

The Salon at The Players Club December 30, 2009

*Exquisite libations. Live music & Burlesque.
Celebrating New Year's Eve Eve & The Piano Store's 10yr Anniversary
Lounging, Dancing & Swinging in Style since 1999*

New York City, NY (December 1, 2009) – **The Salon** returns to the beautiful and historic Players Club on December 30th for another extravaganza of live music, dancing, burlesque, and fine cocktails. In addition to the usual festivities, The Salon will be celebrating New Year's Eve Eve — a time-honored tradition when the professionals come out to play in advance of the biggest amateur's night of the year, New Year's Eve. This is The Salon's last blow out for 2009, and in celebration of the success of the last year's events, live music and cocktails will be featured on two floors of the Players Club, expanding from the main ballroom into both the Sargent room and the upstairs Library. The occasion also marks the 10th Anniversary of the Piano Store Social Club; a short-lived but much-beloved underground party that used to occur in the space now occupied by Pianos.

Featured musical performers include **GEORGE GEE's JUMP, JIVIN' WAILERS** in the main ballroom; **QUEEN ESTHER & THE HOT FIVE**, marking the debut of the upstairs library lounge; **GELBER & MANNING** in the Sargent room, plus burlesque dancers **HELEN PONTANI** and **PANDORA** in between big band sets on the main stage. Additional guests include DJ **RIKOMATIC** and guest bartender **ERYN REECE**, who will be mixing her customized cocktails upstairs in the library. Additional specialty cocktails designed by **LOUNGERATI**, **WIT's END**, and former Piano Store bartender **KEVIN BROWN** will be featured in the main bar downstairs. Kindred spirits include **ZELDA** magazine, plus many more.

Since 1999, The Salon has been bringing together creative people to perform live music, share their art, dance, drink and socialize. The tradition of great Salons from the past has been reinterpreted for the modern world by pulling from a creative community of friends and colleagues who come together to share, collaborate, and showcase their incredible talents in an atmosphere of old-school glamour and up-to-the-minute appreciation of the finest talents in vintage-inflected music and performance that New York City has to offer.

GEORGE GEE's JUMP, JIVIN' WAILERS is one of the hottest big bands in New York City, if not the country. Along with vocalists John Dokes and Hilary Gardner the 10-piece band will perform three sets of Savoy Ballroom-influenced swing in the main ballroom, providing plenty of inspiration for dancers and music aficionados to enjoy. (www.georgegee.com).

On the second floor, the beautiful Library of the Players Club will be transformed into an intimate lounge to enjoy fine cocktails and more live music. Featuring **QUEEN ESTHER & THE HOT FIVE**, a collective of New York City's finest jazz musicians that plays intimate reconfigurations of rare all-American standards and original modern classics. The band is the brainchild of vocalist Queen Esther, who was the Grand Prize winner of the 2008 Jazzmobile Jazz Vocal Competition. (www.queen-esther.com)

Also in the Library Lounge will be guest bartender **ERYN REECE**, mixing traditional and original hi-end cocktails. She is a rising star in the cocktail world and a founding member of Lupec NYC as well as bartender at Louis 649. In addition, a specialty cocktail menu has been concocted for the main bar in the Great Hall, by our friends from **Loungerati, Wit's End** and former Piano Store bartender **Kevin Brown**.

In the Sargent Room, named for the original John Singer Sargent paintings found on the walls, you will find **GELBER & MANNING**, the feuding vaudeville lovebirds and stars of the Internet series *Gelber & Manning In Pictures*. This piano and vocal duo combine original tunes with the hot ragtime hits of the 20s and 30s. (www.gelberandmanning.com)

Burlesque has long been a part of The Salon, and the evening wouldn't be complete without the talents of some of New York's hottest burlesque dancers. We proudly present **HELEN PONTANI** of the World Famous Pontani Sisters, and **PANDORA**, The Greek Goddess of Burlesque. Helen Pontani has earned critical acclaim from the Times, the Post, the Daily News, the Village Voice, and Time Out magazine. She was awarded a Golden Pastie at this year's New York Burlesque Festival for Most Positively Perfect Posterior, and featured on the cover of GO magazine.

