



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Hartford Public Library Announced 2021 Kaman Charitable Foundation Baby Grand Jazz Series, Starting January 3**

HARTFORD – Hartford Public Library proudly announces the return of its ever-popular Baby Grand Jazz series, made possible by the Kaman Foundation.

Jazz concerts will run every Sunday from January 3 through April 25, 2021 at 3 pm and can be enjoyed online on either HPL’s Facebook ([facebook.com/HartfordPublicLibrary](https://facebook.com/HartfordPublicLibrary)) or YouTube ([www.youtube.com/user/HPLCT](https://www.youtube.com/user/HPLCT)) pages.

“We are tremendously grateful to the audience who continue to support this important part of the library’s work. We love sharing the work of these amazing musicians, many of whom come from the rich Hartford music scene. Baby Grand Jazz isn’t only a good time, but it’s an important part of the library’s mission, offering free access to the arts to the Hartford community,” said Bridget Quinn-Carey, HPL’s president and CEO.

The series continues to be one of the library’s most popular offerings, with thousands of people watching virtually during the truncated 2020 season.

"There's nothing like live music. While we are all still staying safe, we're continuing to bring Baby Grand Jazz to you live on Sundays! Cozy up this winter at home and tune in to hear some of our favorite Hartford area musicians, as well as some fresh talent from the region," said Liz Castle, HPL’s programming manager.

This season the library is offering a wide array of jazz expression. From covers to jazz classics to innovative fusions of styles and instrumentation, the Baby Grand Jazz series has something for everyone.

#### **2021 SEASON SCHEDULE**

January 3 – Ken Serio Trio

January 10 – June Bisantz & Alex Nakhimovsky

January 17 – Anton Kot Trio

January 24 – Andrew Wilcox Sextet

January 31 – CBG and the Hartford Sound

February 7 – Medusa  
February 14 – The John Kordalewski Trio  
February 21 – Charu Surl and Friends  
February 28 – Big Read kickoff

March 7 – HGTS  
March 14 – Kyoko Oyobe  
March 21 – Jimmy Gavagan Trio  
March 28 – New England Jazz Ensemble

April 4 – EASTER  
April 11 – Jonathan Barber and Vision Ahead  
April 18 – People of Goodwill  
April 25 – Nelson Bello

For more information about the series, visit <https://www.hplct.org/classes-seminars-exhibits/baby-grand-jazz>.

### **ARTIST BIOS**

Ken Serio Trio

January 3

Drummer Ken Serio and bassist Jedd Chlebowski started to play together in 2016. Soon after, guitarist Sinan Bakir joined and they have been playing, touring and recording regularly as a unit ever since. They play with intense energy and grace and their repertoire is eclectic, covering tunes from jazz standards and compositions to rock and contemporary music as well as originals. Their latest album is titled “Road Trip”, a double live album featuring the late, great Vic Juris and Dave Mullen.

June Bisantz & Alex Nakhimovsky

January 10

Jazz/classical pianist Alex Nakhimovsky and vocalist June Bisantz have performed, recorded and toured together since 2005. Their concerts include jazz clubs and festivals such as the Litchfield Jazz Festival, the BSBI Jazz Festival, the Greater Hartford International Jazz Festival, the Waterbury Palace Theater/Poli Club, the Avon Public Library, Russell Library, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Artist Collective and many others. They have toured Japan four times and recorded three albums together. Bisantz and Nakhimovsky share a background in classical music - both chose the violin as their first instrument - a love of latin rhythms and jazz harmonies, and a serious playfulness that has made them successful musical partners.

Anton Kot Trio

January 17

Anton Kot (drums/piano) was the pianist for the Jazz at the Lincoln Center Youth Orchestra and his ensemble was recognized in the 12th Annual Charles Mingus Festival in NYC. He has performed at Dizzy’s Club Coca Cola in NYC and Shanghai, the Side Door Jazz Club in Old Saybrook, Carnegie Hall, Wesleyan University World Music Hall, at the International Gamelan Festival in Indonesia, the Newport Jazz Festival with the Berklee Global Jazz Institute, and had his compositions performed at Yale University’s Sudler Hall. In 2019, he toured Asia with Carnegie Hall’s NYO Jazz. Upon his return, he also

performed at the Vail Jazz Festival. Anton is the 2020 drummer for Jazz Band of America and a recent graduate of the Manhattan School of Music Pre-college Program in Jazz Studies.

