



Keeping Classic R&B Alive

# Rhode Island Rhythm and Blues Preservation Society

*Affiliate Member of the National Blues Foundation*

[www.bluespreservationsociety.org](http://www.bluespreservationsociety.org) | 12 Kipling Street, Providence, RI 02907 | 401.461.0012

## **RHYTHM & BLUES NEWS of NOTE**

Newsletter Editor: Sylvia Whiting

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President Cleveland Kurtz

### **From the President's Desk**

#### **"You Don't Miss Your Water, Til Your Well Runs Dry"**

For the last Couple Years, I felt that I was more or less in hibernation, suspended animation, the deep freeze, or something like that. It wasn't terrible, but Covid 19's quarantine and isolation program was not a lot of fun either. Except for our Instruments for Children Program, which never even slowed down, the Rhode Island Rhythm and Blues Preservation Society suffered a similar fate. Now that the group is emerging from its slumber, I realize now how connected my fate is to the group's. I feel like I'm waking up,

too. I realize, in a profound way, the Rhode Island Rhythm and Blues Preservation Society is not only a gift to the community that it serves, but it's a gift to me also.

It may take me a minute to figure out exactly what part of my soul it nourishes, but it was missed. Was it: the sense-of-purpose, the sense-of-community, the beautiful soul sounds, or just something to do? Maybe it was some or all of these. In time, I'll figure that out; but whatever it was, I missed it; and, as of right now, it's coming back; and man, I really like that. The group is revitalizing quickly. We are ready to roll. I sense new energy and an even greater commitment to our mission. I wonder if the break may have done us some good.

There is a sense of newness in the group and that includes a desire for new blood. We welcome new members to join us and enjoy all the great things that we enjoy. I am inviting you to check us out, give us a call, and join our parade. We have a place for you in our ranks. There are a lot of good things to do and you won't be disappointed. If you, like me, are too, emerging back into the world, consider joining us. It will be a thrill having you along.

### **EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

President: Cleveland Kurtz  
Vice President: Max Whiting  
Sec/Treasurer: Sylvia Whiting

### **Instruments Program Director**

Tom Colantonio

### **Board Members**

Barbara Bardsley  
Tom Colantonio  
Clarice Smith  
Paul Williams

### **Honorary Board Members**

Richard & Donna Pena  
Lynn & Elizabeth Pegg  
Sylvia Ann Soares

## **R&B Heritage Month Festival**

**DATE to be Announced**

**August 2022. . .**

**CV Club, E. Providence, Details to follow.**

## Vice President / Music Director – Max Whiting



We're pleased to be back in business after some difficult times due to covid and the inability to function as usual. We are now making a concerted effort to renew our programming: **R&B Heritage Month Festival (August)** and the **'Meet & Greet' featuring TAPA students (October)** as a way to attract new supporters and re-new contact with old members.

We've added to our programming with an event scheduled for **June 14<sup>th</sup> 'A Day in the Life'** to be held at the Mt. Hope Library, 315 Academy Avenue, Providence featuring R&B music, life on the road for R&B performers and an overview of our organization and accomplishments. We will also have a table at the **Juneteenth Celebration (June 19)** at Roger Williams Park Temple of Music. We are planning presentations in schools that receive musical instruments through our Instruments for Children Program, libraries, music venues, clubs and other organizations for outreach. We continue to advertise our events in the local press and announce the need for donations to our Instruments Program with successful results.

Our goal is to increase membership, attract prospective Board members, raise awareness of the expanded history of R&B in RI and expand support of the RIRBPS. The Board will focus our efforts on 1) identifying organizations and individuals in Rhode Island and around Providence who might be able to provide support; and 2) expanding our programming. We will begin planning for the **Annual R&B Heritage Month Festival** in August and look forward to student performers for the **Annual Meet & Greet in November**.

## Secretary/Treasurer - Sylvia Whiting

It is again **Membership Renewal** time for RIRBPS. The dues are only for individuals/Musicians and \$5 for students. Through your support we continue to grow our Instruments for Children Program with over 250 instruments donated this past year.