DJ RIKOMATIC will be spinning an eclectic mix of soul, funk, swing & blues to keep you dancing all night long. Rik is also an avid dancer and one of the key members of Yehoodi.com, the largest and most popular swing dance-dedicated website in the country.

The Salon at The Players Club is Wednesday December 30, 2009. The doors open at 8pm and live music begins at 8:30pm. The Players Club is located at 16 Gramercy Park South (20th St off Park Ave). Admission for the Salon is \$25 at the door or \$20 online in advance.

For more information and advance tickets please visit: <http://www.thesalon.biz>

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Salon - Dec 30th, 2009

THE SALON

For hundreds of years, Salons have been gatherings for fascinating people to entertain each other, socialize and increase their knowledge of the arts and the world through readings, performances and conversation. Salons have broken down social barriers, helping to bring about the enlightenment in the 17th century and the birth of the Avant-garde in the late 19th century.

In 2001 composer and music producer **PATRICK SOLURI** sought to develop a multi-cultural gathering of friends and colleagues, inspired by the historical Salons. Another inspiration was the Piano Store Speakeasy, produced in NYC from 1999-2001 by **ANDRE SOLURI** and **LESLEY MARTIN**. The first Salon was held in Patrick's apartment in 2001; friends and colleagues were invited to perform live music and readings, to dance, drink and socialize. The common thread has been live music: from jazz and alternative rock to experimental and classical music. One could hear and see both well-known and unknown artists of all genres. To produce the Salon in larger venues around New York City, Patrick joined forces with **Fredo C.** from **LOUNGERATI** as well as **Andre Soluri** and **Lesley Martin** of **PROHIBITION PRODUCTIONS**.

LOUNGERATI

The cocktail craze that has seduced the city recently is nothing new to the Loungerati; they've been living *la dolce vita* for ten years. Their flight plan - create an outlet for like-minded individuals united in the pursuit of lounge culture. Their website provides reviews of cocktails, lounges, bars and events, as well as articles, entertainment, and commentary. Keep your eyes open for Loungerati sponsored events and cocktail menus near you! <http://www.loungerati.com>

THE PLAYERS CLUB

In 1888, Edwin Booth, America's pre-eminent Shakespearean actor, and 15 other incorporators, including Mark Twain and General William Tecumseh Sherman, founded The Players Club. Modeled after London's famed Garrick Club, The Players was the first American "gentleman's club" of its kind. Its purpose: "The promotion of social intercourse between members of the dramatic profession and the kindred professions of literature, painting, architecture, sculpture and music, law and medicine, and the patrons of the arts..."

The Players, located in a Greek Revival townhouse facing historic Gramercy Park, is also home to the Hampden-Booth Theater Library, reflecting Booth's express wish to create "a library relating especially to the history of the American stage and the preservation of pictures, bills of the play, photographs, and curiosities connected with such history..."

Today, men and women from a variety of professions in the arts, business, and commerce enjoy The Players' unique spirit of conviviality and tradition. that truly makes it a certain club.

LINKS

<http://www.thesalon.biz>

<http://www.theplayersnyc.org>

<http://www.georgegee.com>

<http://queen-esther.com>

www.gelberandmanning.com

<http://www.pontanisisters.com>

<http://www.myspace.com/doubtygreen>

<http://www.myspace.com/pandoraburlyq>

<http://www.loungerati.com>

<http://www.clubwitsend.com>

<http://www.zeldamag.com>

<http://www.yehoodi.com>

<http://www.patricksoluri.com>

<http://www.soluri-architecture.com>

FEATURED PERFORMERS BIOS (The Salon - Dec 30th, 2009)

GEORGE GEE'S JUMP, JIVIN' WAILERS

George Gee is one of the top big band leaders in New York City and has one of the most popular swing dance bands around, with swing dancers and music aficionados flocking to see them perform.

