

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Third Annual California Jazz Foundation Fund-Raising Event to Honor Music Hyphenates/Philanthropists Corky Hale and Mike Stoller**

**LOS ANGELES, March 20, 2015--**The California Jazz Foundation (CJF) will host its third annual *Give the Band a Hand* benefit dinner, concert and honors presentation on April 25 at the L.A. Hotel Downtown, located at 333 South Figueroa Street in Los Angeles. The Foundation has announced that **Corky Hale and Mike Stoller** will take center stage to receive the CJF's "Nica" Lifetime Achievement Award, aptly engraved "for their significant far-reaching philanthropic work and astounding musical output."

The "Nica" is named for the Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter, the famed New York City jazz patron of an untold number of jazz musicians. Aside from yearly memberships and donations, the CJF gala fundraiser is its main source of revenue. Each year, the evening acknowledges deserving figures in and around the music. **Catalina Popescu**, proprietor of Catalina's, and the Jazz Bakery's **Ruth Price** are past recipients of the one-of-a-kind award.

Hale and Stoller have been married for 43 years, sharing their lives throughout parallel careers and working tirelessly at the same time for a number of charitable organizations. Highlights of Hale's career range from piano accompanist for Billie Holiday to harpist for Tony Bennett. Stoller's many credentials list his partnership with Jerry Leiber, co-composer with Stoller of 'Stand By Me' and 'Kansas City.'

"We are proud to know Corky and Mike," said CJF founder and President **Edythe Bronston**. "Their generosity speaks loudly for the importance of taking care of others, reflecting our own mission."

The CJF is a charitable, nonprofit organization created to aid and assist California jazz musicians in financial or medical crisis. To date, CJF has helped 177 instrumentalists and singers with everything from rent, car payments and medical bills to financial counseling. It's no exaggeration to say that in some instances, the CJF has saved lives.

The California Jazz Foundation, a 501(C)(3) corporation (Tax ID#65-1270361), is part of the Entertainment Assistance Cooperative (EAC), an organization comprised of entertainment charities' social workers who regularly meet and share information so that applicants only need to fill out one, rather than many, applications.

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The April 25 *Give the Band a Hand* event is being subtitled “A Marriage Made in Heaven,” which, according to Bronston is the best way to describe the 2015 honorees. The evening begins at 6 p.m. with a silent auction and cocktails, followed by dinner at 7 p.m. and a musical tribute featuring vocalist **Steve Tyrell** with a special appearance by vocalist **Sally Kellerman**. Others are set to be added to the bill, according to CJF board member guitarist **Greg Porée**, who is the evening’s musical director. Broadcaster **LeRoy Downs (“The Jazz Cat”)** returns as master of ceremonies and basketball icon **Elgin Baylor** will introduce his dear friends Corky Hale and Mike Stoller. Honorary dinner chairs are: **Artie Butler, Lainie Kazan, Marcus Miller, Catalina Popescu, Ruth Price and Arturo Sandoval**.

Tickets for the Saturday night April 25 gala are priced at a tax-deductible \$200. per person. There are also sponsorship opportunities available. Net proceeds from the April 25 event will benefit the California Jazz Foundation. To purchase tickets or to become a sponsor, the CJF can be accessed via [www.californiajazzfoundation.org/](http://www.californiajazzfoundation.org/), by email at [info@californiajazzfoundation.org](mailto:info@californiajazzfoundation.org) or by telephone at (818) 261-0057.

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**PHOTO ATTACHED: Music industry’s Corky Hale and Mike Stoller have been named recipients of the 2015 California Jazz Foundation’s “Nica” lifetime achievement award. The honor will be presented at the non-profit’s third annual *Give the Band a Hand* ceremony and concert set for April 25 at the Los Angeles Hotel Downtown.**

**More About Corky Hale and Mike Stoller**

(reprinted from “Corky Hale & Mike Stoller: A Marriage Made in Heaven” by T.C. Coffey, *L.A. Jazz Scene*, March 2015)

Nica awardees Corky Hale and Mike Stoller have had fabulous musical careers, largely independent of each other. But as grand as their career achievements have been, they’re matched only by their spirit of generosity.

As a boy in New York, **Mike Stoller** had a few standard piano lessons but was on fire with a passion for boogie-woogie. Lessons with stride piano master James P. Johnson gave him valuable hands-on training. His family moved to Los Angeles and before he was out of Belmont High, Stoller was playing with Chet Baker in the Blas Vasquez Band.

Lester Sill, record promo man and all-around music facilitator, directed fledgling lyricist Jerry Leiber to Stoller. They quickly meshed because each was in love with black music. Leiber had the ability to write clever words that told stories in the black vernacular; Stoller’s fidelity to

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rhythm and blues gave their songs authentic structure. Their “Hound Dog,” “Riot in Cell Block #9,” “Ruby Baby,” “Love Potion Number Nine,” and “Kansas City” were so firmly-rooted in the black experience that they sounded like the work of veteran black songwriters.