Many require repair and cleaning, pick-up and delivery. Your donation is well spent. We also continue to offer the **Annual Meet & Greet**, a free event for members featuring student musicians from the Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts. The Membership Form is attached to the Newsletter. All membership fees are tax deductible. For information, volunteer opportunities, musician listings, programming and donations please visit us at [www.bluespreservationsociety.org](http://www.bluespreservationsociety.org).

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**  
*Application on Page 7*

## OUR PROGRAMS

### **Director, Instruments for Children Program, Tom Colantonio**

The Instruments for Children program is continuing along, accepting instruments, refurbishing them as needed and filling requests from schools as they come in. School music programs seem to be picking up speed as the pandemic hopefully continues to wind down. Most donations are coming in from our web presence and word of mouth at this point. We still have a decent inventory as most schools are getting to capacity due in part from our efforts to supply their needs. Schools we serve include Woonsocket Middle School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Middle School, Times 2 Academy, the Anthony Carnevale Elementary School, and the Martin Luther King Community Center. Thanks to Roberts Music, Musicians Corner and Village Drum for their support in cleaning, refurbishing and repairing donated instruments.

Anyone with a musical instrument to donate or information on a school or program in need of our assistance, please contact Tom at 401.793.1281 or Cleveland at 401.461.0012. We will arrange to pick up the instruments, if necessary.

***Musical Instruments Needed***  
**Violins, Violas, Trumpets, Flutes,**  
**Trombones, Clarinets, Saxophones**  
Call Tom @ 401.793.1281

### 🎵 **BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS**

Tom Colantonio, Instruments Program Chair works diligently all year to ensure that any needy student in a Rhode Island school music program has the musical instrument needed to participate. Throughout the covid pandemic he continued to advertise, collect, and distribute instruments to many area schools. He also arranges for the musical instruments to be cleaned, repaired and refurbished at area music stores before being distributed to their new student musician. Tom, a Bass player with the Rhode Island based rock band, Edge of Dreams, performs throughout Rhode Island.

***Bassist & Instrument  
Program Director  
Tom Colantonio***



### 🎵 **HIGHLIGHTS FROM R&B HISTORY**

#### **The Celebrity Club Commemoration** (excerpts from Facebook page)



**Nat King Cole and Paul Fillipi  
at the Celebrity Club**

The Rhode Island Black Heritage Society and the Rhode Island Rhythm And Blues Preservation Society joined hands to raise funds to place an historical marker in Randall Square. This marker commemorates and celebrates Paul Fillipi and his Celebrity Club, Rhode Island's first integrated nightclub. The Celebrity Club was founded by Filippi, an Italian American who loved jazz, and was eager to make a difference in a segregated city. It was the first interracial club in New England, welcoming black and white musicians and audiences. Before it opened, African Americans in Providence who wanted to listen to live jazz, or even just go out for dinner, had to cram into narrow, crowded black neighborhood clubs or travel to other cities.

In addition to providing blacks and whites a chance to enjoy the best jazz music in Providence, the Celebrity Club worked for racial equality. It maintained, notes historian McGill, "a solid stance of openness and equality," by providing its performers what one of them called "a musician's paradise" and paying its African American

employees top union wages. But not everyone was happy to see a successful interracial club. The Providence police raided it regularly, harassing black club-goers. Filippi sold the Celebrity Club in 1958, and it closed in 1960. A commemorative plaque was erected in 2013 and can be viewed on the east side of the Marriott Hotel where Charles and Ashburton Streets merge.

Duke Ellington stayed with friends when he played the Celebrity Club and could be found casually walking Providence's East Side streets. Music legends Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, Little Richard, Billie Holiday, Fats Domino and Joyce Bryant all performed in the venue. Red and Arthur Prysock entertained the locals here. It was a small, cozy place, but world-class things happened there.