While he was a freshman at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, George Gee launched his Make-Believe Ballroom program (named after the vintage Martin Block show) on the college radio station - and told everyone who'd listen about his dream of leading his own big band. In an era when punk, new wave and heavy metal ruled, some first thought that George was revisiting the past. Twenty-five years later, it is delightfully clear that George was just way ahead of his time!

The only Chinese-American swing big band leader, George Gee is unique in so many ways. The snap in his fingers, the shuffle in his step and that unbridled joy he radiates and spreads like ecstatic wildfire to all his world-class musicians make immediate and permanent impressions on audiences, musicians, and dancers - even seasoned press! It must be in his blood - since he was a kid, all George ever wanted to do was lead his own big band.

A native New Yorker, George always loved music. He grew up with rock 'n' roll and R&B - but also developed a powerful passion for Swing - especially for the big band styles of Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Louis Jordan, Frank Sinatra, Cab Calloway and other legends. At renowned Stuyvesant High School, George wowed the crowds with his flashy bass showmanship in the school's jazz band.

His college radio show was a huge hit! The station asked George to interview his idol - William "Count" Basie - before a campus concert (listen to the interview). That extensive, exclusive conversation would change George's life forever. The next day, he assembled his own 17-piece big band - the Make-Believe Ballroom Orchestra! Staffed by student players, the band quickly became the darling of the campus community. Throughout the 1980's, George spread his swing gospel throughout the Pittsburgh tri-state region - from rowdy frat houses to black-tie society galas, corporate events and top nightclubs. But George knew what he needed to do next.

He returned home to New York City in 1990, and summoned top New York-based musicians - young and older veterans of the world's most legendary big bands - and Latin and pop giants - to continue living his dream. With each performance, George's powerhouse 17-piece Make-Believe Ballroom Orchestra continues to set new standards - elegantly balancing the genuine big band tradition with exhilarating modernism. His 10-piece Jump, Jive & Wailers, formed in 1998, puts a new twist on big band favorites and delivers all-out rollickin' roadhouse boogie! With this group, which George lovingly calls his "Economy Big Band," they have been able to travel around the United States and the world headlining swing and lindy hop dance events.

George also revels in his stature as a veritable Ambassador of Swing. George is a much sought-after authority on the evolution of the art. He has lectured at the New School University, led clinics and master classes, and is a popular source for newspapers, magazines, TV and Internet reports. George also served as a primary expert for the 2000 nationally broadcast BRAVO documentary "This Joint is Jumpin'", featuring extensive interviews throughout the two-hour film.

Throughout 2005, George is celebrating his Silver Anniversary in the "Big Band Business", and looks forward to an even brighter and more illustrious future. "People have asked me lately what I'll do now that the 'swing fad' that grew a few years back has subsided. The question makes me smile, because when I started in 1980, everyone thought swingin' was about as much fun as pullin' teeth! We've traveled a long road - many long roads - and I'm proud to say that today, swing music, jazz, and the Big Band art form are not only alive and well, but enjoying their widest popularity since their heydays." Still full of joy and energy, this diminutive gentleman of swing and his merry music makers are ready for new adventures in the next quarter-century!

Editors note: Currently, "The Make-Believe Ballroom Orchestra" is more commonly known simply as "The George Gee Swing Orchestra" and/or "The George Gee Big Band."

Continued: FEATURED PERFORMERS BIOS (The Salon - Dec 30th, 2009)

QUEEN ESTHER & THE HOT FIVE

A collective of New York City's finest jazz musicians that plays intimate reconfigurations of rare all-American standards and original modern classics. Featuring Matt Ray on piano, Hilliard Greene on bass, J. Walter Hawkes on trombone and ukelele and Queen Esther on vocals.

