

Our featured [member](#) gets "intimate" with his work ...



THE STRATFORD ARTS GUILD

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ARTS

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Featured Guild Member

Ken Cicerale

Alto Saxophone

Stratford musician [Ken Cicerale](#) has become synonymous with "intimate jazz." Currently performing in various duo settings with bassist Jim Tutunjian and guitarists Keith Yaun and Monroe Quinn, Ken's repertoire features an eclectic mix of music from the American Songbook along with some pop and jazz classics and his own collection of quirky original works.

SAG: Ken, you've "branded" your intimate jazz experience. I've seen you perform in cafe settings, but also on a stage at the Shakespeare festival. As a musician, what is the difference for you?

KC: The concept of "intimate jazz" as I define it refers less to the venue and more to **type of connection I attempt to make with an audience.** To me, it's not about trying to impress people with my playing but rather to try to reach that quiet place inside each person and touch them in some way. So, ultimately, the music I make isn't specifically about me, or even the audience per se, but rather, the connection I try to make between us. That's what I'm going for anyway. And I feel it's easier to do with a smaller ensemble.



SAG: You are one of the go-to guys in the area for live jazz music. How did that level of recognition develop?

KC: Persistence, more than anything! **Through membership in the Guild, I've come to know many people in the community** and as a result gotten to play a number of local venues such as Siena, The Station House, Lil' Mo's and especially Stanziale's Restaurant where bassist Jim Tutunjian and I have been performing every Thursday since January. I

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have also been involved with the Stratford Arts Commission, particularly in regard to advocating for the Shakespeare Theatre. They have been very generous in allowing me to perform on the Theatre grounds at their summer festivals and at other fund-raising events such as the Conversation with Christopher Walken.

SAG: Musicians like yourself are constantly collaborating, in live music, especially. Do you think this develops a different kind of artist's "muscle" than say a poet or painter, who works alone?

KC: I think so. It's like finding another way to connect with audiences and fellow artists. I enjoy collaborating and at various times have done so in rather unusual settings. For example, I was once approached by a poet who wrote a short book of what he called "Urban Haiku" to compose some background music for a reading. I created a score for solo clarinet that I performed with him for an audience at the William Carlos Williams Center in NJ. I have also created and performed some **original incidental music to a quartet of short plays entitled "Close Enough for Jazz"**. This was done some years ago Off-Off Broadway at the West Bank Theatre in NYC. I'm looking forward to more interesting projects in the future.

SAG: A lot of artists tend to keep a "big" project or something new simmering on the back burner. Can we get a sneak preview of what you have coming down the pike?

KC: I do have a few things in mind I'd like to see develop. Fellow Guild member [Elizabeth Howard](#) and I plan to do a **music and poetry collaboration** down the road and I'm really excited about that. I'd also like to try some cross-genre combinations with other musicians and have had a few discussions with some interesting composer/performers about this. But most of all, my goal is to just keep playing and finding new audiences.

SAG: You are a certified "working" artist. Music is your business. Do you ever just want to stop working at being creative all the time and just become an accountant?

KC: I don't think it's possible to turn off being creative and I wouldn't want to. That being said, I don't know any "working artist" who feels he or she is working enough. Most creative people realize that it's not easy to try to piece together a living doing what they love. A lot of people just don't go out as much anymore for entertainment with so much available at home at a thumb's touch. But **there is a lot to be said for hearing music live**, especially from people you wouldn't be able to find in the vast commercial marketplace.

I also find it very rewarding to perform at Senior Centers and living facilities where the audiences are truly hungry for live entertainment. They are so appreciative and I enjoy the opportunity to give something back to the community and put a few smiles on people's faces.

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SAG: Thanks Ken!

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You can find a schedule of Ken's [upcoming performances on his website](#).