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Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra Diversity Council honors IDEA Award recipients at annual Opening Doors event

Award recognizes WNY community members and organizations for creating inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible musical environments



Carol McLaughlin



The Historic Colored Musicians Club of Buffalo

On Friday, June 20 at 5:30pm, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra Diversity Council presents their annual Opening Doors fundraiser and awards ceremony at Kleinhans Music Hall. With music from local band Critt's Juke Joint, food from Graze and Luxe, Brothers Restaurant and Sabor Criollo y más, a cash bar and basket raffle, this event supports the BPO's efforts to build diversity in orchestral music and recognizes this year's recipients of the BPO Diversity Council IDEA Award.

The IDEA Award, won through peer nomination, aims to recognize and uplift individuals and organizations in Western NY who embody the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access (IDEA) while promoting, supporting, and/or practicing the musical art form. At Opening Doors, the 2025 IDEA Awards will be presented to Carol McLaughlin, Honorary Chair of the Jazz Department at Community Music School, and The Historic Colored Musicians Club of Buffalo—one of the oldest African American musicians clubs in the country—celebrating the 90th anniversary of its chartering by New York State this year.

In the nomination of Carol McLaughlin, Jennifer Guillow, Executive Director of Community Music School, wrote: "Carol McLaughlin has been a fixture of the City of Buffalo's music scene for over five decades. As a classically trained saxophonist and flutist who found his calling in the jazz world, he has broken down barriers to the access of playing and learning music and strives to build bridges wherever

he can. By playing all over the WNY area, Carol has contributed to the accessibility of the jazz genre. He and his bands play in all seasons in parks, community associations, organizations such as the Colored Musicians Club and the Broadway Market, at parties, restaurants and more. Carol schedules public rehearsals where any person who's interested can attend free of charge. He invites students and professional musicians alike to join his band rehearsals, giving them the opportunity to perform publicly. Carol takes his music and musicians to all corners of Buffalo and beyond, reaching as many community members as possible, and has specifically reached out to underserved communities with the intention of bringing orchestral music to anyone who would like to learn and perform."

Craig Steger, Board member of The Historic Colored Musicians Club, shared: "The Historic Colored Musicians Club and the American Federation of Musicians union that founded it (AFM Local 533, 1917-1969) began a program of free music education as early as 1921. Over the last 100 years, our mission statements have stated that we are dedicated to promoting research and preserving the history of African American music in Buffalo and globally, and that we aspire to enlighten, encourage, and educate our youth on their musical heritage. At our Sunday night jam sessions, we provide an opportunity for our mentees to observe and perform with professional African American musicians. Over many decades, many musicians have credited the HCMC with helping them improve their jazz improvisational skills and starting their careers. With the recent acquisition of a large building next to the HCMC, we are planning to create a formal music school with practice and performance spaces for all types of music, in collaboration with local schools and music education programs, with particular focus on the art forms of youth."

Tickets for Opening Doors are \$35, available to purchase at bpo.org. The event is presented by [Uniland](#), and proceeds benefit the [Buffalo United Community Choir](#). To learn more about the 2025 award recipients, visit bpo.org/IDEA-Award.

About Us: To learn more about our storied history, distinguished conductors and world-class musicians, and commitment to [IDEA](#), visit the [Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra](#).



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