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Jazz Aid Fund

**San Jose Jazz Board of Directors Creates Jazz Aid Fund
to Support SF Bay Area Musicians Amid Pandemic**

**Initial Round of \$1,000 Grants go to a Diverse Group of Artists
Spanning Genres, Generations and Geography**

**Adam Theis, Amy D., Aneesa Strings, Archish Harun, Ash Maynor, Bobi Céspedes, Brian Ho,
Chris Cain, Claudia Villela, Edward Simon, Fernando Barocio Salcedo, Guilio Xavier Cetto,
Howard Wiley, Ian Santillano, James Jackson, Javier Santiago, John Santos, Justin Ouellet,
Kasey Knudsen, Keshav Batish, Kev Choice, Kevin Wong, Lee Dynes, Mark Arroyo,
Melecio Magdaluyo, Mild Monk, Monique Valenzuela, Robbie Benson, Ron E. Beck,
Tammy Hall, Ten Spencer, and Vãn-Ánh Võ**

Tuesday, January 19 2021--San Jose, CA: Building on a significant lead gift by longtime Board member Jan DeCarli, the San Jose Jazz (SJZ) Board of Directors today announced the creation of the SJZ Jazz Aid Fund providing to SF Bay Area musicians a grant of \$1,000 each for the creation of a new work.

Conceived in direct response to the devastation of artists' incomes during the Coronavirus pandemic, the initial fund includes \$30,000 from members of the SJZ Board, plus an additional \$3,000 raised in the final days of 2020, allowing the organization to support 33 musicians with a vital infusion of cash to live, work and create new musical works that will be premiered by SJZ.



SJZ Announces Jazz Aid Fund, p2

Continued fundraising will allow SJZ to support even more artists in 2021 and to select from this cohort ten artists who will each be given an additional grant to video a full performance in a new, state-of-the-art music studio that SJZ is now developing. The timing of these performances will be according to the relaxation of Coronavirus social distancing rules. These high-quality videos will be invaluable promotion tools for the artists, and will be released online by San Jose Jazz.

Longtime San Jose Jazz Board member Jan DeCarli sparked the project through her consummate love of jazz and her admiration of local artists--many of whom remain under-recognized in an art form centered in New York, London and Tokyo. Jan observes: "The Bay Area is home to some of the best jazz musicians, anywhere. We need to support them financially and keep them creating so the Bay Area remains a place where jazz artists can build careers."

While the initiative is primarily focused on supporting artists, it is also grounded in the importance of the role of musicians in the community, in these difficult times. According to SJZ Board President Julie Ramirez, "Music can bring comfort and joy, and a strong sense of community. Musicians and live music events are essential to our recovery not only from the fear, uncertainty and loss brought on by the Coronavirus pandemic, but also from the deep divisions our Country is experiencing."

Artists were selected from a group of recommendations provided by members of the SF Bay Area jazz community including Monterey Jazz artistic director Tim Jackson; Public Radio International Latin music correspondent (and SJZ Latin music coordinator) Betto Arcos; music critic Andrew Gilbert; SFJAZZ Director of Artistic Programming Lilly Schwartz; KCSM Radio 91 music director Alisa Clancy; and other administrators, artists and curators.



SJZ Announces Jazz Aid Fund, p3

The resulting selection represents a true cross-section of working musicians across the Bay Area. “The wide range of our ‘recommenders’ in the community allowed us to connect with new artists and broaden our scope.” SJZ Artistic and Festival Director Bruce Labadie said. “I’m especially looking forward to presenting ten of these artists in person in our own studio and streaming them to our online audience.”

The grants come at a critical time in the pandemic. The resources of many musicians are being tested by the expense of living in the Bay Area and the emotional and artistic costs of nearly a year of quarantines. According to grantee Adam Theis: “To be commissioned to create a new work and to be paid fairly for it, especially in these upside-down times, is huge. Not only does it help me stay afloat financially but it is a huge morale booster and an encouraging reminder that the Bay Area does have love and support for its artists.” It has also become abundantly clear that music is essential to the recovery of our communities. Grantee Amy D. added: “More than anything I think the pandemic has illuminated art as a necessity to our survival and mental health. Music especially is a guiding force and a healing art form.”

The 33 artists chosen for the first round of this program represent a fraction of the number of SF Bay Area musicians currently in need. SJZ Executive Director Brendan Rawson said: “Since the beginning of the pandemic, San Jose Jazz has been focused on the needs of artists and the health of the live music scene, starting in March with our Live From Home live-streamed concerts, which put 100% of donations directly into the hands of artists. We now need the partnership of individuals and sponsors to uplift more artists and make sure they are here for the community, once social distancing rules are relaxed.”

