McCann and *The Saturday Morning Edition of Jazz's* 35th Anniversary Birthday Bash and Jazz Appreciation Month Celebration

Bill McCann has been hosting "The Saturday Morning Edition of Jazz" on 90.9 FM, WCDB, Albany, since April of 1985. This weekly four-hour jazz program is broadcast from UAlbany's Campus Center Building on Saturday mornings from 8 a.m. until noon.

To mark the occasion of the 35th Anniversary of the program and to celebrate Jazz Appreciation Month, Bill McCann has put together a "Day of Jazz" featuring many of the best jazz bands and musicians in the Capital District.

When: Saturday, April 18th, 1-11 p.m.

Where: UAlbany Alumni House, University Drive West, University at Albany Uptown Campus. (Maps are at alumni.albany.edu).

The event is free and open to the public. Light food and refreshments will be available. The program will be as follows:

1 pm: The UAlbany Jazz Ensemble, under the direction of David Hosley.

2 pm: Michael Benedict Jazz Vibes.

3 pm: Teresa Broadwell Trio.

4 pm: Cliff Brucker and Full Circle.

5 pm: Colleen Pratt with Peg Delaney Trio

6 pm: Skip Parsons' Riverboat Jazz Band.

7 pm: Joe Finn Trio.

8 pm: The Brian Patneaude Quartet.

9 pm: Joe Barna and Sketches of Influence.

10 pm: The Dylan Perrillo Orchestra.



Photo by Daily Gazette

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For more information, email Bill McCann at jazz@wcdbfm.com. ☰

*For the area's most up-to-date jazz calendar, visit
APlaceForJazz.org/calendar.htm*

Join Swingtime Jazz Society

The **Swingtime Jazz Society** roster of members has reached 91. You are encouraged to join us by using the coupon on this page.

The Society's mission is to promote quality jazz by employing the finest regional artists for four or five events every year. The format is two hours of concert-cabaret music by the featured artists, followed by a one-hour jam session open to all cats.

All members have a full vote on future attractions and electing officers of the non-profit corporation. We also have a wonderful series of dinner meetings hosted by members. There is a once-only fee of \$100 to join.

See Pages 1, 8 and 9 for our March 8 attraction, the **Jeanine Ouderkirk Quartet**.

I want to join the Swingtime Jazz Society. Enclosed find my lifetime membership fee of \$100.

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