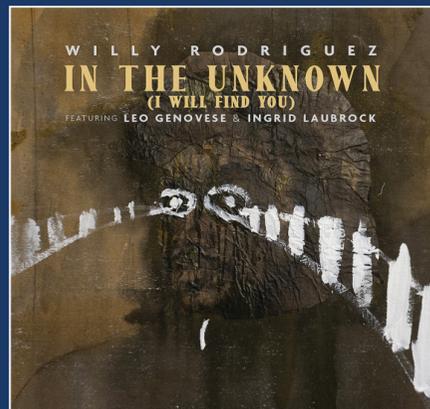


CLOVIS NICOLAS
BLUES IN BLUEPRINT
 LARRY GOLDINGS & CARL ALLEN
 SSC 4120 / AVAILABLE 3/20/26
 @ Midnight Blue, March 26, 2026

Assistant and composer Clovis Nicolas explores the blues here as a versatile jazz foundation. Joined by Larry Goldings on acoustic piano and Carl Allen on drums, the trio moves through traditional and modern works, blending eras and styles into a cohesive, swinging, and deeply engaging program.



WILLY RODRIGUEZ
IN THE UNKNOWN
 (I WILL FIND YOU)
 SSC 1797 / AVAILABLE 3/13/26

Composer-drummer Willy Rodriguez presents his profoundly thoughtful second album as a leader, shaped by grief, memory, and the search for spiritual reunion. Deeply personal in origin yet expansive in sound, the music reflects a journey toward connection in the absence of certainty, with music serving as the sole space where reunion feels possible.



www.sunnysiderecords.com

Held in Carnegie Hall's Resnick Education Wing (Feb. 7) during Black History Month, reviewed here for Women's History Month, bassist **esperanza spalding's** *Homemade Field of Love* was a celebration and reaffirmation of Black women's spiritual survival. This collective spirit, fanned by civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, was passed down to June Jordan (whose poem inspired the event's title), to host Alexis Pauline Gumbs, to music director spalding. The space was fittingly fitted with homemade items: visual art, herbal tea (shared as a libation), seed-shell shakers (for audience participation), even seating cushions. Gumbs, spalding, Morgan Guerin (keyboards, tenor) and Eric Doob (drums) faced each other in a close circle, audience surrounding them in a wider circle. In between Gumbs' poetry readings, the musicians (accompanied by the audience) performed trance-inducing jazz, two dancers gyratory and undulant in the very center. An extended, audience-led free improv, lights turned low, led to a moment of pure *communitas*. Although spalding's song lyrics petitioned for clean air and cool waters, ironically her own vocal air stream had been sullied during a recent trip to Mumbai, causing her to cough and crack notes. Undeterred, she whistled and even managed to coax a few sweetly triumphant tones through her obstructed windpipe—an apt metaphor for the struggles of her spiritual sisters/ancestors to overcome adversity through (to use Gumbs' terminology) "vibrational technologies." — **Tom Greenland**



esperanza spalding @Carnegie Hall Resnick Education Wing

ELEW (aka Eric Lewis), fresh from touring as the solo piano opening act for Sting brought stadium-scale energy to the intimate environs of Zinc Bar (Feb. 10). Enlisting bass and drums were Russell Hall (bass), who appeared larger than life in pirate's tricorn and frock coat, pendulous braids and heavily-ringed fingers, reggae dancing with his instrument; and David Hawkins (drums), who, hunching forward over the kit, wielding long sticks like a martial artist, combined the ruggedness of a linebacker with the delicacy of a dancer. The first set opened with ELEW at full throttle, keeping it there and blowing through fast rhythm changes, sultry Philly-style funk and uptempo swing, spouting precisely yet sinuously articulated motifs and figurations, his powerful left hand fiercely independent of the right. The pianist's body language perfectly mirrored his musical language. Crowned by a gloriously unkempt Beethoven-Afro, his head swiveled in all directions over his neck like a ball-and-socket joint, pitching, yawing, rolling, or else vibrating fervently as the musical spirit so moved him. His face, often turned directly to the audience, eyes scanning, was equally expressive—none of which upstaged his incredible playing. As more folks trickled in, the room reached critical mass. Disinclined to poop the party, ELEW elected to keep going—for almost 3 hours (!)—creating one big, beautiful set comprising post bop, acoustic electronica, Puerto Rican salsa, Sting songs (previewing his next album), bossa nova and R&B—a testament to his comprehensive mastery. (TG)