The brainchild of Queen Esther, a multi-disciplinary artist. Her work as a vocalist, lyricist, songwriter, actor/solo performer and playwright has led to creative collaborations in neo-vaudeville, alternative theater, various alt-rock configurations, (neo) swing bands, trip hop DJs, spoken word performances, jazz combos, jam bands, various blues configurations, original Off Broadway plays and musicals, experimental music/art noise and performance art. As a featured actor in Bravo TV's documentary series *The It Factor*, an AUDELCO award-nominated star of George C. Wolfe's *Harlem Song*, and the Grand Prize winner of the 2008 Jazzmobile Jazz Vocal Competition, Queen Esther continues to create solo performance art as well as self-released original music while thriving in ongoing creative partnerships in jazz.

GELBER & MANNING

Jesse Gelber & Kate Manning, feuding vaudeville lovebirds, combine original tunes with the hottest ragtime hits of the day. They are regulars at the monthly jazz age soiree Wit's End, and can also be found at Duane Park in Tribeca every Monday night, and at Pane e Vino, on Smith St. in Brooklyn, every other Wednesday. Gelber & Manning are the co-stars and co-creators of the hit vintage fantasy web series, *Gelber & Manning in Pictures*.

HELEN PONTANI

Part of The World Famous Pontani Sisters, who have changed the face of burlesque as we know it. Helen has dazzled audiences from the gritty big top of Coney Island to the glittering lights of Hollywood, traveling in dozens of national and international tours while making frequent appearances on Late Night with Conan O'Brien, Gossip Girl, Delocated, MTV, and VH1 among others. Appearing in show-stopping performances that have earned critical acclaim from the Times, Post, Daily News, Village Voice, and Time Out magazine. Awarded a Golden Pastie at this year's New York Burlesque Festival for Most Positively Perfect Posterior, and featured on the cover of GO magazine. She is known as the Tap Dancing Tornado in a weekly running show This is Burlesque. "Helen Pontani satisfies the craving for old-time Hollywood ingenue, with a dash of Betty Boop for good measure. A shuffle-ball-change never looked that sexy in Miss Roberts' Wednesday afternoon dance class" – Edge Philadelphia

For the Salon, Helen's tap numbers include **Goin Nuts!**, a high energy tap extravaganza inspired by old Hollywood, and a silhouette dance ala Josephine baker.

ERYN REECE

Eryn Reece started working in the restaurant industry at the age of 16, bussing tables and hostessing at a local restaurant in her hometown of Portland, Oregon. Venturing north to Seattle at the age of nineteen, Eryn quickly fell into the restaurant scene. Her love of mixology and cocktails grew while working at Mona's Bistro & Lounge, a premiere Seattle establishment. At her new position at Mona's Eryn became interested in what her fellow bartenders were creating; she insisted that they teach her everything. Her curiosity and diligence paid off! A year later Eryn was promoted to their full time bartender. The experience and knowledge Eryn gained in Seattle at Mona's made her crave for more. She then made the big move to NYC. Now residing in Brooklyn, she is working her way through the ranks of the cocktail industry. Her first big break was working at Bar Milano under the tutelage of Tony Abou-ganim. Suddenly Eryn's concept of cocktails was blown completely open. Since then she has gone on to work at the Hideout in Fort Greene, helping to keep the integrity of Charlotte Voisey's cocktail program. She can now be found behind the bar in the East Village at Louis 649, helping to shape their extensive cocktail menu.

Eryn is extremely involved in this new "cocktail culture" by staying on top of new methods and by consistently researching. Eryn is also an active member of NY's United States Bartender Guild. When not behind a bar you can find her sipping on a cocktail or checking out new art at local galleries.

WIT'S END

Created in 2000 by Diane Naeqel and Don Spiro, Wit's End is a celebration of Jazz Age lifestyle, music and aesthetics. Wit's End offers fine cocktails, live music and dancing for an elegant and jaunty evening and is presented the last Saturday of every month. Wit's End was named after the nickname that Dorothy Parker gave to Aleck Woollcott's apartment, which became a somewhat infamous hangout for the Round Tablers and others in the New York social set.