Find out more about the Jazz Aid Fund at sanjosejazz.org/jaf. Donate to the initiative now at sanjosejazz.org/donate — be sure to write “Jazz Aid Fund” in the text field.

For interviews and hi-res photos, contact Massimo Chisessi at massimoc@sanjosejazz.org.



GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Adam Theis

Based in Oakland, multi-instrumentalist, producer, bandleader and composer Adam Theis has been an active in the Bay Area music scene for 25 years. In 2000 Adam co-founded Jazz Mafia, an eclectic collective of the most forward thinking local players in jazz, hip-hop, classical, and global music. As Jazz Mafia's director, he has led/co-led dozens of acclaimed bands including The Shotgun Wedding Quintet, Realistic Orchestra and Cosa Nostra Strings. In 2008 Adam received the Gerbode-Hewlett Foundation's Emerging Composer Grant, resulting in *Brass, Bows & Beats*. Combining symphonic arrangements and hip-hop, the work was performed at the Newport, Playboy, Montreal, San Jose and Monterey Jazz Festivals.

<http://www.jazzmafia.com/>
<https://jazzmafia.bandcamp.com/>

Amy D.

The soulful, effortless sounds of vocalist and songwriter Amy D. (Amy Dabalos) envelop listeners in a dream-like fusion of jazz, soul, world, and R&B styles. Combining inspiring lyrics and heartfelt storytelling, her music is a timeless soundscape inviting reflection, healing, and growth. She created a stir with her debut portrait album, 2019's *Like You*, created with producer and master keyboardist Michael Aaberg (Goapele, Lalah Hathaway, Derrick Hodge) and as a graduate of the Multicultural Arts Leadership Institute, Amy D. has also contributed to arts and community-based advocacy initiatives including the Hewlett Foundation's Bay Area Arts Crisis Navigator advisory group.

<https://www.amyd-music.com/>

Aneesa Strings

Aneesa Strings is a bassist, vocalist and composer from Oakland, where she recorded her first jazz album at just 13 years old. Aneesa received her Bachelors of Music in Jazz Studies at the University of Southern California in 2014, where she released her first solo album *A Shift In Paradigm* featuring her single "Simpin," produced by Patrice Rushen in collaboration with SFJAZZ. A Masters of Music in Jazz Studies at Michigan State University followed in 2016. Aneesa dropped her critically acclaimed sophomore album *Ways* in 2019, and has recently toured world-wide with the likes of Duckworth, José James, Kandace Springs and many others.

<http://www.aneesastrings.com/>



SJZ Announces Jazz Aid Fund, p5

Bobi Céspedes

Gladys “Bobi” Céspedes has been at the forefront of Cuban music in the Bay Area and internationally for over 40 years, with music that integrates Cuban folkloric and modern elements in an authentic and distinctive sound. Her resonant voice and dynamic stage presence lead audiences on a journey from Yoruba incantations to Cuban son. Always present is her chambo—her vibrant and resilient Cuban soul. Bobi’s composing and singing gifts are showcased in 2020’s *Mujer Y Cantante*, an album of eight original compositions celebrating Black cultural heritage as a source of strength and resilience.

<https://www.bobicespedes.com/index.php>

Claudia Villela

Claudia Villela’s glorious five-octave voice is lithe and startlingly beautiful in every register. Born and raised in Rio de Janeiro, she writes and sings mostly in Portuguese, interpreting lyrics with keen emotional insight and supple rhythmic command. Already performing professionally in Brazil in her teens, Claudia later attended the Manhattan School of Music evolving into an inventive scat singer and an ingenious songwriter with an astonishing body of original material. The latest of her seven albums is 2019’s *Encantada (Live)*, a collection of performances that *DownBeat* lauded as exhibiting “an unwavering commitment to the highest level of improvisation.”

<https://www.claudiavillela.com/>

Edward Simon

Venezuela native Edward Simon has made a name for himself over decades in America as a jazz improviser, composer, bandleader and educator. Based in the Bay Area as a member of the all-star SFJAZZ Collective, he has 15 albums to his credit including 2018’s *Sorrows and Triumphs*, declared “unmissable” by WBGO’s Nate Chinen. *DownBeat* has called him “one of the strongest pianists of his generation, with intuitive empathy and drum-like ingenuity.” Edward is on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and has also served on the faculty of the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. He was a 2010 Guggenheim Fellow.

