

Bio - Ramona Collins

Ramona Collins is a premier entertainer who was born in Toledo OH but grew up in Lansing MI. Based in Toledo since 1969, she worked day gigs until retiring two years ago from her job with the State of Ohio. She is the mother of 5 adult children, 14 grandchildren, and 7 great grandchildren. Always considered an activist, during her time as a state employee Ramona was a union steward, chief steward, president of her local Ohio Civil Service Employees Association (OCSEA) AFSCME chapter, served on two contract negotiation teams, and two arbitration and pre-discharge review committees. She currently serves on the executive board for her union.

Long established as a singing entertainer in Toledo and the Midwest, Ramona wears many hats as a recording artist, songwriter, actress, emcee, radio host, community activist and all-around carrier of the jazz torch in her community. She has organized many events over the years and been recognized for her efforts. Audiences throughout the Midwest have known for some time that this singing entertainer, recording artist, songwriter, educator, mentor, actress, radio host and emcee is one of the region's true music treasures. Known primarily as a jazz singer, she also performs blues, R&B, big band music, gospel, doo wop and a little rock and country.

Although she always sang and performed her shows over the years while she worked a day job, she managed to establish herself as a premier entertainer in the Midwest and beyond. She is an audience favorite at clubs, concerts and festivals wherever she goes and covers all the flavors from honey to hot sauce, whether she is half of a duo or fronting an orchestra. She is considered the real deal.

Ramona views her performing career as part entertainment, part educational. To that end, she has taken aspiring young performers under her wing, supporting, educating and encouraging them and has conducted several master classes on stage performance, one at Oakland University in 2016, the other at the Berklee College of Music in Boston in 2005. "There are a number of young people who have talent and respect for jazz," she says. "I'm thrilled they view me as a mentor...it's inspiring." Toledo is the hometown of jazz legends Art Tatum and Jon Hendricks and it is great to know that we have young people who are interested in carrying the jazz baton that is being passed to them. We have to keep jazz alive in Toledo.

She has recorded two independent albums, "Everything Old Is New Again" and "Live & Lovin' It", which are available for download on cdbaby.com. She is the guest vocalist on the Toledo Jazz Orchestra cd "Out Of Nowhere". Ramona is currently working on original material for her next recording project. Her most recent original piece is a song called "Temporary Home" that she wrote for a benefit for the Aurora House.

Chris Hovan, photographer and jazz writer/reviewer for "All That Jazz" said, after first seeing her performance at the 2001 Ford Detroit International Jazz Festival, "... with her robust approach and sparkling personality, Ramona Collins is a regional artist worthy of wider recognition."

Body of Work

Awards

- 2002 - Milestones Honoree – first honoree in the Arts Category
- 2011 – Nominated for best Jazz Vocalist – Detroit Black Music Awards
- 2014 - Designated a Motown Ambassador by Duane Parham CEO of Educational Arts, Music & Talk Radio, Detroit MI
- 2015 – Best Of Toledo winner in Singer category
- 2016 – Best of Toledo winner in Blues/Jazz category
- 2017 – Nominated for Best of Toledo Blues/Jazz category

Currently sits on the following boards or committees or panels:

- Founding member – Women of Toledo Inclusive
- Founder – Maryann Russo Scholarship Event “Songs For Our Sister” (10 years)
- Member – Toledo Public Schools Broadcasting Arts Advisory Committee
- Board Member – University of Toledo School of Visual and Performing Arts
- Secretary – Black Swamp Blues Society
- Sponsor/committee person – Great Lakes Jazz Festival
- Member – Music Uniting Sisters Everywhere (MUSE)
- Member – UTMRC Ryan White Program “Reviving The Red Ribbon” Committee
- Recurring panelist – Full Circle Podcast

Past Service – Organizations, Boards or Committees

- President – Toledo Jazz Society (responsible for renaming former annual jazz festival for Art Tatum).
- Member - Toledo School For The Arts Tech Advisory Board
- Artistic Director – 2016 Forrester’s “Jazz On The River” Music Series
- Artistic Director – 2015 “Hot Glass, Cold Beer, Cool Music” series @ Gathered Glassblowing Salon

Annual events

- It’s Friday @ Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo OH
- Jazz In Paradise – Farmington Hills MI
- Jazz In The Garden @ Toledo Botanical Garden
- Jazz On The Green @ Gesu Church, Toledo OH

Clubs

- Baker’s Keyboard Lounge – Detroit MI
- Bert’s Jazz Club – Detroit MI
- Bird of Paradise – Ann Arbor MI
- Bob Stop – Cleveland OH
- Carr Center – Detroit MI
- Cliff Bell’s Jazz Club – Detroit MI
- Collingwood Arts Center – Toledo OH
- Degage Jazz Club – Maumee OH

- Detroit Steinway Gallery – Commerce Charter Twp MI
- Dirty Dog Jazz Café – Grosse Pointe MI
- Dizzy's Club Coca Cola – New York NY
- Harbor House – Detroit MI
- Jazz @ The Elks – Plymouth MI
- Joe's Top Dog – Dearborn MI
- Kerrytown Concert House – Ann Arbor
- Lansing Community College – Lansing MI
- Lennox Lounge – New York NY
- Lily Pearl's Lounge – Owosso MI
- Michigan State University – East Lansing MI
- Moriarty's Pub – Lansing MI
- Murphy's Place – Toledo OH
- Music Hall for the Performing Arts – Detroit MI
- Nikola's Restaurant – Southfield MI
- NINE Restaurant – Toledo OH
- Paula Brown's Put – Toledo OH
- Real Seafood – Toledo OH
- Registry Bistro – Toledo OH
- Rush Street Night Club – Ann Arbor MI
- Rusty's Jazz Café – Toledo OH
- Savage Hall – Toledo OH
- Slater's Pub – Port Clinton OH
- Small's Jazz Club – New York NY
- Smoke Jazz Club – New York NY
- Stella's Restaurant – Perrysburg OH
- Toledo Club – Toledo OH
- Valentine Theater – Toledo OH
- Ye Olde Dirty Bird – Toledo OH

Festivals

- Detroit Jazz Festival, Detroit MI
- Defiance Jazz Festival, Defiance OH
- Old Town Jazz Festival – Lansing Michigan
- Ypsilanti Heritage Festival – Ypsilanti MI
- Toledo African American Festival
- Michigan Jazz Festival
- Summer Solstice Jazz Festival
- Kimmie Horne Jazz Festival