Even though many of us were not living in Rhode Island during the Celebrity Club's heyday, this effort to commemorate what the Celebrity Club meant to the Rhode Island community is honorable. A reception sponsored by the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society was a wonderful event that gave local people who patronized the Celebrity Club a chance to tell delightful stories about the entertainers they saw there and the great times they shared with their friends and neighbors. Their stories and anecdotes did not exclude the difficulties the club suffered because of Rhode Island racism.

Some of our members attended the reception and enjoyed the whole experience. The late Richard Pina, former Treasurer, told a couple of outrageously funny stories about what happened to him when his mother took him there when he was a child. We hope you'll take the time to find the Celebrity Club Plaque.

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE @ [www.bluesperservationsociety.org](http://www.bluesperservationsociety.org)**

 **OF INTEREST**

## **EVENTS CALENDAR**

***'A Day in the Life', Tuesday, June 14, 6PM***

**RIRBPS: 'A Day in the Life'**  
an Introduction to R&B In Rhode Island.  
Mt. Pleasant Library, 315 Academy Avenue, Providence.

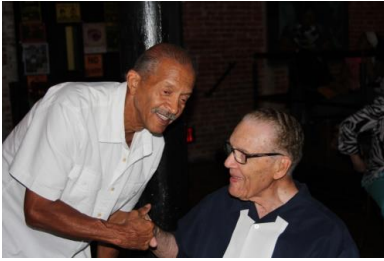
***Juneteenth Rhode Island, Sunday June 19***

**Juneteenth @ Roger Williams Park**  
Sunday, June 19 - Noon til dusk  
Please visit our table.

***August, R&B Heritage Month Festival***

**R&B Heritage Month Festival August 2022**  
**DATE / Details to be Announced**  
CV Club, E. Providence

*Rich Pena (l) with Red Tolliver*



## **Rich Pena 1938-2022    Tribute & Contributions**

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Rich Pena, long time member of the Rhode Island Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society, dedicated music lover, dancer, avid softball player and kind and witty friend. He was a founding member of RIRPBS and served as an Honorary Member of the Board. He was committed to preserving, promoting and educating the community on the early history of R&B in Rhode Island. After a 33 year career with UPS he also served as a member of the Fox Point Boys Club and Cape Verdean Progressive Center (CV Club). He could always be found on the dance floor with his

beloved wife Donna, an Honorary member and founder of RIRPBS. He was a mentor to community youth and had a passion for entrepreneurship, encouraging the youth 'to strive for the top'.

*Jose Santos (top Center) with R&B Preservation Hall Band 2009*



## **Jose Santos (Joe Simmons) 1935-2020 Tribute & Contributions**

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Jose was a lifelong musician and vocalist; proficient on keyboards, drums, saxophone and guitar, performing with many local groups, such as "The Sultans," during the course of his career. He was also a member of the Rhode Island Rhythm and Blues Society contributing his sultry keys and soulful voice to the R&B Preservation Hall Band.

He was the owner of Video Specialists, was an avid golfer, bowler and skier. He was an Army veteran and member of the Military Police. Jose gave freely of his time as an entertainer for residents of senior housing and performing for the homeless at Newman Congregational Church.

## **Vint Bonner 1936-2021**

*Jose Santos (top Center) with R&B Preservation Hall Band 2009*



## **Tribute & Contributions**

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Walter Lee 'Vint' Bonner was an outstanding R&B saxophonist. Hailing from Buffalo, New York, he came to Boston with the band 'Little George and the Sabres'. His band broke up and he joined the Jose Santos & the Sliders with Terry Springer, Frankie Monteiro and Max Whiting (RIRPBS VP), touring the Eastern US and Canada.

Vint was like a family member with his band mates and remained in the Providence area for the last 50 years of his life. He will be missed by all who know him. He is survived by three adult children and several grandchildren.

