

## NEWS

# Jazz vocalist channels 'Golden Age of Song'

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When Margi Gianquinto explains her bond with music from the Golden Age of Song, you might think she was born in the wrong era. Some of her friends and fans and even family members have been known to think that way, too, at least that's what the jazz vocalist told me recently.

Fortunately for us, Gianquinto is here, now, sharing her musical gifts and talents, and her love of an exquisite style of music from another era that she says she feels more comfortable around compared to the music of her own time.

Gianquinto is a regular on today's New York City jazz circuit, so Fairfield County audiences can count themselves fortunate she's performing locally this weekend. The singer headlines the second installment of the Norwalk Public Library's six-part Winter Concert Series at 3 p.m. on Sunday in the library's main auditorium. She's bringing with her a talented quartet of fellow New York City-based players, John Merrill on guitar, Neal Miner on bass, Jay Rattman on

clarinet and sax, and Chris Gelb on drums. The performance is free. The library is at 1 Belden St. Visit [norwalklib.org](http://norwalklib.org).

"It's the entire era that appeals to me," Gianquinto said, "and it has done so since I was a child. The first exposure I had to these songs was watching films like 'An American in Paris' with all Gershwin songs, 'Lady and the Tramp' with songs written and sung by Peggy Lee, 'Easter Parade' and 'Holiday Inn,' all with the music of Irving Berlin. The music, glamour, class, it all spoke to me. In terms of the music specifically, I think there is so much richness in these songs, how they are crafted, how they tell a story, how they speak to human emotions on so many different levels. One can never tire of the genre, and never tire of singing these songs. They are timeless."

One of the superstars from that era, Peggy Lee, whose style Gianquinto has been known to channel on stage, is the singer's biggest influence. "I have always gravitated toward Peggy Lee's slightly raspy, minimalist style," she said. "Also, her sense of time is impeccable. And I do some of her arrangements, especially those in the Latin style, for inspiration."



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**Margi Gianquinto headlines the second installment of the Norwalk Public Library's six-part Winter Concert Series at 3 p.m. on Sunday in the library's main auditorium.**

The singer just returned from a tour of Israel in early January, and her shows there revolved around a Peggy Lee theme. "I may keep that idea in mind for Sunday's show," she said, "plus a few other tunes sung by singers like Jo Stafford, and others."

Gianquinto described how she brings her own interpretations into the music. "Basically, the song comes first," she said. "And I feel a singer owes it to these glorious songwriters to be respectful to what they wrote, and also to tell the story. So, my approach is just to listen, really digest the melody and the story, then bring that across without over-thinking. I just

sing it from my heart. Then, if I feel like playing around with the rhythm and melody a bit and improvising, I do. But sometimes that can take awhile."

Gianquinto has been playing piano her entire life, "which has served me well in terms of work opportunities and supporting myself." She has performed in the area and has taught in the state. "At one time I had over 40 students in my piano teaching studio in Connecticut before I relocated to Brooklyn. I now still have a handful of students in Brooklyn."

At one time, she ran a small musical group in Greenwich, where she's originally from, called the

Offsunders. She has done music directing in New York City, including at the Lee Strasburg Institute for a children's musical. She works with the children's choir at Trinity Wall Street as part of a team of teaching artists, where she accompanies on piano and does some conducting of the choir. She plays at churches locally, most recently at Our Lady Star of the Sea and St. Clement of Rome, both in Stamford. And you may have caught her act at the 9th Note in Stamford last April or July, before the club closed. Recording plans are in her future.

For Sunday's concert, she's bringing in a talented team of players. "Guitarist

John Merrill and I have done many shows together in New York City at a wonderful venue called Mezzrow," she said. "Bassist Neal Miner tours with Jane Monheit and has performed with me many times. Chris Gelb is a tasteful and extremely musical young drummer from North Carolina, who appeared with Vince Giordano's band in Woody Allen's most recent film 'Cafe Society,' and Jay Rattman on clarinet and sax is a wonderful musician with whom I've been playing together since I first came on the scene. Did I mention that they are all nice guys? I won't tolerate anything less."

Gianquinto has played regularly in New York City at places like Mezzrow, the Lambs Club, the New York Swing Dance Society, the New York Athletic Club and others. She has done full shows that she's either created or produced at the Metropolitan Room in December and at the hip Brooklyn space, the Jalopy Theater, where she's performed four times. She's appeared with other bands at Birdland, the Metropolitan Room, Smoke, Smalls and many other venues. She'll be at Carnegie Hall in June as part of a larger cast in a tribute to the music of Schwartz & Dietz. It's a pretty busy time — and a busy era. For information, visit [Margisings.com](http://Margisings.com).

*Mike Horyczun's Sound Surfing column appears every Saturday in The Hour. Mike can be reached at [news2mb@gmail.com](mailto:news2mb@gmail.com).*