

WELCOMING WORDS TO OUR NEW MEMBERS FROM OUR LONG-TIME MEMBERS!

GRETCHEN WEAVER

Local 56 member since 1960

Former member/Grand Rapids Symphony

“Welcome to Local 56! We hope that you will explore the value of AFM membership, and I encourage you to stay active in our organization. Please join me in attending the Local 56 membership meetings to gain more information about the AFM. I look forward to seeing you there!”



ELGIN VINES

Local 56 member since 1977

Former member/Local 56 Executive Board

“It’s wonderful to see this creative mix of musicians, young and old, joining Local 56. Your membership is valued, and I hope that you will stay active in our organization. Our musical community is very special, and I look forward to seeing and hearing your talents soon. Welcome!”



A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM "FRITZ" STANSELL (1932-2024)



We were sad to learn that one of our Life Members, William "Fritz" Stansell, passed away in late December. A Local 56 member since 1959, Fritz was the founder of Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, a renowned summer school of the arts. Together with his wife and family, Fritz took the first steps in 1963 to build Blue Lake and worked tirelessly throughout his career to sustain its mission. Their goal was to provide a quality experience in arts education for deserving children of all abilities.

In 1993, Fritz Stansell received our Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians Life-long Contribution to Music Award. Fritz Stansell is survived by Gretchen Stansell, his wife of 71 years, along with their three children. Their son Tom Stansell is a member of Local 56, and he provided these words to us for this tribute.

Most AFM Local 56 members are aware of my father's role in music education. Some may not be as aware of his lifelong advocacy and support for professional musicians, which I'm certain came from first-hand struggles as a gigging musician. He was a proud lifelong member of the AFM, as were his father and grandfather, and his father-in-law, my maternal grandfather, Ozzie Kristen (Kutschinski). I am the fourth generation.

Some of my earliest memories and many family stories come from his playing career. One memory in particular was the almost daily ritual of making his old Kay bass fit into our 1963 VW Beetle, a feat reminiscent of an advanced level of Tetris.

He often spoke fondly of some of the great Local musicians he had known and worked with, most notably a trio with Larry Gray and Gay Whitney, who had a long engagement at the Northway Lanes in North Muskegon.

I'd like to thank the many members of Local 56 for the many kind words and tributes. Your thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated.

Local 56 extends our deepest condolences to the Stansell family and thanks them for their dedication to music education and our organization.

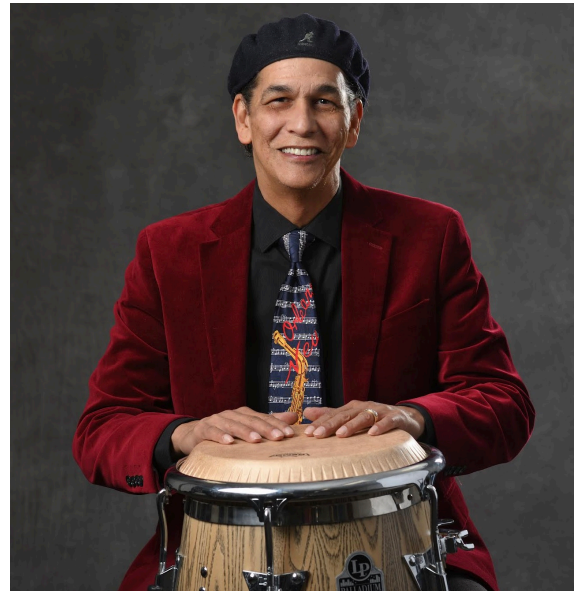
A celebration of life will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family encourages donations to the Fritz Stansell Endowed Fund at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, which provides camp scholarships to arts students.

For more information, contact Andy Lofgren, Vice President Finance & Development, at development@bluelake.org, or write to Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, 300 E Crystal Lake Road, Twin Lake MI 49457.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2024 HONOREES!

MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR KEVIN DALTON-JONES "BUJO"

Renowned as a percussionist, band leader, producer, and educator, Kevin has toured the globe with the legendary Isley Brothers for 13 years and worked with Whitney Houston for 4 years. A Michigan State University faculty member, Kevin was recognized at our November 2024 membership meeting and graciously sat in with all of the performing groups that afternoon!



OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD KEVIN MURPHY



Shown here accepting the award from Local 56 President Bennie Keys, Kevin Murphy has worked tirelessly to promote our organization. A lifelong Grand Rapids resident, January marked 55 years of Local 56 membership for Kevin Murphy! A saxophonist, Kevin is currently Vice President of AFM Local 56.

PHOTO GALLERY/NOVEMBER 2024 MEMBERSHIP MEETING



The Amphitheater of The Masonic Center was the location of our meeting.



Our 2024 Outstanding Service Award winner, Kevin Murphy. Truly a man of many talents!

President Bennie Keys congratulates our 2024 Musician of the Year, Kevin Dalton-Jones "Bujo."

Fong and Friends performed an arrangement of Ravel's "Bolero" by Local 56 Board Member Christina Fong.



Always a pleasure to see long-time Local 56 member Elgin Vines at our meetings!





Our meeting started with the group Local 56 Board & Buddies, who performed an arrangement of Earth Wind & Fire's "Sunshine" by Board Member Sterling Jenkins ...



... and our meeting ended on a high note with an outstanding set by the group
The Sharp Five!

Be sure to join us for our next membership meeting on February 25th, via Zoom. Details are given on the last page of this newsletter.

Photo Credit: Daniel Terpstra/Terpstra Photography