

# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2024 JSJA WINNERS!

Posted October 1, 2024

The Board of the John Stites Jazz Artist Organization is pleased to announce the 2024 John Stites Jazz Award winners. In 2024 we began focusing on Artistic Development awards. These awards are designed to provide funding to enhance the career opportunities of innovative established and emerging jazz musicians. We received a record 95 applications this year and nearly 20% of the applicants scored more than 80 out of 100 points. The JSJAO hopes prospective Artistic Development applicants will be inspired by these projects to apply for a 2025 award.



**John Damberg**/Studies to Aid in Teaching Jazz Improvisation in Alaska – John Damberg will use the award to study at 3 highly regarded music camps in Summer 2025 including Jazz Camp West, Jazz Port Townsend, and Victor Wooten’s Spirit of Music Camp. He will learn new teaching techniques, which can

be applied at his Alaska Jazz Workshop (AJW) classes and the yearly AJW Jazz Camp. The Alaska Jazz Workshop (AJW) is a nonprofit based in Anchorage, AK. It was founded in 1995 by John Damberg and incorporated in 2000. The AJW's mission is to provide jazz education and performance opportunities programs in Alaska and beyond to students from grade 6 through adults. Mr. Damberg is a multi-percussionist and teacher who specializes in teaching jazz and world music. He believes this course of study will improve his improvisation, song writing, production and recording skills. It will also provide him with networking opportunities, assist him in presenting his portfolio in a more polished and professional manner, and inspire him with new ideas and approaches to working with band members, students, and live audiences.



**Keith Hall/Brazilian Drumming Studies** – Keith Hall plans to travel to Brazil to study with master drum teachers and focus on various percussion instrument techniques and their application to the drum set. He will also be devoting significant time to studying Brazilian rhythms, styles and some of the most significant Brazilian composers. Mr. Hall believes the opportunity to immerse

himself in the Brazilian culture and music community is a vital step in his artistic development as a jazz performer and educator. He plans to compose a suite of music based on his studies and experiences in Brazil, which will provide the opportunity to introduce his music to new audiences.



**Kitt Lyles**/Study of Jazz and Arabic Music Intersections and Upright Bass Technique – Kitt Lyles is a Lebanese-American jazz bassist, multi-instrumentalist and educator. He plans to pursue an intensive professional development study of Arabic music with 2 highly regarded masters culminating in attendance at the yearly Arabic Music Retreat in Massachusetts. In addition, he will be studying jazz and classical upright bass technique with a well-known teacher and member of the Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra. Mr. Lyles believes the Arabic music study will enrich his musical voice and compositional concepts as a jazz band leader and side person. The bass technical study will increase his virtuosity and enhance his execution of jazz and adjacent genres while playing in multiple ensembles.



**Nick Weiser**/Lessons with the Legends of Jazz Piano – Nick Weiser plans to study with contemporary jazz piano legends who are currently shaping the idiom. The project is designed to harness the insights and explore the pedagogy of these masters as influenced by their communities. Mr. Weiser believes studying with these jazz legends will elevate his artistry, invigorate his playing, and enrich his teaching with newfound insights. He plans to study with more than a dozen highly regarded jazz pianists, so that he can bring many unique and diverse perspectives to his work. He also plans to author an article exploring how these pianists' communities influence their music, so that he can share these perspectives with the broader jazz community. Through this journey, he seeks to make a meaningful, lasting contribution to the music.

The applications were scored by an independent Review Committee composed of professional jazz musicians with national and international experience. JSJA has awarded over \$330,000 in the last 5 years. The 2025 Award cycle begins on February 15. JSJA plans to award an additional \$50,000 to another group of outstanding applicants in September 2025. Information on the 2025 award timeline will be available on our website in early February. If you have questions, please submit them by using the Contact form.

The Board of the JSJAO thanks all the applicants for their participation. We encourage anyone with an idea that supports professional exceptionalism in jazz music to apply. Please go to [www.johnstitesjazzawards.org](http://www.johnstitesjazzawards.org) for more information. In honor of John Stites and his love for jazz.