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## Dick Wilner 1944-2021 Tribute & Contributions

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**Dick Wilner R&B  
Heritage Month Festival**



Dedicated to the mission and purpose of the Rhode Island Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society, Dick was a hard worker enjoying professional gigs with several bands, actually too numerous to mention. Richard's passion, of course, was music and it consumed him for most of his life. Given the name of the 'Godfather of RI Blues Jams', the guitar was his instrument of choice but he is also respected and remembered for his vocals, fabulous arrangements, and as having been a terrific teacher and mentor. Having invested and endeared himself to so many over the years has blessed him with a large and extended musical family who now mourn his passing.

When he wasn't making or listening to great music, he enjoyed fishing, time at the beach, and traveling most anywhere. He cherished spending time with his family with whom he made great memories.

### **WHERE IT'S AT - - - Where music lovers may go to satisfy a healthy R&B craving !!!**

**TT's 133 Club**, Sunday, 29 Warren Ave., East Providence 401.438.1330 – Blues/Jazz Music Series, call for details, dates, times. Mac Odom Band. Motown R&B - NO COVER

**ASKEW**, 150 Chestnut St., Providence, 774-526-9736. Music evenings, Wednesday Jam. Call for details.

**Cady's Tavern**, 2168 Putnam Pike, Chepachet, RI, 401.568.4102. Blues Jam, Sunday afternoon at 3-7PM.  
<http://www.cadystavern.com/#!ricks-roadhouse-blues>, no cover.

**Fifth Element**, 111 Broadway, Newport 401.619.2552 - Jazz in bar - Sat., Sun., Mon.

**Knickerbocker Café** 35 Railroad Avenue, Westerly, RI. 401.315.5070. **Featured Events.** Classic Blues, R&B, Rock, Oldies, Pop. <http://www.theknickerbockercafe.com>. No cover.

**Murphy's Law** 2 George Street, Pawtucket, RI. 401.724.5522. Blues Jams. No Cover. <http://murphyslawri.com/events>.

**Sardella's Italian Restaurant**, 30 Memorial Blvd., Newport 401.849.6312 Wednesday, 7-10 PM Live Jazz.

**Tarragon Bar**, 311 Westminster St., Providence RI, Blues and jazz Sundays, 7:30 PM. No cover.

**The Pub on Park**, 661 Park Ave., Cranston RI - Vintage R&B Ensemble, call for featured bands. 401.781.8888

**The Revolution**, 2190 Broad Street, Cranston, RI, 401.780.8700. "Excellent Food + Good Music = Fun", Check their schedule for Blues greats.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Your support is valuable to us in many areas. Here are some ways you may help:

- Promotion and advertising
- Bookkeeping and banking
- Social media coordination (website, twitter, etc.)
- Producing and staging shows
- Coordinating and compiling our history projects

Our needs have grown along with our organization and we could really use your help. We are easy to work with; we have a lot of fun; and we serve our community. Now, you can't beat that. Please contact me at your earliest convenience.

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### *RIRBPS Membership / Sponsor Application*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Company/Organization/Instrument Played: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Membership Types / Dues</i>		<i>Payable to RIRBPS &amp; mail to:</i>
Student	\$ 5/year	Sylvia Whiting, Treasurer
Individual/Musician	\$15/year	24 Jennifer Lane, Stoughton, MA 02072
Couple	\$25/year	857.222.1785 / sylmax99@yahoo.com
Non Profit	\$50/year	<b>Payable on-line @ <a href="http://www.bluespreservationsociety.org">www.bluespreservationsociety.org</a>.</b>
Venue/Club	\$75/year	
Corporation	\$100/year	<b>Membership renewal year runs from June 1 to May 31.</b>
<b>Advertising Prices for Newsletter &amp;/or Website:</b> Business Card \$25 (2x3.5)   ¼ Page \$50 (4.5 x 5.5)   Half Page \$75 (5x8) Full Page \$150 (8x11). All Ads require camera ready jpeg file.		
<b>Sponsor Flyers:</b> Members only, 1 <sup>st</sup> time free – You Print – We Attach (inserted if mailed).		

**Voluntary Donation**          \$ \_\_\_\_\_          \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total**    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Volunteer Information (optional):**

In addition to supporting RIRBPS with my Membership, I would like to volunteer in the following way:

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