

This is a letter of support for my good friend Ray Koskie on behalf of the Jazz Performance and Education Centre (JPEC) who, since the beginning of the Covid 19 Pandemic has been doing everything he could possibly do to help musicians and keep jazz alive during these trying times.

I'm hearing constantly on the news of different groups of people asking the Government for assistance because the pandemic has put many of them either out of business or left them in a situation that makes it impossible to keep going. Governments go out of their way to help restaurants stay open, keep airlines flying, bars need help, farmers need help, everyone needs help. We all need help. The future for most musicians is bleak, no matter what kind of music they happen to play. Symphonies are canceling all events for the next year or so, the opera, the ballet, chamber music festivals, and jazz festivals all over North America are canceled 'till further notice but I don't hear much on the news about this. They did have an item on CNN News about Broadway shutting down in New York. They went on about the fact that not only were the actors and singers out of work but also the lighting crews, sound crews, all the people working in the theatre, but they didn't mention the musicians playing in the pit. It seems as though the plight of musicians has gone un-noticed, but for years, it's been made clear to us that musicians (actually most people in the arts) are a non-essential service.

Here in Toronto there are quite a large group of jazz musicians who, even in normal times have a tough time getting by and now, with the pandemic it's even worse with almost no playing opportunities at all. The fact is also that if the jazz venues stay closed long enough the jazz audience, in time will lose interest in the music and forget about it. They'll just get used to life without it.

Ray Koskie has made it his mission to keep this from happening. He is not only providing the musicians with a chance to play and get paid for it, he's presenting great "new" performances on line for people to be able to listen to and watch and they are listening and watching.

I've known Ray for many years and he's always been a huge supporter of our music and what he's been doing recently is truly amazing. With a dozen or so more people like him around Jazz would have nothing to worry about. As it stands though, he's a one of a kind miracle worker and we all owe him a ton of thanks for all of his efforts and as much support as is available.

Don Thompson OC