

Lee Shaw Scholarship Fund

Dear Applicant,

The scholarship for which you are applying was established upon the death of jazz pianist Lee Shaw (October 25, 2015) by the not-for-profit Swingtime Jazz Society Inc. The following information is provided to give you a sense of the woman for whom this scholarship was founded.

(from The Daily Gazette Lee Shaw obituary written by Diane Reiner)

Lee Shaw, 89, died peacefully on Sunday, October 25, 2015. Born Londa Lee Moore on June 15, 1926, she grew up in Ada, Oklahoma. Lee was an internationally known jazz pianist, composer and educator who was adored by a multitude of friends, jazz fans and students world-wide. She was a brilliant musician and a totally charming human being with an insatiable love of life, curiosity about other people, and passion for jazz. Lee received a bachelor's degree from the Oklahoma College for Women, a master's degree from the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago, and an honorary doctorate from the College of St. Rose where she was on the faculty. She played with many jazz greats throughout her career, studied with the legendary Oscar Peterson, and was leader of the Lee Shaw Trio for five decades. In 1993 Lee was inducted into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame, where the archives of her illustrious career in jazz will reside. Lee was predeceased by her husband and drummer, Stan Shaw. (DR)

Lee's life is an example of passion for music, for learning, for teaching, and she passed this on to all of us. She had love for all who knew her, and her spirit lives on in her music and our memories of her. To honor her memory, there was a beautiful public memorial service and concert to celebrate her life on December 11, 2015. A Lee Shaw Scholarship Fund has been set up for donations by the Swingtime Jazz Society Inc. A \$1000 scholarship will be awarded yearly to a high school senior student pursuing a music degree with a concentration in jazz studies in college. This fund is under the umbrella of the not-for-profit Swingtime Jazz Society.

Contributions to this fund can be made payable to SWINGTIME JAZZ SOCIETY and mailed to Colleen Pratt, Treasurer, 119 Brian Crest Court, Schenectady, NY 12306-3449 with "Lee Shaw Scholarship Fund" in the memo line. (Please remember that Swingtime Jazz Society Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization, which means donations are tax deductible and they should qualify if your employer matches your charitable donations.)

Lee Shaw

Obituary from The Daily Gazette

Shaw, Lee



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From Times Union October 26, 2015

Lee Shaw Obituary by Steve Barnes

Lee Shaw a tiny, gentle woman who produced a huge, aggressive sound as a jazz pianist, died Sunday at age 89. She was under hospice care at the Eddy Memorial Geriatric Center and had suffered from medical issues including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and related complications. Until January, when she had a stroke, Shaw had lived in the same house along the Mohawk River in Colonie that she and her late husband, Stan, bought in 1971 when they moved to the Capital Region from New York City. Despite her health difficulties, Shaw was an indefatigable performer. Oxygen tank in tow, as it had been for several years, Shaw played her last regular gig in early September at Grappa '72 Ristorante in Albany. It was but one of many area restaurants and nightspots over the years where local audiences could hear world-class talent for free in an intimate setting.

"She was a phenomenal force on the piano," said Rich Syracuse, who as the bass player in The Lee Shaw Trio for the past 23 years performed thousands of shows with Shaw.

"Sometimes we'd get to a place and the piano would be out of tune, but she would play it with such force and musicianship that the damn thing would suddenly be in tune," Syracuse said Sunday evening. "It was as if she willed it into being in tune by the strength of her playing."

Born June 25, 1926, in Oklahoma, Shaw as a child learned to play piano by ear, pecking out popular tunes of the era after hearing them on the radio. She later studied piano classically at Oklahoma College for Women and, for her master's degree, at the former American Conservatory of Music in Chicago, where she met and married her husband, Stan, in 1962. They would play together for the next 39 years. Throughout her classical studies she maintained a large repertoire of pop standards and earned a living playing at restaurants and nightclubs. Shaw claimed never to have heard jazz until seeing the Count Basie Orchestra in Chicago. She later studied with jazz great Oscar Peterson who is said to have invited Shaw to be his student after hearing her play just once, and Shaw herself was a teacher of renown, with students including John Medeski of the jazz-funk band Medeski Martin and Wood. A recording of a Shaw-Medeski concert at The Egg in Albany was released as the album "Live at The Egg."

