

SOUTHBURY MAKERS SPOTLIGHT

SwingSet



Wendy Matthews
Vocals and Ukulele



Ernie Pugliese
Guitar



Julie Sorcek
Flute and Vocals



Ed Pryzby
Bass and Vocals

SwingSet, jazz and swing band

By Kelly Keenan, SEDC Arts & Culture Subcommittee

Photos courtesy of the artists

This month's spotlight features an eclectic and talented group of musicians who, together, form the band SwingSet. Band member Ernie Pugliese shared some insight into their musical process and what they've got on the docket for this year.

Q: How long have you all lived in Southbury?

A: I moved to Southbury five years ago. We enjoy the small town atmosphere, but with lots of activities and shopping. It is more affordable cost of living versus lower Fairfield County, where I grew up. It's accessible to NYC but the gateway to the beautiful, bucolic and pastoral Northwest Connecticut and the Berkshires.

Q: Who is in your band, how long have you been together, and how did you meet?

A: The band started as a trio five years ago. It was comprised of Wendy Matthews on vocals and ukulele, Julie Sorcek on flute, vocals and sax and myself on guitar. Wendy and I met eight years ago at a Swing Camp in West Virginia. Then we reconnected when I moved back to CT at an open mic where we added Julie and formed the group, SwingSet. And recently, for larger venues and audiences we've added Ed Pryzby on bass and vocals and Bill Fedorko on percussion. I also play in a gypsy jazz band from Brewster, called La Pompe Attack led by two-time Grammy nominee Doug Munro. Wendy plays with The Edukated Fleas and Fluke. Julie plays with On The Road Again and Fluke. Ed plays with The Hat City duo and Bill with Shoo Fly.

Q: Tell us about the type of music you play.

A: We play tunes from "The Great American Songbook". These were composed mostly as show tunes from the 30's, 40's and 50's, and were the popular music of those times. They're considered jazz standards and have been covered by Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Nat King Cole and more recently, Harry Connick Jr. and Diana Krall.

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Q: How do you come up with your set list?

A: We consider the venue and audience. We play a mix of serene, soft, sophisticated jazz and swing standards, and Latin bossa novas, with great instrumentals and vocals. We have coined the phrase “a Mirthful Musical Mélange of Classic American Songbook Standards” to describe our musical playlist.

Q: Where are some venues and events you've performed at?

A: Ann's Place Festival of the Trees, Danbury Street Festival, Danbury Chow-Down, Bethel Summerfest, Bethel Makers Market, Walkway Over the Hudson Walktoberfest, New Milford Farmers' Market, Danbury Farmers' Market, Heritage Village Harvest Fest, Sarah Cook Hall, HVG Pool Four, Glen Crest Senior Living, Watermark at East Hill, King Street Rehab, Redding Community Center, Glenn Ridge Senior Center, Sherman Jewish Community Center, Painted Lemon Restaurant, Pulcinella's Restaurant, Note Kitchen and Bar, Putnam House Restaurant, Charter Oak Craft Brewery.

Q: What is your favorite aspect of performing? Least favorite?

A: Favorite - the response you receive, playing live in front of and from an enthusiastic, appreciative audience. Least favorite - dragging around loads of equipment.

Q: What does the band have in store for 2024?

A: Hopefully many more live performances. Our next gig is at [Charter Oak Brewery](#) on March 10th from 3:00 - 5:00pm.

Q: Do you have any advice for other musicians and artists who are just getting started?

A: Do it because you love sharing your musical talents with a live audience... secondarily as a vocation.



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