Celebrating Valentine's week, **Ashley Pezzotti** with the Steven Feifke Big Band at Dizzy's Club (Feb.12) was an outstanding concert no matter the season or reason. The two have known each other for about a decade, and the collaboration reveals an easy camaraderie between the singer and pianist-leader. Their set featured plenty of great standards, and with some imagination, it would be easy to believe the setting as the Hotel Statler with Helen O'Connell and Jimmy Dorsey, most felt with Pezzotti's own swing number, "Don't Tell Me". There were also moments evocative of Ella Fitzgerald, as with the swinger, "Exactly Like You" (Jimmy McHugh, Dorothy Fields). Although Pezzotti is a terrific scatter, she kept that ability to a minimum, instead focusing on lyric interpretation, excellent in a soulful "You Go to My Head" (J. Fred Coots, Haven Gillespie) and in the slow-dance mood of "When I Fall in Love" (Victor Young, Edward Heyman). Feifke is a generous, articulate leader; he rarely took a feature, but when he did, was solidly melodic with excellent creative ideas. The GRAMMY-winning complement of 17 members played in the pocket, with tasty arrangements, which included very welcome bass elements in baritone, bass clarinet and bass trombone. Closer was a big band take of the ironic and malleable Cole Porter standard "Get Out of Town". Fitzgerald took it to haunting fierceness, Sammy Davis, Jr. as a Las Vegas romp and Anita O'Day with swing—Pezzotti and Feifke gave it oomph with hard swing, mega-scat and a dollop of tongue in cheek. — **Marilyn Lester**



Ashley Pezzotti @Dizzy's Club

Ten-time GRAMMY award-winning septuagenarian **Arturo Sandoval** is an experience. Primarily cited for magnificent trumpet artistry and high-note mastery, his appearance at 92NY's Kaufmann Concert Hall (Feb. 4) revealed a showman. In sparkly shoes and eventually reaching for his red-lacquered custom large bore trumpet, he was also full of commentary and discourse throughout, and enough jokes to qualify him for standup status. Toward the end of the program he took collective breaths away with a virtuosic piano performance of a lush, cinematic "Days of Wine and Roses". He also turned vocalist with a solid rendition of "Smile" (Charlie Chaplin, John Turner, Geoffrey Parsons). But to start, a Latin-tinged band feature with Michael Tucker (saxophone), William Brahm (guitar), Lisandro Pidre (piano), Maximilian Gerl (bass), Daniel Feldman (drums) and Roberto Vizcaino (percussion), heralded his arrival. Throughout the concert, Keith Fiala (trumpet) and Larry Bustamante (baritone) appeared on a variety of numbers. That variety included a mix of Afro-Cuban rhythms, bebop, swing and modern jazz. There was no printed set list, and the maestro didn't announce any titles, but the energy of the show was so high and the artistry so off the charts, that this deficit became insignificant. Just watching Sandoval was entertainment in itself as he wandered around the stage picking up and playing riffs on a collection of instruments and freely vocalizing at will. Ending with a mambo, he beseeched a willing audience to *baila!* (ML)

Disclaimer: this below review refutes any accusations of hyperbole. **Imitate No One: A Firespitters Tribute to Jayne Cortez** at the Brooklyn Museum (Feb. 7), part of its "First Saturdays" series, rates as a top concert and one of the most politically relevant. The show, a moving, stirring tribute to the late great Cortez (1934-2012)—the grand dame of avant jazz and protest poetry—filled the house with volcanic spoken word and the still revolutionary concept of Harmolodics. This reconfigured Firespitters, Cortez' band, was led again by her son Denardo Coleman, whose drum artistry was recognized at age 12 onstage with father, Ornette. Bass masters Al MacDowell and Jamaaladeen Tacuma, original Firespitters and Prime Time-ers, were essential to this event. The guitar chair, left vacant by the loss of Bern Nix, remained unfilled, but MacDowell, high on his instrument's neck with a slide, added edge and appropriate blue quality. In place of saxophonist Frank Lowe or others, was prodigious young lioness, alto saxophonist Lee Odom, plus guest Bill Cole on untempered double-reeds. The music was ceaseless and as it progressed, the roving, Harmolodic downbeats worked across each musician as Odom's lamentations conjured Ornette's folk-form howl. Cortez' poetry, front and center, exploded through the dizzying tumult, particularly when joined with the aerial, vocal improv of Tracie Morris. Other powerhouses were Felicia Cade and LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs, as well as solo recitations by Rosamond S. King and Camonghne Felix. This evening was an antidote to the oppressive noise we face daily. — **John Pietaro**