"She had a tremendous classical technique underlying the jazz, and she was always studying, recording gigs and listening to them after, always learning and trying to improve, even in later years," said Jeff Siegel, the drummer for The Lee Shaw Trio for the past 14 years.

"The way she played American standards was so fresh, so authentic, that if you heard her play one, you'd think that was what Cole Porter or Gershwin would have wanted," Siegel said.

The Lee Shaw Trio performed extensively throughout the greater Capital Region and across the country, including in her native Oklahoma, where Shaw was inducted into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame in 1993. In 2007, 2008 and 2009, the trio toured Europe each year; a concert in Austria, recorded by the Austrian Broadcast Co., was the basis for the trio's 2008 album and DVD, "Live in Graz."

In contrast to the intensity she brought to jazz, Shaw was gracious, even genteel, and warm with friends and fans alike.

"She was so appreciative as a person," said Tess Collins, who got to know Shaw in the late 1980s and 1990s, when Collins managed the Albany restaurant Justin's, then a jazz hotspot. "We'd carry her things for her, and she'd come back with a thank you, brownies or some other food. She was just so genuine," said Collins, who now owns McCreary's pub in Albany and DiCarlo's lounge in Colonie.

"She was so caring and interested in other people that when you asked about her, she'd always turn it around and somehow you'd be talking about you," said Diane Reiner who was a neighbor and close friend of Shaw's for three decades and recently had been helping her with legal and medical decisions. Shaw was also a composer.

"She had a great lyricism evident in her songwriting," Siegel said. "You could feel and hear her expressing herself so beautifully."

Although she was hospitalized multiple times this year, Shaw was determined to continue playing.

"Music was why she was staying here," said Siegel. "At one point her arm was paralyzed, but she said she'd play again, and she did. What she went through to continue to play" — including, earlier in life, three bouts of cancer — "was unbelievable."

Siegel and Syracuse, who had played alongside Shaw for a combined 37 years, visited Shaw's bedside on Saturday, the day before she died. Morphine limited her ability to speak, they said, but she acknowledged their presence with a strong squeeze of their hands. Talking wasn't necessary among the three, who communicated through music, and so they played recordings of some of the trio's tunes. One of them was a Shaw composition, "Song without Words,"

A funeral observance later this week will be private, Reiner said. Siegel and Syracuse said they hope to organize a memorial concert and celebration in Shaw's honor in the coming months.

For Lee: It seems only yesterday
that I was sitting in your
living room, painting the rushing river
outside the window with
runny watercolors and a brush
too big for my small hands,
or that I was laughing,
delighted by the way your hands danced
over the keys of your piano
in a perfect imitation of horses
prancing on nimble limbs
through my madcap imagination.
I used to think you looked like an
old Hollywood star, staring out of
worn black and white photographs with
sparkling eyes and a smile that I
couldn't help but return,
but even then I recognized your face,
unchanged behind the lines of time—
a youthfulness that I know persists
even now, as your spirit floats free.
And without fail, in the dead of winter,
a box of pears would appear on our doorstep,
pears wrapped in golden foil,
the only pears I would ever eat,
the most delicious pears I have
ever tasted, to this day;
we used to laugh, because it was
pears every Christmas, and we
adored your generosity and your
conviction in our love of pears
in equal measure.
Now, I think about how
we will never receive those
gilded pears again, and how
I will only ever hear your playing

through speakers ringing with your old recordings—
I will never forget your soul, though;
your sincerity, your artistry and your radiant energy,
the way you lit up the rooms you played in and the
eyes which beheld you,
the kindness which endeared you to all
who were lucky enough to meet you,
and the unending passion which sustained you
even as age and sickness fought to
rob you of it.
I am eternally grateful to have known you, Lee—
May your spirit play on, eternally.

Eliza Siegel, daughter of Jeff and Myra Siegel