



Frank D. Stagnitta

AUG 8, 1948 - JAN 27, 2023



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Frank D. Stagnitta

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Frank Daniel Stagnitta of Syracuse, NY, passed away peacefully in his sleep at Upstate University Hospital, during the morning hours of Friday, January 27th 2023, after a lengthy battle with end-stage renal disease. Frank was 74 years old.

Frank was born in Syracuse, NY on August 8th, 1948, to beloved parents, Frank J. Stagnitta and Eva M. Stagnitta (nee, Giarrusso), and raised alongside sisters, Diane and Carol. Frank lived a full life which was driven by his love of music, both jazz and classical, along with his passion for playing the piano - which made him a unique generational talent. His innate talent for music was recognizable at an early age while playing the accordion. His professional career began in his mid-teens when he started playing the piano. Frank played on many local broadcasts in the late 50s and early 60s where he won numerous musical competitions. This was the start of a lifelong career in which Frank would make a name for himself in the local and international jazz scene.

In 1972, Frank met and married Terry Ferrara (nee, Walrath), where he took up residency in Florida for a brief time. His daughter, Shani, who he lovingly nicknamed "Fauve," was born in 1973. Battling with great strength, he was able to see her turn 50 earlier this year.

In 1976 he relocated to New York City, where he met Martha Patricia ("Pat") Gideon. In 1983 both moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas where the two were later married. He and Gideon spent years sharing their talents with one another, pairing Frank's piano compositions with Pat's memorable singing voice. Sadly, Gideon died four weeks before him in December 2022. Despite divorcing, the two remained close over the years. It was in Arkansas that Frank catalogued his future album, Remembrance, transferring the work from reel-to-tape to cassette in 1985, which would later be remastered for a studio release in 2009. Frank also had an unbelievable talent for writing classical compositions. He undertook the tedious task of handwriting scores by hand without the aid of a piano. He would spend hours sitting at a park near his home in Fayetteville, Arkansas writing out instrumental parts for 48 different instruments and to date has written 51 Opuses.



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In 1987 Frank moved to the Netherlands with Gideon to further pursue their respective careers in the arts. He spent 15 years teaching at Koninklijk Conservatory in The Hague and performing at jazz festivals throughout Europe with musicians Sal Nistico, Rachel Gould Quintet, Domagoy Ralasic, Gijs Hendriks, Douglas Sides, and Benny Bailey. Other collaborators included musical talents from his hometown and around the world Joe Riposo, Barry Fairbanks, Joe Stagnitta, Jack Fragomeni, B.J. Jansen, Matt Vacanti, Karl Sterling, Danny Hayes, Bob Bodley, John Betsch, Chet Baker, Zoot Sims, Phil Woods, Woody Shaw, Charles McPherson, Mingus Dynasty, Barbara Morrison, Eddie Gomez, and Tom Harrell.

Frank returned to Syracuse, NY in the early 2000s and would continue to work with local musicians until mid-2010. In 2005 he was the recipient of a Syracuse Area Music Award (“The Sammys”) in the category of Best Jazz. Frank contributed to and was featured on five studio-released albums, including Remembrance (2008), All the Best (2008), Wish (2009), Groove Yard (2009) and Syracuse Connection (2009), the latter of which was distributed for a global audience. Collaborating with Frank was a highlight for those he worked with. Upon the release of Syracuse Connection in 2009, Jansen told Syracuse.com, “I feel very blessed to have been able to record another album with Frank Stagnitta. Frank is one of the most under-known jazz pianists of his generation.” Frank cited his musical inspirations as Thelonius Monk, Bill Evans, Count Basie, Alban Berg, Alexander Scriabin and Frederick Delius.

Frank was a storyteller through his piano - often pulling inspiration from what he observed and loved - whether it was ‘Dis-Pencer,’ inspired by his daughter’s yappy chihuahua, or ‘Kay’s Great Day,’ for his friend Kay Gruss. Frank had a talent for finding beauty in the world around him, despite battling clinical depression for many years.

