



Bassist Susan Hagen. Photo courtesy of the West Stockbridge Historical Society.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

PREVIEW: The West Stockbridge Historical Society presents Boston Symphony bassist Susan Hagen at the Congregational Church on April 27

Contemporary works for double bass are uncommon and intriguing. But not as intriguing as performing them on Serge Koussevitzky's own instrument.

BY DAVID NOEL EDWARDS
POSTED ON APRIL 21, 2024



West Stockbridge — If you attend concerts at Tanglewood, you have probably gotten a glimpse of Boston-born Susan Hagen on the stage of the Koussevitzky Music Shed, in the bass section, along with her former Boston University bass instructor, Edwin Barker. Susan is principal bassist of the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra and first alternate bassist for the Boston Symphony and Boston Pops Orchestras. And on Saturday, April 27, she will appear at the Congregational Church on Main Street to perform a program of works for double bass that were commissioned especially for the occasion of bassist and former BSO Music Director Serge Koussevitzky's 150th birth anniversary. The program, curated and performed by Hagen and British bassist David Heyes, will include pieces by double bass virtuoso Giovanni Bottesini.

Serge Koussevitzky was the BSO's ninth conductor and the first to hold the title of music director. The year 2024 marks Koussevitzky's 150th birth anniversary and the 100th anniversary of his appointment as leader of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Ms. Hagen earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in double bass performance from Boston University, graduating with honors under the tutelage of BSO Principal Double Bassist Edwin Barker. She has been busy the last 15 seasons as an extra player with the BSO and is the very first woman to hold the position of principal double bass of the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra.

Contemporary works for double bass are uncommon and intriguing. But not as intriguing as performing them on Serge Koussevitzky's own instrument, which is on loan this Spring to Ms. Hagen for a series of concerts marking Koussevitzky's 150th birth anniversary.

Susan performed with electric bassist Steve Bailey at the International Society of Bassists Convention in 2015 and continues to collaborate with him on recording projects like Steve's latest album, "Carolina," which features Susan's playing. She has also recorded pieces for Victor Wooten and Steve Bailey's latest Bass Extremes album "Slow Down."

Susan—not one to be needlessly oppressed by a pandemic—started giving online recitals in 2020, including premieres of over 50 pieces, and has recorded more than 90 pieces since then. Among her virtual appearances was a solo recital in honor of Teppo Hauta-aho and Frank Proto at the International Society of Bassists' 2021 virtual convention.

In 2018, Susan gave the U.S. premiere of David Heyes' "Seven Last Words from the Cross" and has commissioned or premiered double bass music composed by David Heyes, Simón García, Lloyd Goldstein, Rodrigo Mata, Luis Guillermo Pérez, Mary Rae, P. Kellach Waddle, and Martin Wind.

Pianist Rebecca Plummer and soprano Sarah Poole will join Ms. Hagen and Mr. Heyes on the 27th.

Hear bassists Susan Hagen and David Heyes on April 27, 5 p.m., at West Stockbridge Congregational Church, 45 Main St. Tickets are available [here](#).

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Preeminent jazz pianist Marcus Roberts. Photo courtesy of Roberts.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

PREVIEW: Marcus Roberts Trio closes Pittsfield CityJazz Festival at the Colonial April 27

This final concert of the Pittsfield CityJazz Festival will also feature the Berkshires Jazz All Star Youth Ensemble.

BY DAVID NOEL EDWARDS
POSTED ON APRIL 21, 2024



Pittsfield — When someone is called "one of the preeminent American jazz pianists of his generation," you have to wonder what's up. Because it's not the first time you've heard such a claim. How many preeminent American jazz pianists (of his generation) can there be? The following description of Marcus Roberts' playing from the Philadelphia Inquirer's A.D. Amorosi will make you stop wondering what's up, because Mr. Amorosi spells it out clearly:

Pianist Marcus Roberts is known for many things: a genius skill that makes him the logical successor to Thelonious Monk's wild style (with a lot of Fats Waller in his stride), an immense love of the blues, technological innovations in regard to composing for the blind, and a soulful sense of tradition and invention.

The Monk reference speaks volumes, confirming what your ears tell you when Roberts plays any standard tune you would care to name. At times, there is a seemingly reckless quality to his playing that distinguishes him from almost everyone but Monk himself. When Roberts gets outside, he gets *really* outside and tends to frighten you a little before returning. But his playing always overflows with harmonic ear candy. And yes, Roberts evinces an immense and irresistible love of the blues, which provide the foundation for everything he plays.

Drummer Jason Marsalis. Photo courtesy of Marcus Roberts.

It is a joy to hear Marcus Roberts play solo. But when he plays with his trio, featuring Jason Marsalis (Ellis's son) on drums

and Rodney Jordan on bass, the fun and excitement go up a notch or two. These guys have had a joy together for many years, and their telepathic interactions on stage give them away as masters of jazz improvisation.

The trio will perform Roberts' 12-movement suite, "From Rags to Rhythm," along with a tribute marking Duke Ellington's 125th birth anniversary.

During the first 15 years of his career, Marcus Roberts released over 30 recordings of piano performances—solo, with trio, big band, and with symphony orchestra. Also during this time, his trio performed Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" with Seiji Ozawa conducting, in a truly mind-boggling revelation of Gershwin's intentions that anyone can recognize as such. He and Ozawa also presented Roberts' own arrangement of Gershwin's "Concerto in F for Piano and Orchestra." CBS featured Roberts in the "60 Minutes" episode "The Virtuoso," which traced his life from his early years in Jacksonville, Fla., and at the Florida school for the Deaf and Blind, to his career as a professional musician. In addition to his achievements as a performing musician and arranger, Roberts established the J-Master Records label in 2009. His commitment to mentoring and training emerging jazz talents led him to establish the multigenerational ensemble Modern Jazz Generation, and he has mentored such jazz greats as trumpeters Marcus Printup and Nicholas Payton, trombonist Ronald Westray, and drummer Jason Marsalis.

Bassist Rodney Jordan. Photo courtesy of Marcus Roberts.

This final concert of the Pittsfield CityJazz Festival will also feature the Berkshires Jazz All Star Youth Ensemble.

Hear the Marcus Roberts Trio at the Colonial Theatre, 111 South Street, Pittsfield, on Saturday, April 27, at 7:30 p.m.. Tickets are available [here](#).

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BERKSHIRES CALENDAR

	Pittsfield CityJazz Festival APRIL 24 - APRIL 28 @ 07:00 PM - 10:00 PM
	BerkChique! APRIL 26 - APRIL 28
	Stockbridge Festival Chorus Spring Concert APRIL 27, 2024 @ 03:00 PM -
	Crescendo Presents Gilbert & Sullivan: Trial By Jury. And More! MAY 05, 2024 @ 04:00 PM - 06:00 PM
	James Bagwell Conducts Magnificat MAY 11, 2024 @ 04:00 PM - 05:30 PM
	CATA Annual Performance MAY 12, 2024 @ 01:00 PM - 02:00 PM

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