



# International Society of Bassists

April 3, 2014 would be the 78th birthday of the great **Scott LaFaro**, best known as the bassist in Bill Evans's groundbreaking trio and still an influence on players today decades after his untimely death in 1961. **Barrie Kolstein**, luthier and president of **Kolstein Music** in Baldwin, New York, chose Scott's birthday to announce that he is making a gift of LaFaro's double bass to the **International Society of Bassists**.

The Kolstein and LaFaro families have had a long and affectionate relationship of almost 60 years. Barrie's father **Sam Kolstein** first met Scott LaFaro when they were introduced by George Duvivier, a first-call bassist in New York City who recommended that Sam work on a bass Scott had recently acquired and brought Scott to meet Sam at Sam's shop. Upon hearing Scott trying out instruments in the shop, "Sam looked at George and simply said 'Who is that and what is that?'" Barrie recalls. "You have to understand that even by today's standards, Scotty's playing would turn heads, but back in those years, his style of playing was unheard of and completely unique in every aspect."

After Scott's death in a car crash, a heartbroken Sam purchased the badly damaged bass from Scott's mother with a promise that it would be restored and played again. But it was his son Barrie who eventually undertook the arduous restoration decades later, and Scott's bass returned to the world in 1988 at the ISB's convention in Los Angeles. Since then Barrie has been the steward of the Scott LaFaro Bass, becoming friends with Scott's sister and biographer **Helene LaFaro-Fernandez** in the process, and making the bass available for recordings (notably by Marc Johnson and Phil Palombi) and live performances.

The International Society of Bassists gives the **Scott LaFaro Prize** to the first place winner in its biennial jazz competition thanks to support from Scott's four sisters and the endowment fund they created for the ISB in memory of their brother. Now, with the gift of the Scott LaFaro Bass, the ISB will make the instrument available for performances by ISB members as part of a future **Scott LaFaro Archives** at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York, where Scott's father, a violin virtuoso and band leader, attended in the early days of the conservatory and where Scott went to classes for a year before leaving school for a career that continues to grow in legend and influence. Until the archives are ready to receive the instrument, the Scott LaFaro Bass will continue to reside at Kolstein Music.

"Thanks to Barrie Kolstein's extraordinary and extremely generous gift to the ISB, which raises our net worth by six figures, the residency of Scott's bass at Ithaca College will be a lasting tribute," says ISB general manager Madeleine Crouch. **Nicholas Walker**, professor of bass at Ithaca College, adds, "For bassists everywhere, Scott LaFaro's sound and musicianship have been a deep source of inspiration. Both the LaFaro and Kolstein families are committed to keeping us all connected to the man behind that sound, a man they loved dearly. The creation of a living archive at Ithaca College will make it possible for future generations of bassists to come into direct contact with his instrument and the materials that helped shape Scott LaFaro as an artist. What a gift to us all!"



*[Painting of Scott LaFaro](#)  
by Manny Fernandez*