Music and entertainment writer for The Post Standard, Mark Bialczak, said of Remembrance, “you can hear the magic.” On the near 12-minute track, ‘Desperado,’ Bialczak comments “everybody has their big part, but Stagnitta’s piano rules at the end.” A favorite track on this same album, ‘Shani,’ named for his daughter, “shows Stagnitta’s grace and power.”

While it had been many years since Frank last touched the piano, he still found joy in listening to classical music, watching Turner Classic Movies, The Twilight Zone, The Godfather and spending time in the company of his daughter and sisters.



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Frank is survived by his mother, Eva Stagnitta, his sisters, Diane Dillon (Paul) and Carol Wendt (Richard), his daughter, Shani Stagnitta, three grandchildren, Carina Sorrentino, Cassandra Sorrentino, and Kobe McKinney, numerous nieces and nephews and many cherished friends throughout the music world. His father, Frank J. Stagnitta, preceded him in death.

Frank is eternally memorialized through his years of musical work and composition on the piano, and his 2009 album, *Wish*, can still be enjoyed today by friends and family.

Family and friends may call from 1:00-2:00 pm on Friday February 3, 2023, at Thomas J. Pirro Jr. Funeral Home, 3401 Vickery Rd. (corner of Buckley Rd.) North Syracuse, NY. Frank will be laid to rest beside his father at Woodlawn Cemetery Mausoleum in Syracuse, NY.


Thank you to the teams at AllAboutJazz and Syracuse.com for their previous coverage of Frank's life and work.




Events

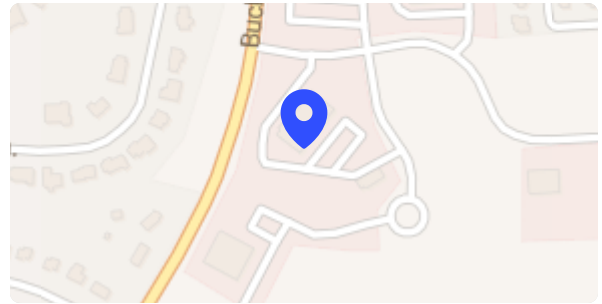
Frank D. Stagnitta
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Visitation


 **Friday**, February 3, 2023

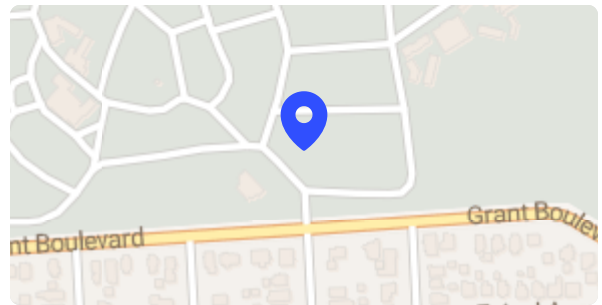
 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM ET

 **Thomas J. Pirro Jr. Funeral Home**
3401 Vickery Rd, Syracuse NY 13212



Cemetery Details

 **Woodlawn Mausoleum**
800 Grant Blvd, Syracuse NY 13203





Tribute Wall

Frank D. Stagnitta

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Tony Rowe posted:

My thoughts and prayers are with "Frankie and the Families"!! He was amazing talented musician that will never be forgotten in our memories! RIP Frankie I will always listen for you!! Tony, Lorena, Jake, Luke Rowe

February 3 at 7:49 AM



Anonymous sent a Full Of Love Bouquet to the Stagnitta family.



February 2 at 11:01 AM



Larry Luttinger posted:

As any jazz musician of age in Central New York will tell you, Frank was a world-class talent on piano. I had the great fortune to play a few shows with him along with the great bassist Bernie Upson, when Frank subbed into Calvin Custer's trio at times. Working with Frank was like trying on a \$1,000 suit - amazingly comfortable, a wonder. He was an amazing harmonist who could really swing hard with a light touch, a consummate musician. RIP Frank, you made an indelible mark on the music world.

February 2 at 5:32 AM



Diane Moro posted:

I send my dearest sympathy..I remember Franky very fondly..Diane Giarrusso Moro...Armand and Nancy Giarrusso's daughter

February 2 at 3:43 AM



Anonymous sent a Medium Dish Garden to the Stagnitta family.