<https://www.edwardsimon.com/>

Ian Santillano

Hayward multi-instrumentalist Ian Santillano taught himself how to play the guitar after years of playing Guitar Hero. Since then, he’s forged a melodic, soulful sound from influences including John Mayer’s *Continuum*, D’Angelo’s *Voodoo* and Kendrick Lamar’s *To Pimp A Butterfly*. While at Santa Clara University, Ian sharpened his music skills, learning jazz and music theory while getting degree in Computer Engineering. Now 24, he writes, produces and records his original music. Lush pads, funky drums, dreamy vocals and aggressive guitar solos support lyrics of honesty and self-experience. Ian has a sound all his own: “Greasy Mayer;” melodic funky soul with a touch of jazz vocabulary.



SJZ Announces Jazz Aid Fund, p6

Ian Santillano, continued

<https://www.iansantillano.com/>
<https://www.iansantillanostore.com/>

James Jackson

The founder and creative director of the group YASSOU, James Jackson is a producer, composer, and multi-instrumentalist. He has spent the last decade creating critically acclaimed content across musical genres and artistic disciplines. In 2015 James composed and produced YASSOU's *Video EP*, a six-song "album cycle" of single videos pronounced by *Nylon* as "redefining the album" and by *Billboard* as a "project that should be on your radar." Since then, his compositions have included the full-length *How They Fade* for the Louisville Ballet and music for the feature film *Crown Vic*.

<https://yassouband.com/>

Javier Santiago

Javier Santiago is one of the most prolific young pianists in the Bay Area and a notable force in the jazz, beat and hip-hop scenes. He has played with top rising international stars including Theo Croker, Kenneth Whalum, John Raymond, Yosvany Terry and Irwin Hall. Javier's debut album, *Phoenix* (2018) on Ropeadope Records was named the #1 Jazz Album of the Year by *Vinyl Me, Please*. In addition to being a pianist and sideman, Santiago is also an accomplished educator, arranger and producer. He is alumnus of The Brubeck Institute Fellowship Program and The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in NYC.

javiersantiagomusic.com

John Santos

SF native John Santos is a prolific Afro-Latin performer, bandleader, composer, teacher and cultural activist with a musical career spanning 50 years. The internationally renowned, multi Grammy-nominated master percussionist has worked with acknowledged masters including Cachao, Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Bebo Valdés, Max Roach, Eddie Palmieri, and Omar Sosa. He is an Advisory Board member of Oaktown Jazz, Living Jazz and the Afro-Latin Jazz Alliance (NY), and a Trustee of SFJAZZ. John is on the faculty of San Francisco State University, the College of San Mateo and the California Jazz Conservatory. His latest album, *Art of the Descarga*, was released in 2020 on the Smithsonian/Folkways label.

<https://johnsantos.com/>



SJZ Announces Jazz Aid Fund, p7

Justin Ouellet

Justin Ouellet, named 2019's Best Jazz Instrumentalist by *San Francisco Classical Voice*, has garnered a reputation as a fearless performer and dedicated educator. In addition to an accomplished career as a classical musician on both violin and viola, Justin moves effortlessly between genres such as jazz, R&B, blues, rock and hip-hop, and has collaborated with an astonishing range of artists from Kev Choice and Jennifer Johns to Air Traffic Controller and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg. Justin is a recipient of the Academy of Gospel Music Award for his achievement in arts education as co-director of Orchestral & Chamber Music Studies at Oakland School for the Arts.

<http://justinouellet.com/>

Kevin Wong

A versatile multi-instrumentalist, composer and audio engineer, Kevin Wong gives top priority to the groove in music, whether it's jazz, funk, soul or gospel. Kevin grew up playing classical piano, clarinet, saxophone, bass trombone and tuba. While pursuing Jazz Studies in San Luis Obispo, he found his calling in life when a colleague took him to see Soulive, an organ trio featuring left hand bass. One of the most in-demand keyboardists in the Bay Area, Kevin has worked with Kenji "Jino" Hino, Tommy Igoe, Ben Misterka, Adam Theis, Narada Michael Walden, Tony Lindsay, Vernon "Ice" Black and Lyrics Born.

<http://www.kevbasskeys.com/>

Lee Dynes

Lee Dynes is a multi-instrumentalist, composer and educator. He has been playing professionally as a jazz guitarist since he was a teenager, has become a fixture in Bay Area jazz scene, having performed with such local legends as Michael Aragon, Vince Delgado, and Dave Getz. He has also broken into the realm of "Middle Eastern" music on the oud, a fretless lute found in the Middle East and North Africa. Lee's debut album, 2015's *Pathways*, featuring all original compositions. He also teaches music daily at the Marin Music Center and at Zion Lutheran School, in San Francisco.

