

JOE PIAZZA

DRUMMER

Artistic Director, Producer, Marketing, A&R

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Born in Staten Island, Joe began playing drums in the music program at Public School 41. At age 10, he marched and played drums with the Staten Island Community Band and was selected to be a member of the Staten Island District Orchestra. By age 11, Joe was studying privately with Henry Okstel, who currently teaches at North Texas State University. Recognizing his talent, District Music Superintendent Louis DeTaranto created a Big Band that featured Joe playing Gene Krupa arrangements. At 13 he led a Benny Goodman style trio that played for grown-up events, while at the same time playing music of his generation at sock hops and rock 'n' roll shows. DeTaranto would later recommend Joe to the High School of Performing Arts in New York City. In 1963 at 17 he led a jazz group called The Quintet who played in the hard-bop style of Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers and Horace Silver.

After his graduation in 1964, Joe's professional career took off with the recording of The Strangeloves "I Want Candy" and The McCoys "Hang on Sloopy," both #1 records. Additionally, while nurturing his first love, jazz, Joe played in a variety of rock bands including Circus Maximus, Euphoria Five and The Eric Mercury Band, managed respectively by Celestial Artists, Brian Epstein and the Robert Stigwood Agency.

Settling in Minneapolis in 1969, Joe was a session drummer for Sound 80 Studios' engineer Tom Jung and played at the Guthrie Theater with Music Director Herb Philhofer.

Joe also played drums and sang with The Mystics, an award-winning R&B soul band who, along with Joe, were inducted into The Minnesota Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in 2006. In 2007 he was inducted into the Minnesota Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame with the group Blackwood Apology, who received 2 Connie Awards in 1969 for Best Vocal Group and Best Album.

While residing in Minneapolis, Piazza produced world-class jazz events, presenting extraordinary artists, such as —The Bill Evans Trio, Earl "Fatha" Hines, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, McCoy Tyner, Sonny Rollins, Tony Williams Lifetime, Gary Burton, and The Jimmy Smith Trio, while playing drums in the bands of Bobby Lyle, Irv Williams, Manfredo Fest, and Roberta Davis.

Returning to New York in 1979, Joe was hired as the first Artistic Director of Snug Harbor Cultural Center. He conceptualized a Summer Festival, demonstrating the Harbor's potential as an arts institution, thereby positioning it's eligibility for funding. Joe negotiated with The New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera Company to convince them to bring their summer concerts to Snug Harbor. Those concerts continue to this day.

Performing with some of the most famous practitioners of the Hammond B-3 organ, and playing in a style in which he is most comfortable, Joe continues to be an integral part of New York's uptown jazz scene. His collaborations have included playing with Etta Jones, Houston Person, Dr. Lonnie Smith, and Big John Patton.

From 1999-2001, Piazza served as the music director for the Off-Broadway production of Lord Buckley Alive!

In 2002, Joe produced the Staten Island Waterfront Festival and was the director of its highly-acclaimed tribute to September 11 at SI's Borough Hall, overlooking New York Harbor.

Accomplished in a variety of styles, Joe has also performed with Doc Severinson, Gato Barbieri, the "legendary" Ink Spots, Ray Price, Loretta Lynn, and Jamaican superstar, Sugar Minot.

Joe was the lead negotiator for the sale of the domain name www.applemusic.com, which was used for the launch of Apple Computer's iTunes Music Store.

Currently residing in New York, Joe Piazza is a creative resource and a visionary for music and the arts.