



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### BPO Diversity Council honors IDEA Award recipients at annual Opening Doors event

**Award recognizes WNY community members for creating inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible musical environments**



*Muhammad School of Music*

*Karen Saxon*

On Friday, June 21, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra Diversity Council presents their annual BPO Opening Doors fundraiser and awards ceremony at Kleinhans Music Hall. With music from Jukeboxx Band and Jamaican food by Chef Darian Bryan of The Plating Society, this event supports the BPO's efforts to build diversity in orchestral music and recognizes this year's recipients of the BPO Diversity Council IDEA Award.

This award, won through peer nomination, aims to recognize and uplift individuals and organizations in Western NY who love any and all genres of orchestral music, and embody the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access (IDEA) while promoting, supporting, and/or practicing the musical art form.

At Opening Doors, the 2024 IDEA Awards will be presented to **Karen Saxon**, local professional vocalist and music educator at City Honors School and Buffalo State University, and to Buffalo's **Muhammad School of Music**, founded by local professional violinist and educator **Henri Star Muhammad**.

In the nomination of Karen Saxon, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Staples of First Shiloh Baptist Church shared: "Karen has been instrumental in bringing together communities that would not normally come together. She has used her musical talent to diversify the musical offerings in the African American community and has offered traditional African American music in predominately White communities. She has also taught in the Buffalo

Public School System for nearly 30 years. Countless students have gone on to have international musical careers because of her. Her commitment to musical excellence and diversity are unparalleled."

Nominating the Muhammad School of Music, Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts (BAVPA) Principal Jody Covington submitted: "Henri Star Muhammad was born and raised in East Buffalo and attended BAVPA. Early in his career he identified the need to expose, teach, and inspire youngsters to learn more about the genre of classical music. As a violinist with a concentration in classical music, he has taken his talent and interest to enlighten children in Buffalo to learn an instrument and develop an appreciation for orchestral music. The School of Music, celebrating 25 years of musical service in the Buffalo community, has made its mission to inspire Black youth to take an interest in classical music."

To learn more about the 2024 award recipients, visit [\*\*bpo.org/IDEA-award\*\*](https://bpo.org/IDEA-award).

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Tickets for Opening Doors are \$35, available to purchase at [\*\*bpo.org/opening-doors\*\*](https://bpo.org/opening-doors). For more information, interviews, or images, contact Robin Parkinson at (716) 242-7808 or [rparkinson@bpo.org](mailto:rparkinson@bpo.org).

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***About Us: To learn more about our storied history, distinguished conductors and world-class musicians, and commitment to IDEA, visit the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.***



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