When they wrote for the Coasters, Leiber & Stoller had a vocal group with versatile dramatic abilities. Leiber wrote musical playlets, casting the singers as characters. Jerry & Mike shared the experience of listening to radio mysteries as boys, and they had a rich vein of material to mine. From the beginning, they produced their own sessions, and Stoller’s arrangements made resourceful use of local jazzmen like guitarist Barney Kessel and tenor saxophonist Gil Bernal.

“Smokey Joe’s Café,” “Searchin’,” “Down in Mexico,” “Yakety-Yak,” “Charlie Brown,” “Young Blood,” “Girls, Girls, Girls,” “Three Cool Cats,” “Poison Ivy,” and “Little Egypt”—all by the Coasters—gave a voice to the often illicit interior world of the American teenager in song form. They wrote the lives of a generation.

They moved to New York and entered into a production deal with Atlantic Records. The Coasters were still their main group but Leiber & Stoller also wrote and produced for LaVern Baker, Big Joe Turner, and Ruth Brown. Their production on “There Goes My Baby” by the Drifters was the first use of strings for a rhythm and blues record. Their formidable track record for hits and innovative production made them a template for developing writing teams of Gerry Goffin & Carol King, Barry Mann & Cynthia Weil, and Jeff Barry & Ellie Greenwich.

The British rock bands of the mid ‘60s liberally interpreted the Leiber & Stoller songs, selling them to a new generation of American listeners. But songs for teenagers no longer held a great deal of interest for Jerry and Mike. They turned their hands to writing adult songs, most notably for Peggy Lee. Her *Mirrors* album (’66) contained the Kurt Weill-influenced “Is That All There Is?” Ruth Price, for one, holds it as her favorite album of all time. The great lyricist Johnny Mercer congratulated Leiber & Stoller that they had finally written a good song!

**Corky Hale** was a child piano prodigy in her native Illinois. By the age of eight she was mastering the harp. She added flute and cello by the time she was twelve. Two years at the Chicago Music Conservatory preceded her move to study at U.C.L.A. The 17-year old never set foot in a classroom; after a week in town she was playing in Freddy Martin’s Orchestra at the Coconut Grove. She made her television bow at age 19 and spent the next three years playing harp on Liberace’s TV show and tours.

In 1955, Corky was in Las Vegas with the Jerry Gray Orchestra. At the first rehearsal, Billie Holiday walked in, agitated that her accompanist was nowhere in sight. Gray offered Hale’s services to run over Billie’s charts. Though greeted with a cold stare, Corky’s playing won Holiday over instantly. At the conclusion, she threw her arms around Corky’s neck and proclaimed: “You’re my little girl!” Not only did Hale play for Billie onstage in Vegas, she followed her to L.A.’s Jazz City for a week-long stand. An appearance on Channel 7’s “Stars of Jazz” TV show immortalized that brief musical interlude.

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As a session player, Corky is one of the few musicians to enjoy a prolific career on both coasts. Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Nat 'King' Cole, Peggy Lee, Ella Fitzgerald, Mel Torme and Judy Collins are just a few of the singers she's recorded with. As a singer, she was heard with the orchestras of Gray, Ray Anthony and Harry James.

While Mike's writing career was turning more towards Broadway, Corky retained her performing profile. She soloed with Barbra Streisand at Central Park and the Hollywood Bowl, was seen on Bjork's MTV special, and played with George Michael at the Royal Albert Hall in London and RFK Stadium in Washington D.C. She was heard around Los Angeles in shows at the Westwood Marquis, Catalina's, The Gardenia, Lunaria, and the Moonlight Tango Café. Hale also served as musical director for lyricist Hal David and the teams of Livingston & Evans and Alan & Marilyn Bergman. When Leiber & Stoller had a private audience with President Bill Clinton in 1993, it was by no means her first time at the Oval Office; Corky had played the White House 25 years earlier with Tony Bennett. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2007 as a soloist with the New York Pops Orchestra.

Though her first appearance on film was in Liberace's *Sincerely Yours*, Corky's soundtrack work includes *The Ten Commandments*, *The Nutty Professor*, *Godspell* and *Blue Gardenia with Nat King Cole*. In addition to the Liberace show, she appeared many times on the small screen including her appearance on *The Tonight Show* with Tony Bennett. She will be seen in *Hired Gun*, this year's forthcoming film documentary on studio musicians.

*Smokey Joe's Café*, the longest-running musical revue in Broadway history, has committed the Leiber & Stoller canon to the stage.

Corky and Mike have used their capital to fund numerous civil rights concerns. The Dorothy Hecht Health Center (named for Corky's mother) in L.A., the Stoller-Filer Health Center in Compton and several Planned Parenthood centers are just a few of the entities they've funded. Their donations to the Southern Poverty Law Center were rewarded with the dedication of the Mike Stoller and Corky Hale-Stoller Civil Rights Memorial Theatre in Montgomery, Alabama.

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