



Keeping Classic R&B Alive

Rhode Island Rhythm and Blues Preservation Society

Affiliate Member of the National Blues Foundation

www.bluespreservationsociety.org | 12 Kipling Street, Providence, RI 02907 | 401.461.0012

RHYTHM & BLUES NEWS of NOTE

Newsletter Editor: Sylvia Whiting

SPECIAL EDITION

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President Cleveland Kurtz

From the President's Desk

ISSUE Dedicated to:

Juneteenth

**Oldest Commemoration of the Ending of Slavery
in the US...Celebrating African American
Freedom & Achievement**

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

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

Instruments Program Director

Tom Colantonio

Board Members

Barbara Bardsley
Tom Colantonio
Dell Padgett
Paul Williams

Honorary Board Members

Richard & Donna Pena
Lynn & Elizabeth Pegg
Sylvia Ann Soares

During these very troubling times the Rhode Island Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society is dedicating this issue to **Juneteenth**, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day. **Juneteenth, celebrated on June 19th** is a holiday in the United States that commemorates the announcement of the abolition of slavery in the U.S. state of Texas in 1865. History tells us that the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863, so what happened for those two plus years? The state of Texas finally notified all slaves that they were now free; marking the celebration on June 19, and the holiday **Juneteenth** evolved.

Moving forward to 2020 **Juneteenth** now has a new and renewed meaning as the country is in the path of two pandemics: the Covid 19 pandemic and the Racism pandemic. During the past year RIRBPS planned to have a **Juneteenth** event; a celebration of freedom, peace, music and art. The RIRBPS **Juneteenth** event would have recognized the contributions of R&B in Rhode Island on this historic day. Then along came Covid-19 and a host of personal health problems of some of our Board members. This forced the Rhode Island Rhythm and Blues Preservation Society into a state of hibernation. I think that the time may be right for us to emerge from our winter's state as we honor and

celebrate **Juneteenth** through print and protest. I hope you agree. This may be a blessing in disguise. We all had lots of time to think, and this may be a good time for new beginnings.

I know I've thought a lot about it and now have some ideas kicking around in my head. I bet you have, too. If so, we need to start the conversation. I think this is a perfect time for it. I am not sure when the state will reopen; but I am sure that it will be soon; so put on your thinking caps. We may be able to resume our meetings then. If that takes too long, we may have to resort to social media. I am no good at it, but willing to try.

New ideas, wild and crazy ideas, revisiting old ideas, are all welcome; so put your imagination to work. My guess is that adding new blood to our group is at the top of your list, too. How do we do that, and what do we do with them once they are here? I bet there are a multitude of innovations in your head that are worth looking at, so let's do it. How does that sound to you?

Vice President / Music Director – Max Whiting



This past year has been quite challenging for our organization and for the country as a whole. We are very pleased with our **Annual Meet and Greet** event and the long awaited **RI Ladies Sing the Blues**. These events underscored the cornerstone of our organization.



The Coronavirus brought a new set of challenges for us and the country at large. The pandemic has made it impossible to move forward with planning future activities and events. However, we are viewing this as an opportunity to plan and re-organize for a more comprehensive approach to fulfilling our mission. We are inviting all interested persons to join with us as we prepare for the challenges that lie ahead. We look forward to a new year and many successes.

🎵 HIGHLIGHTS OF HONORARY BOARD MEMBER

Sylvia Ann Soares, RIRBPS Honorary Board Member is an accomplished playwright, artist and entertainer. Sylvia Ann , a founding member of the Rhode Island Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society, provided unselfish labor and support as a Board member and supporter. Her commitment, dedication and contribution to Rhode Island's Cultural Heritage *Made and continues to make a Difference.*

As part of our dedication to Juneteenth we are pleased to share a recent work presented by Sylvia Ann Soares:

Sharing.....amidst all.....

Sheltering in place with challenging forgotten Black RI history that matters. See a new version of Sylvia Ann Soares' solo **"Defiance!"** as Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, 1st female grad of color from RISD, 1918. She was African American Narragansett-Pequot. (1890-1960) A 48 minute spirited journey thru Prophet's life, diary excerpts, letters and more. At Newport Art Museum June 27, 2019 to accompany the exhibit "Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney: Sculpture" View on link below and feel free to share...

[Sylvia Ann Soares in Defiance! \(Newport Art Museum 2019 --48"\)](#)



INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?
Skills Needed
Technical /PR/Finance

🎵 HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019

RI Ladies Sing the Blues

For many years the Rhode Island Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society discussed the need and interest of dedicating an event to ***RI Ladies Sing the Blues***. This idea finally came to fruition on August 9, 2019 for our ***11th Annual R&B Heritage Month Festival***. We dedicated this yearly festival by highlighting two remarkable and memorable singers; Michelle Cruz & Becky Bass. These women singers in RI have left a mark on the local landscape for their soulful blues and powerful presentation. Featured artists, Michelle Cruz & Becky Bass sang to a full house at the CV Club in E. Providence under the musical leadership of Paul Williams and his band of accomplished artists; Mibbits Threats on bass and Paul Williams, Jr, drums.