#### CBG and the Hartford Sound

January 31

CBG and the Hartford Sound is a collective started by pianist Damian Curtis, percussionist Nelson Bello and trombonist Emmett Goods. The three have been friends and musical associates for over 20 years but in 2014 came together for a one-night gig and decided to keep working. And in the last six years the band has played all across New England and in Pittsburgh, Pa. The group's unique mix of both jazz and latin styles gives them a sound that can only be described as uniquely "Hartford". The band is currently working on its first recording due for release in 2021.

#### Medusa

February 7

Medusa was founded in 2010 by Tap dancer Corey Hutchins and percussionist Jocelyn Pleasant. They wanted to change the way Jazz music was seen and especially heard. Medusa is a statement band that wants to be heard as they bring the two great American art forms of Jazz music and Rhythm Tap dancing together in a smooth mix of jazz standards and tap dancing at its highest level. Corey Hutchins has been with the Broadway sensation Riverdance and performed around the world as well as the White House in 2010. Jocelyn has made her mark in the community and performance scenes over the past 15 years.

#### The John Kordalewski Trio

February 14

Pianist John Kordalewski, best known as leader of Boston's big band The Makanda Project, teams with Wes Brown and Royal Hartigan, rhythm section partners in the group Blood Drum Spirit for over 30 years. The program will cover a wide spectrum, from "straight ahead" jazz compositions, to original compositions, to "global jazz" from South Africa and West Africa.\

#### Charu Surl and Friends

February 21

The first female Indian American jazz composer to premier work at Carnegie Hall, Charu was born in South India and has been playing the piano since the age of five, and performing since the age of nine. She formed her jazz band a few years ago, and has released three albums since then, including the recent "The Book of Ragas" blending a jazz trio and Sufi sounds, and The New American Songbook that is an ode to the more traditional songbook sound. Her work led her to become a GRAMMY voting member this past summer.

#### HGTS

March 7

Colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the area of Jazz and African American Music Studies, HGTS brings music to new heights with dynamic original music that explores stylistic variety while balancing improvisational interplay, group dynamics, and arranged ensemble. Jeff Holmes is pianist with the Paul Winter Consort, a multiple NEA Composition grant recipient and leader of the Jeff Holmes Big Band featuring Dawning Holmes, vocals, and Jeff Holmes Quartet. Thomas Giampietro has been fortunate to have opportunities to record and perform all over the U.S. with artists such as Jeff Coffin, Tim O'Brien and Casey Driessen. A native of São Paulo, Brazil and an active performer and composer in the U.S. since 1995, Felipe Salles was

the 2018 recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation Composition Fellowship resulting in his latest recording *The New Immigrant Experience*. Fumi Tomita was active in New York for many years and his latest recording is *The Elephant Vanishes: Jazz Interpretations of the Short Stories of Haruki Murakami*.

Kyoko Oyobe

March 14

The Japanese-born pianist, composer Kyoko Oyobe has been a mainstay in the New York Jazz scene since 2005. She started performing with her own group at New York City's renowned jazz clubs, such as Smalls Jazz Club and Fat Cat. In December 2008 she made a live recording of her original music with her trio, at Smalls Jazz Club that gave birth to the album, "Cookin' at Smalls" released in 2009. In 2014 she made a recording with her Quartet, "Happy Silence," which was released in 2015. She has headlined at many well-known jazz venues in New York, such as the Blue Note, Smalls Jazz Club, Mezzrow, Jazz at Kitano, Garage, 55 Bar, Fat Cat, etc. In Japan, she is also known for touring regularly with her Trio and Quartet at NHK concert hall (Japan's National public broadcasting organization), Body and Soul (Tokyo), Left Alone (Kobe), Speak Low (Hiroshima), New Combo (Fukuoka), Renaiss Hall (Okayama) and many others. Her prowess as a superlative jazz pianist is recognized internationally by musical peers who regularly invite her to accompany them.

