

**JazzBoston Opening Statement**  
**Public Hearing of Boston City Council Committee on Arts & Culture**  
**April 7, 2014**

**Presented by Pauline Bilsky, Executive Director**

JazzBoston is an 8-year-old nonprofit jazz support and advocacy organization that represents the entire Boston jazz community. I'm here today to suggest ways the jazz community can help achieve some of your most important goals for the City of Boston:

- a united city, with less violence and more of the inter-racial good will that we saw at the St. Patrick's Day breakfast
- a world-class city that attracts businesses and tourists.

Employees of Boston's growing tech start-up community need somewhere to go after a day of innovating, and the sports tourists the Mayor hopes to draw to the city need somewhere to go when the game's over. Late-night public transportation is important, but Boston still needs more night life. Jazz is the quintessential form of night-time entertainment all over the world. It could be in Boston too.

All the ingredients of a world-class city are here now. What's missing are recognition – and collaboration.

Boston's rich jazz heritage, unique jazz community, and dynamic jazz scene are an important part of what distinguishes it from other major cities. There are very few great jazz cities in the world. Boston is one of them. That fact is under-recognized nationally and internationally, and even locally.

Here's what we propose:

**1. Partner with JazzBoston, MassJazz, and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) to make the most of what's here now.** We have been working together for several years to keep Boston's jazz scene growing and brand Boston as one of the world's great jazz cities. This effort would be much more effective with the City as a partner and some clear lines of communication.

**2. Make it easier for new jazz clubs to open, and survive, in Boston.** (Pat Hollenbeck and the Boston Musicians' Association are behind this one because it means more jobs for working musicians.)

- a. Loosen or remove restrictions on live music performances and dancing in clubs and restaurants. Everyone has spoken about this. It's particularly important for jazz. They heyday of jazz was when people got up and danced to it. Does anyone here like to dance?
- b. Give landlords an incentive to rent basement spaces to jazz clubs at below-market rates
- c. Make unused basement spaces in City-owned buildings available to jazz organizations and jazz clubs free or at low cost.

(Boston's jazz scene is upside-down. Everywhere else in the world, people go downstairs to hear jazz. To get to Boston's – and Cambridge's – main jazz club, you have to take an elevator up.)

**4. Put a line item in the City budget for Jazz Week, including an official celebration of International Jazz Day.** Jazz Week is a 10-day celebration in and around the city, featuring performances and educational events of all kinds at a wide range of venues ranging from clubs, galleries, museums, and churches to libraries, schools, hotels, and shopping malls. It is about making Boston's jazz scene more visible to residents as well as visitors, connecting audiences of all ages to the music, bridging cultural and generational divides, and growing the jazz audiences of the future. To achieve these goals, we place a special emphasis on making jazz more affordable and accessible during Jazz Week by organizing or engineering a variety of free and low-cost events in different neighborhoods. JazzBoston has organized and promoted Jazz Week every year since we revived it in 2007.

The centerpiece of Jazz Week is a free public concert on International Jazz Day (proclaimed by the United Nations in 2011 and celebrated worldwide on April 30 since 2012), that we are producing for the first time this year. It will be at Emmanuel Church on the evening of April 30. Through its lineup and a special outreach effort, the concert will bring together, onstage and off, many of the different communities in our city. Because it will be publicized and streamed worldwide, it will also help brand Boston as one of the world's great jazz cities.

**5. Announce a program to name places after Boston-born and Boston-based jazz legends, living and dead – a possible immediate step.** The program would stimulate development and build pride in neighborhoods targeted for renewal, provide celebratory occasions to bring people together, and ultimately create another attraction for cultural tourists. We first proposed this program in December. MOTT and Mass Jazz were hoping the program could be launched on International Jazz Day. However, given the late date, just the announcement of the program, possibly including the names and presence of the first two honorees (we suggest Roy Haynes-Roxbury and Mae Arnette-Dorchester) could be a special IJD event in itself, with the participation of the local City Councilors and community leaders, and of course, live jazz.

JazzBoston can also help connect the City to organizations that share some of your educational concerns. For example, we are in the process of connecting the Newport Festivals Foundation, a Jazz Week sponsor, with the Arts Department of the Boston Public Schools. George Wein is considering offering a special BPS discount on tickets to this summer's Newport Jazz Festival, possibly combined with low-cost transportation. This grew out of a collaboration between JazzBoston and the BPS Director for Performing Arts to present a day during Jazz Week that will be focused on young people and jazz. "Meet the Next Generation of Jazz," on April 29, will include BPS Jazz Open Studios during the day and a High School Jazz Band Showcase at the Boston Public Library in the evening.