RI Ladies Sing the Blues 2019



Michelle Cruz & Becky Bass

Becky Bass, has performed for RIRBPS on other occasions to the thrill of all in attendance. She is a locally renowned vocalist & steel drummer and recently joined Jhony Keys at The Rooftop for live Caribbean soul music. A two-time New England Urban Music Award winner, Becky's beautifully talented voice can be heard with several bands, such as Lion Eye Music, Natural Element, Mystic Jammers, or as a solo artist. Becky, appearing early on as a guest steel pan artist on numerous recordings, recently debuted her solo album, *My Love Is Real*, as lead vocalist. Her style of playing brings you straight to the emerald beaches and sunny skies of the Caribbean. Her soulful, angelic voice also adds that extra special touch to any occasion.

Becky Bass August 2019



Michelle Cruz, new to the RIRBPS stage is an accomplished entertainer and performer.

Her style, range and class set her apart in the local music scene. Michelle is an award-winning singer/songwriter (vocals and guitar) who blends folk, jazz and rock in her music. Cruz was the featured performer at "George Wein and Friends" in honor of Newport Jazz Festival founder, George Wein, for two years in a row and was part of the opening line-up for The Roots (Tonight Show) in Providence. She won Album of the Year Awards from Motif and Best Female Jazz at the Boston Urban Music Awards and has performed in NYC, Philadelphia, Hawaii and locally in the Providence and Boston area including jazz festivals like the Falmouth Jazz Festival and Boston Jazz Festival.

Michelle Cruz August 2019



Cruz loves her community and was chosen to perform at Trinity Repertory's Pell Awards in honor of singer Jeffrey Osborne, Debra Messing of "Will & Grace" and paid tribute with a big band to one of her biggest vocal influences; Nat King Cole and daughter, Natalie Cole. Michelle was asked to sing her Portuguese composition, "Deixa" for the President and First Lady of the Azores during their visit to the US. This past summer, Cruz paid tribute to one of her greatest influences, Nina Simone, for the Burnside Music Series in Downtown Providence. *"Being able to sing in front the founder of the Newport Jazz Festival and groups I admire so much like Sweet Honey In The Rock has been such a blessing..."* states Cruz.

"Michelle has a Billie Holiday soul and the wonderful Cape Verdean flavor of Cesaria Evora"- CVN

"Incomparable..." -Trinity Repertory Company.

It was an honor and a privilege to have two remarkable singers and entertainers performing for the Rhode Island Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society 11th Annual R&B Heritage Month Festival. An evening enjoyed by all.

Sponsors and supports of RIRBPS who donated to the raffle included Imperial Pearl, Providence; Theatre by the Sea,

Wakefield, RI, Chan's Restaurant, Woonsocket, RI, Stadium Theatre, Woonsocket, RI, Make Up & Style, Providence, Board Members, Sylvia & Max Whiting, Tom & Marylou Colantonio and supports, Joann & Gary Johnson.

RI Ladies Sing the Blues 2019



Michelle Cruz & Becky Bass

RI Ladies Sing the Blues 2019



Drummer, Paul Williams, Jr.

RI Ladies Sing the Blues 2019



Becky Bass & Paul Williams Band

TAPA Student Performers



Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts

TAPA student performers were featured at our 5th Annual Meet & Greet on October 27, 2019 at the Cape Verdean Progressive Club in East Providence. This has become an annual event that highlights the successful collaboration between RIRBPS and TAPA; an annual treat for our members, guests, music students, parents and friends. Through the dedicated and talented leadership of Avi David, Music Director at TAPA; we were greeted with a multi-faceted evening of music and song featuring groups of student performers representing each grade level.

The **Meet & Greet** offered our members and guests an opportunity to see youth performers who have been the recipients of the **Instruments for Children** programming. The annual **Meet & Greet** offers an opportunity for our members, guests, community supporters, parents and young musicians to meet our members and mingle around the music we love.

Student Performers



Music Director Avi David & Family



Avi introduced groups of student performers representing each grade level at **Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts** who took the stage with a show of force; rockin' music, song, musical expression and energy from the student performers and the audience. The young musicians were accomplished, polished and professional.

Students/RIRBPS VP Max Whiting



TAPA Student Performers



Student Performers



Student Performers



Student Performers



Student Performers



Student Performers



STAY SAFE

Wishing our friends, supporters, music lovers

R&B movers and shakers to

Stay Safe, Healthy & HOME . . .

We look forward to seeing you this year.

Donations Greatly Appreciated

Volunteer Opportunities

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

- Promotion and advertising
- Social media coordination (website, twitter, etc.)
- Bookkeeping and banking
- 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; have a lot of fun; and we serve our community. Please contact RIRBPS if interested.

RIRBPS Membership / Sponsor Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Company/Organization/Instrument Played: _____

Membership Types / Dues

Student: \$ 5/year
Individual: \$15/year
Couple: \$25/year
Non Profit: \$50/year
Venue/Club \$75/year
Corporation \$100/year

Payable to RIRBPS & mail to:

Sylvia Whiting, Treasurer
125 Cliff Avenue, Winthrop, MA 02152
617.539.3951 / sylmax99@yahoo.com

or **Payable on-line @ www.bluespreservationsociety.org.**

Membership renewal year runs from June 1 to May 31.

Advertising Prices for Newsletter &/or Website: 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.

Sponsor Flyers: Members only, 1st 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: