

RISA HISTORY TIMELINE

by MaryAnn Rossoni

1993 We Begin, February 1993

- RISA formed by songwriter Mary Wheelan, first meeting takes place at her home in Pawtucket
- John Fuzek joins that April and he, Mary and the ten original members form a planning committee
- The group soon has all of its meeting and song swaps at The Providence Center

1994 Songwriter Boom

- Critiques held monthly at The Providence Center
- 40+ songwriters beginning to attend critique sessions
- RISA begins charging a membership fee; membership expanded from 10 to 100!
- Once a month songwriters gather to listen to and discuss instructional songwriting tapes
- Members meet for planning purposes
- Monthly feature performances by members at CAV restaurant followed by first official RISA open mic
- RISA hosts pre-festival songwriter showcase outside the gates at the Ben & Jerry Newport Folk Festival
- First Annual Songwriting Competition
- Hear in Rhode Island Festival showcases 23 RISA artists; event draws over 500 people
- Multiple venues host various RISA shows and showcases.
- RISA forms bylaws and first officers voted in: RISA Board: Co-chairs: John Fuzek, Jeff Olson; Mary Wheelan, Vice-President; Jackie Villanis, treasurer; Joseph Matthew, membership secretary; Barbara Kemper, correspondence secretary and Marge Lawton, recording secretary
- RISA has stage at First Night Celebration
- RISA selected for Fast Folk, a monthly music magazine produced by Jack Hardy in New York
- There are weekly open mics at: 729 Hope Street and CAV
- RISA newsletter called Quarter Notes, is written and mailed to all member four times/year.
- Mailing list spikes to 200+ members
- Total operating budget averaged about \$800

1995 - Growing Pains

- John Fuzek and Jeff Olson voted in as new co-chairs
- First meeting of the new Performance Committee
- A New York-style Session, inspired by the late Jack Hardy, forms at the home of Jackson Braider
- Board member Marcia Taylor facilitates workshop for the women of RISA
- RISA once again invited to hold stage at First Night
- Workshop - Press & Promo 101 with John Fuzek
- RISA directory put together for members
- Women of RISA holds first of many annual concerts, titled "Hot Cookin' Women"
- Many more performance opportunities form
- Members begin recording their music
- RISA joins North East Regional Folk Alliance with group membership
- First of many compilations: Our Invincible Summer was a fundraiser CD for the Providence Center
- RISA member Thomas Giblin, Esq. helps the organization apply for its non-profit status
- An organization, Business Volunteers for the Arts, assists us with long range planning
- Outreach for new volunteers/members begins
- Total operating budget averaged about \$1,079.00

1996 - RISA Revisits Core Mission

- Jeff Olson and Steve Valentine voted in as new co-chairs
- RISA hosted open mics begin at The Gallery Cafe, Cafe Zog and continue at CAV
- Critique sessions move from The Providence Center to The Music School
- Showcase series begins at Providence Public Library
- Workshop - Nashville songwriter Jason Blume
- Workshop - Publishing Your Songs with Bill Petterson
- Workshop - Myths and Realities of Becoming a Singer/Songwriter with Mary Ann Rossoni
- The 12 Steps of Christmas compilation is released
- RISA has first showcase at the famed Stone Soup Coffeehouse

- Performance opportunities take priority over songwriting angering founding members;

Board meets to discuss revitalization of fundamental RISA principles of education

- A new group forms within RISA, Songwriters Work Group (SWG). Members of this group discuss explore music marketing to record and publishing companies
- Current board members exhausted, attendance at monthly meetings is poor, decision made to recall board members with poor attendance. Board approves a new elections held

1997 RISA Re-charges

- Steve Valentine and Peter Hail voted in as new co-chairs
- Newsletter, now reduced to a single page, is re-vamped.
- Critique sessions need new home. Some members feel critiques are too harsh.
- Members suggest an alternate group for a Song Swap for those who just want to “present” material without criticism.
- Song Swaps now held at Sue Dearing’s house.
- Board begins to explore the possibility of a website
- New RISA Concert Series held at Coffeehouse in the Square
- Board becomes overworked and breaks free of Hear in RI yet remains as a supporter and sponsor

1998 Moving Forward

- Mary Ann Rossoni and Chris Myers voted in as new co-chairs
- Song Swaps morph back into critique sessions with a new twist - The “Salsa Method”. Members are asked prior to presenting a song if they want their salsa/criticism mild, medium, hot or none at all
- Newsletter re-designed and now features book and gear reviews, listing of open mics and record reviews of members and more.
- Website in production = webmasters Chris Myers and Louriann Mardo-Zayat
- RISA continues to be a Hear in Rhode Island sponsor which is not a two-day event presenting 80+ acts. Festival includes RISA and non-RISA performers
- Workshop - Journal Writing for Songwriters with Andrea Mainardi
- Workshop - Press & Promo 101 with John Fuzek
- Workshop - Finding Your Sound with Charles Obert
- RISA hosted open mics: Finnegan’s Wake and In the Square Coffeehouse and continue at CAV

- Survey sent to all members with the hope of finding better ways the organization can serve them.
- RISA holds first Fun-raiser on April's Fool's Day. Only funny songs presented with Yankee Swap

1999 In Motion

- Deb Dovale and Dave Fontaine voted in as new co-chairs
- RISA finally has swag - T-Shirts and bumper stickers
- New RISA hosted open mic now at Brewed Awakenings
- Open mic at CAV comes to an end when owner switches to jazz format
- First RISA Cookout at the home of the Myers
- First RISA Holiday Party at the home of the Khouris
- Website goes live

2000

- Deb Dovale and Dave Fontaine voted in as new co-chairs
- RISA open mic now at The Castro
- There is a fire at the Castro and we move our open mic to The Brooklyn Coffee Tea House

2001

- Deb Dovale and Dave Fontaine voted in as new co-chairs
- RISA purchases a sound system that members can rent for free when needed

2002

- John Fuzek, Dave Fontaine and Mary Ann Rossoni voted in as new co-chairs

2003

- John Fuzek, Dave Fontaine and Mary Ann Rossoni voted in as new co-chairs

2004

- John Fuzek and Bill Furney voted in as new co-chairs

- Printed newsletter goes by the wayside and members encouraged to go to website for info
- Songwriter series begins at The Towers in Narragansett
- Songwriter series begins at The Eclectibles Cafe
- RISA open mic at Rolfe Street Station
- Workshop - Press & Promo 101 with John Fuzek and Mary Ann Rossoni
- Workshop - Sound Advice with Greg Bass

2013

- Chuck Williams, president
- RISA hosts One-Day NERFA (North East Regional Folk Alliance) at the University of Rhode Island campus in Kingston.

We have more history to post so please check back.