Felicia Cade @Brooklyn Museum

Pianist, composer and sovereign improviser **Trudy Silver** has been a perennial of the East Village scene for decades, thriving through woefully sparse commendation. With husband Bruce Morris, she has been commandeering the 5C Cultural Café through times hard and harder, yet their mission of casting new music into the service of social justice has never been stronger. When asked why 5C has struggled these many years, Silver shrugged and, taking a seat at the house baby grand, dug into a florid, airborne path of free improv fortified by Muhal Richard Abrams, Bill Evans, Amiri Baraka and a century of movement arts. She is that fearless cultural worker who, following a career teaching music in public schools, dedicates her time to being jailed for justice and composing incendiary performance art works. On a frozen Sunday afternoon (Feb. 8), 5C quickly filled into SRO capacity—with Matt Lavelle (trumpet, bass clarinet), Jair-Röhm Parker Wells (bass), Philippe Crettien and Ras Moshe Burnett (tenors), holding court around her. The music began with a Lee Morgan-like '50s blues-heavy sound, then moved quickly into the free zone. Tonality became rapidly slivered and shredded through Silver's steely-eyed conduction. Improv transformed into symphonic fantasy with Lavelle's semi-tonal bass clarinet out front. Silver was in wonderfully rare form, racing through harmonic imagery and other-worldly melody as both tenor players painted new harmonic concepts against the radical placards on the 5C Café wall. (JP)

Displaced from Nublu on short notice, **Arts for Art's (Inter)Space** series landed in the Ki Smith Gallery (Feb. 4), where improvising tap dancer Melissa Almaguer opened a mini-residency with DoYeon Kim and Krissy Bergmark with Amanda Everich painting live to the side. "My first time screaming on stage—I just needed it." Almaguer said afterward, summing up a set built on pressure and release. Her tap, rooted in a percussive lineage borne by enslaved Africans and shaped under constraint, met Kim's wide-ranging gayageum and Bergmark's steady tablas in a music that merged traditional instruments into a shared, borderless atmosphere. The trio moved with an alert telepathy and with the addition of Kim's powerful vocalizing, edged toward a collective cry that arrived as both rupture and lift. Drummer Warren "Trae" Crudup followed with n'Good Company, closing a four-week residency alongside Shara Lunon (vocals, electronics), Ayumi Ishito (tenor), subbing for bassist Jordyn Davis, and dancer Ann-Sylvia Clark. Lunon's synthesizer swirled around Ishito's echo-washed lines, while AFA's Patricia Parker used her phone flashlight to cast Clark's shadow across the wall as she moved. Crudup's firm, unhurried beat held the center as Lunon's murmurs swelled toward aria and back. The set moved from spiritual invocation to discotheque to a spacious psychedelia, ending on a spoken exhortation echoing an Angela Davis sample to "keep hope alive." The event felt like a balm for its multigenerational audience, just to be together in the shared sacred space of sound, which we all needed. — **Ariella Stok**



Ayumi Ishito, Ann-Sylvia Clark, Shara Lunon @Ki Smith Gallery

Canonized by John Coltrane/Rashied Ali's *Interstellar Space* (1967), the saxophone-drum duet established a generative framework for free jazz: unmoored improvisation with built-in intimacy. On opening night of drummer **Tomas Fujiwara's** weeklong residency at The Stone at The New School (Feb. 11), that stripped format again felt liberating. The pairing of Fujiwara and alto saxophonist **Darius Jones** is relatively new, yet they moved with the depth of long-time collaborators. Their set began gently: Fujiwara rolling mallets into low, circular cycles, Jones answering with long, unadorned tones. Almost imperceptibly, the music accumulated, volume and velocity rising by increments until it reached a kind of dervish intensity. The drummer's touch stayed exacting and lyrical, cymbal strokes shaped like exclamation points, rhythms shadowing his partner's lines. Jones drew abrasive textures from his horn, at one point producing a bleat closer to electric guitar feedback than a saxophone. Fujiwara rubbed a stick upright along a drumhead, coaxing sound outward from the surface. The improvisation felt suffused with a sense of infinite potential and discovery: Jones hollered "oh yeah" between phrases, scattering quick zips of air and staccato bursts; Fujiwara answered with restraint that clarified the fervor, building a kind of poetry out of his command of the kit. Each crest met a counterweight: abandon paired with deliberation. By the end, what lingered alongside the heat of fire music was a sense of shared concentration—two musicians sounding their way toward a unified center. (AS)

WHAT'S NEWS

Journey in Satchidananda (Impulse!, 1970) was one of 14 recordings recently inducted (the only jazz album) into the GRAMMY Hall of Fame. The fourth release as a leader by pianist-harpist (and widow of John Coltrane) **Alice Coltrane** (1937-2007) was recorded at The Village Gate and in Dix Hills, NY—where the John and Alice Coltrane Home is scheduled to open as a museum later this year. The band on the recording includes Pharoah Sanders (soprano), Cecil McBee and Charlie Haden (bass), Rashied Ali (drums), Vishnu Wood (oud), Tulusi (tambura) and Majid Shabazz (percussion). Of other notable albums inducted in the GRAMMY class of 2026: Nick Drake's *Pink Moon* (1972), Funkadelic's *Maggot Brain* (1971), Bertha "Chippie" Hill's "Trouble in Mind" (1926), Ella Jenkins "You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song" (1966), Radiohead's *OK Computer* (1997) and 2Pac's *All Eyez on Me* (1996).