<https://www.leedynes.com/>

Mark Arroyo

Guitarist Mark Arroyo mixes his love of jazz, funk, rock, hip-hop, dub, and electronic music to create a sound that's both foreign and familiar. His musical curiosity is on display in the original compositions he performs with the Mark Arroyo Trio with a sensibility that bridges the gap between modern jazz and the indie underground. The group plays in a jazz-strewn, rock-infused dialect that's grounded in a contemplative, intimate sound that has become its emotional signature. Mark also explores improvised music as Distracted Circuits, using a collection of guitars, synthesizers, drum machines, groove boxes, and effects to explore and create rhythms and sound. www.themarkarroyotrio.com



SJZ Announces Jazz Aid Fund, p8

Melecio Magdaluyo

Born and raised in San Francisco, extraordinary saxophonist/flutist/educator Melecio Magdaluyo has been active in the vibrant San Francisco Latin music scene since the mid-1970s. A multi-instrumentalist known for his virtuosity on saxophone, clarinet, flute, piano, and percussion, he was a founding member of John Santos' Machete ensemble in 1985. Since then, he's made himself known as a one of the most sought after freelance recording and performing musicians in the SF Bay Area collaborating with the Asian American Jazz Orchestra, The Whispers, Confunction, Tito Puente, Pete Escovedo, Sheila E. and M.C. Hammer, in addition to leading his own quintet.

Mild Monk

Mild Monk is the brainchild of Henry Stein, a San Jose Asian-American songwriter & producer. After picking up guitar in 2016, Henry started writing songs on his phone by experimenting with a variety of musical inspirations. His music ranges from alternative pop and indie rock to lofi/instrumental hip-hop. After releasing his debut album *Love* (2018), Henry moved to San Jose and released records including *Orbit* (2018) and *Sunsmile* (2020 featuring a talented crew of Bay Area friends. Whether it be creating a lush sonic landscape with swirling instrumentals or telling a story through lyrics, Stein has created a universe within Mild Monk that is constantly expanding and rediscovering itself.

Robbie Benson

Learning to play on a Wurlitzer electric piano while still in diapers, Robbie "Gwobs" Benson had a rich musical upbringing in San Jose, where a Hammond B3 organ was just an arm's length away. Surrounded by the sounds of his dad & uncle's R&B vinyl collection, and their stories as bay area musicians, Robbie was born into a deep appreciation for his hometown's rich musical history. Greatly inspired and mentored by the local legends he'd see perform (Clifford Coulter, Ron E Beck, Russell Ferrante, etc.), Robbie has tried to keep that old-school San Jose "funk" alive for the next generation.

www.RobbieBenson.com

Ron E. Beck

Drummer/vocalist Ron E. Beck came west at the age of 18 after reaching the top of the music scene in his hometown, Omaha. From 1975 through 1978, Ron E. played with the legendary California outfit Tower of Power and, since then, has been an established and welcomed contributor to the Northern California music scene with his funky drumming and vocal style. He's played with the likes of Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr.; John Lee Hooker; Sylvester; Bill Withers, Clifford Coulter, Sista Monica, Dr. Lonnie Smith and more. He has five albums to his credit and one on the way: *Still Grinding*, due out in early 2021.

<https://www.ronebeck.com/>



SJZ Announces Jazz Aid Fund, p9

Tammy Hall

Tammy Lynne Hall began playing the piano at age four, urged on by her two grandmothers who pooled their resources to fund her private lessons. Since then she has become one of the most respected and beloved performers and music directors in the SF Bay Area. Tammy has worked with acclaimed vocalists like Etta Jones, Kim Nalley, Nicolas Bearde, Ernestine Anderson, Melba Moore, and Queen Esther Marrow; and instrumentalists such as Regina Carter and Terrence Brewer. In 2017 she was awarded Best Musical Direction from the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle for her work in Pamela Rose's *Blues Is A Woman*.

<http://www.tammyhall.com/>

Ten Spencer

Ten Spencer is a bay-area based vocalist and visual artist. Whether it's soul or sultry, her honey-sweet voice captures the minds of her audience and invites them into her world. From jazz and R&B, rock and funk, Ten's artistry expands to a wide appreciation of the Black American Improvisational Music that has guided her work today.

cristenspencer.com

Vân-Ánh Võ

Vân-Ánh Võ dedicates her life to creating music by blending the unique sounds of Vietnamese instruments with varieties of music genres, and fusing deeply rooted Vietnamese musical traditions with fresh new structures and compositions. Since settling in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2001, Vân-Ánh has been focusing on collaborating with musicians across different styles, cultures and genres to create new works, bringing Vietnamese traditional music to a wider audience and preserving her cultural legacy through teaching. Her music reimagines traditional music to contemporary forms, bridging the previous with the current while bringing Vietnamese art music to the next generation.

<https://www.vananhvo.com/>

For interviews and hi-res photos, contact Massimo Chisessi at massimoc@sanjosejazz.org.

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