February 1 at 7:11 PM



Tribute Wall

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Katherine Holley posted:

My first memories of Frank were from 1966 at Corcoran High School. He was so friendly, kind, and unbelievably talented. We were in the band together practicing "Der Meistersinger" - a very heavy Wagner piece. After practice Frank sat down and played the whole thing on the piano with no music! We spent a lot of time in the music room after forging passes to get there and enjoyed a nice friendship. After graduation I heard him play in some night clubs in Syracuse but then lost track as he went to Potsdam for a degree in music. I found him in Holland when I was in Europe and became friends with his then wife Pat. We kept in touch over the Internet but we didn't really meet again until 2000 when he returned to Syracuse. I enjoyed the reunion and the chance to bolster our friendship but mostly to hear him play in so many places. Frank was a musical genius. He was also a really good guy. He would give anyone the shirt off his back. He truly cared for his family in all ways. I will always remember the chicken frittatas and pizza frits made by his loving mother, Eva at his house while his Dad was trying to get the perfect mixture of oil and vinegar in the salad. I will miss you Frank and am so sorry for the suffering you went through, but I know for sure that you are at peace now probably playing a huge piano with a big grin on your face. Rest in peace and know you were loved by many.

February 1 at 5:17 PM



Anonymous sent a Blue Caribbean Bouquet to the Stagnitta family.

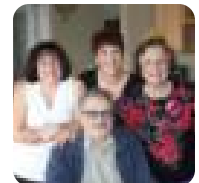


February 1 at 11:38 AM



Shani Stagnitta shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

Aunt Diane, Aunt Carol, Meem and Dad ❤️



February 1 at 11:11 AM



Katherine Holley shared a photo to the **Loveable Kitty!** album.



February 1 at 9:43 AM



Shani Stagnitta February 1 at 10:36 AM

I love this picture ❤️



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Katherine Holley shared 10 photos to the **Music** album.



February 1 at 9:31 AM



Gilda Morina Syverson February 1 at 8:01 PM

I'm Joe Stagnitta's niece. Frank and I were the same age and I last saw him many, many years ago. I am deeply sorry for your loss and for the loss of such a creative soul. Sending my deepest Condolences



Shani Stagnitta February 1 at 10:30 AM

Thank you Kay for sharing all the pictures ❤️



Media

Frank D. Stagnitta
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Shani Stagnitta shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

February 1 at 11:11 AM





Katherine Holley shared a photo to the **Loveable Kitty!** album.

February 1 at 9:43 AM



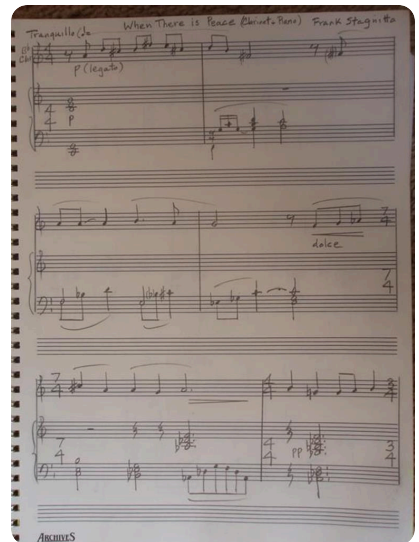
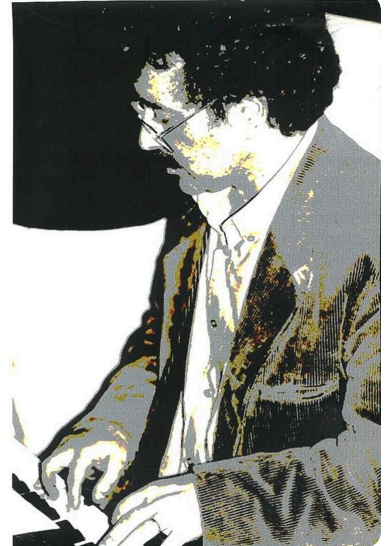


Katherine Holley shared 10 photos to the **Music** album.

February 1 at 9:31 AM



Such Talent!





Media

Frank D. Stagnitta
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Frank playing at the 23rd Street Cafe in Philadelphia



Early 2000s



Playing at Ortleibs in Philly 2005





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Frank by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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