And our congratulations to all the 2026 GRAMMY winners and nominees. A roundup of jazz-related awardees follows below...but first, a comment about the always-problematic, short-shrifted jazz representation in the In Memoriam reel. It did include jazz artists Gordon Goodwin, Eddie Palmieri (who later in the program was also posthumously recognized as one of the GRAMMY Trustee Awardees), Roy Ayers, Lalo Schifrin, Sheila Jordan, Chuck Mangione, Anthony Jackson and Jack DeJohnette (the latter whose face and name randomly appeared with a half-dozen others as basically an afterthought, well after the actual Memoriam reel). Several other significant names were inexplicably left out, however—as seems to be the case every year with the GRAMMYs. Given the GRAMMY history of omitting notable figures in particular, why these musicians (all of whom passed away in 2025) did not receive any recognition is baffling: Andy Bey (two-time GRAMMY nominee), Al Foster (GRAMMY winner), Jim McNeely (12-time nominee plus one GRAMMY win), Phil Urich (who appeared on George Benson's GRAMMY-winning *Breezin'*), among others. To add insult to injury, the live GRAMMY performances upstaged many of the In Memoriam artist images and names on the screen behind the stage, rendering them inconsequential to viewers. Dear GRAMMYs: do better. With all due respect, from those of us watching at home, if you're paying tribute, do it properly. That said, our hats are off to the following jazz-related awardees...
 BEST JAZZ PERFORMANCE: Chick Corea, Christian McBride, Brian Blade's "Windows-Live"; BEST JAZZ VOCAL ALBUM: Samara Joy's *Portrait*; BEST JAZZ INSTRUMENTAL ALBUM: Sullivan Fortner's *Southern Nights*; BEST LARGE JAZZ ENSEMBLE ALBUM: Christian McBride Big Band's *Without Further Ado, Vol. 1*; BEST LATIN JAZZ ALBUM: Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Yanier Horta, Joey Calveiro's *A Tribute to Beny Moré and Nat King Cole*; BEST ALTERNATIVE JAZZ ALBUM: Nate Smith's *Live-Action*; BEST AMERICANA ALBUM: Jon Batiste's *Big Money*; BEST GLOBAL MUSIC ALBUM: Caetano Veloso/Maria Bethânia's *Caetano e Bethânia Ao Vivo*; BEST ALBUM NOTES: Ashley Kahn (*Miles 55: The Prestige Recordings*); BEST INSTRUMENTAL COMPOSITION: Remy Le Boeuf with Nordkraft Big Band & Danielle Wertz "First Snow"; BEST ARRANGEMENT, INSTRUMENTAL OR A CAPPELLA: Bryan Carter, Charlie Rosen, Matthew Whitaker (The 8-Bit Big Band's "Super Mario Praise Break"); ARRANGEMENT, INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCALS: Nate Smith featuring saïe's "Big Fish"; RECORD OF THE YEAR: Kendrick Lamar with SZA's *Luther* (featuring tenor saxophonist Kamasi Washington, who appeared onstage for the acceptance speech). Sidenote: electric bassist Marcus Miller and pianist-vocalist Jon Batiste both appeared with vocalist Lauryn Hill's star-studded Memoriam tribute performance to the late, legendary neo-soul/funk musician D'Angelo and Roberta Flack. For more info visit grammy.com.

The sophomore class of the **Jazz Legacies Fellows** (JLF) has just been announced: vocalists Dee Alexander and Mary Stallings, pianists Marilyn Crispell and Kenny Barron, saxophonists Oliver Lake, Charles McPherson, Gary Bartz, Bennie Maupin, Archie Shepp and Donald Harrison, bassist Buster Williams and trombonist William Cepeda. JLFs are lifetime achievement awards made possible by the Jazz Foundation of America (JFA) in collaboration with the Mellon Foundation to honor artists not only for their historical impact, but for their ongoing creative vitality and leadership. Each fellowship comes with unrestricted grants of \$100K per artist, in addition to access to tailored professional and personal resources, including performance and master class opportunities, production support and financial counsel, as needed. Mellon Foundation president, Elizabeth Alexander, notes: "As we honor them and their leadership, we are proud to reaffirm our commitment to America's performing arts, to continue expanding robust, holistic support for American artists, and to join in lifting up jazz itself—a fundamentally American art form that celebrates and expresses freedom." For more info visit jazzfoundation.org/jazz-legacies-fellowship.

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