Jimmy Gavagan Trio

March 21

Jimmy Gavagan and the members of his ensemble are current students of the University of Hartford. Together they take influence from John Coltrane, Ahmad Jamal, Miles Davis, and many other jazz greats to manifest a creative musical environment. You will hear them recreate jazz standards as well as channel their influences through original music.

New England Jazz Ensemble

March 28

New England Jazz Ensemble is comprised of Walter Gwardyak on the piano, Steven Bulmer on the bass, and Jonathan Mele on the drums. Gwardyak (piano) is a bebop pianist, composer and arranger whose five-decade career has many highlights, including: a summer playing with the Buddy Rich band in 1969; a decade as house pianist with the Sonny Costanza big band in the 1980s and 90s; and music director, composer and arranger for the New England Jazz Ensemble for over 20 years. Bulmer is a multi-dimensional musician actively performing and recording on upright bass, electric bass and tuba. Mele (drums) is a New York City-based freelance drummer, percussionist, composer and audio engineer.

Jonathan Barber and Vision Ahead

April 11

International recording artist, composer, educator and bandleader, Jonathan Barber was voted the #1 Up-and-Coming Drummer of 2018 in *Modern Drummer*. Barber has already recorded and toured worldwide with such artists as Pat Metheny, Erykah Badu, Nicholas Payton, Buster Williams, Jimmy Greene, Jeremy Pelt, Wallace Roney, Terrace Martin, Jennifer Holiday, Harold Mabern, Steve Davis, Stefon Harris, The Brooklyn Philharmonic and many more.

In addition to his first-call status as a sideman, Barber has recently stepped forth as a composer and leader with his Vision Ahead band, featuring saxophonist Godwin Louis, guitarist Andrew Renfro, bassist Matt Dwonszyk, and pianist Taber Gable. The group's blend of classic, swinging jazz with elements of gospel, rock, soul, and fusion is a compelling showcase of Barber's broad stylistic range as a

composer and performer. Jonathan Barber & Vision Ahead was featured and headlined the 2018 Rainy Days Jazz Festival held in St. Petersburg and Moscow, Russia, 2019 Hartford Jazz Festival, 2020 Clifford Brown Jazz Festival, amongst numerous venues across the country.

#### People of Goodwill

April 18

In homage to Africa, the music of People of Goodwill is based around the drum and always reflects a deep respect for the power of rhythm. The music of People of Goodwill freely uses the wide variety of popular music styles, including Jazz, Funk, Rock, Reggae, Rhythm & Blues, Latin, Brazilian and Afro-Cuban that have evolved as a result of the African Diaspora. People of Goodwill presents a combination of its own original compositions and its arrangements of select compositions by some of the most outstanding songwriters and musicians of our time. The band has opened for internationally acclaimed artists such as Ray Charles, saxophonist George Howard, and percussionist Sheila E. People of Goodwill recently was featured at the First Night Hartford Celebration, the Juneteenth Festival at the Wadsworth Atheneum museum in Hartford, CT and the International Festival of Arts and Ideas in New Haven, CT. On several occasions Academy Award winning actor Paul Newman has invited the band to play for his annual gala fundraiser at the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Ashford, CT.

#### TROMBEATZ

April 25

Trombeatz is a musical group featuring Latin jazz/Fusion on a mission to express cultural and social issues. Directed by trombonist Hommy Ramos and percussionist Nelson Bello, Trombeatz is their forum to relive their wealth of life experience. Through their compositions and arrangements, Trombeatz takes Latin music and changes in it into a whole new form, the fundamental base for a unique fusion that combines rock, hip hop, reggae, funk, soul, R&B, and electronic music, resulting in an exquisite combination of pop art.

#### **About Hartford Public Library**

Now celebrating its 126th year, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st Century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. [www.hplct.org](http://www.hplct.org).