

Susie Hansen -- Bio

Electric violinist Susie Hansen plays fiery Latin Jazz and Salsa, creating music that brings audiences to their feet, dancing in the aisles. Susie and her Los Angeles-based band have been acclaimed by many critics, such as Phil Elwood from the San Francisco Examiner who describes them this way: “It’s a sizzling, swinging Salsa band. Hansen can solo as if her bow was afire. The whole room was jumpin’ for joy.”

The Chicago native is a well-established jazz musician, and she has developed a unique and exciting Latin jazz style that features her electric violin as the lead instrument of the ensemble. She has drawn on various forms of both jazz and Latin music, utilizing the ever-potent fire of Afro-Cuban rhythms. She integrates her own interpretation of traditional Cuban *Charanga*, a predecessor of Salsa which often features the violin, with the compelling harmonies of straight-ahead jazz. According to Don Heckman of the Los Angeles Times, Susie “creates a brand of music that is as physically moving as it is intellectually stimulating.” Her all-star band features Daniel Castillo on lead vocals and congas, Kaspar Abbo on lead vocals and guitar, Joe Rotondi on piano, and other great musicians.

According to Oscar Abadia, KLVE-FM, radio K-Love in Los Angeles, “Susie Hansen is the greatest Salsa violinist in America.” She has been featured as a soloist with Orquesta Los Van Van, Cuba’s premier dance orchestra, both in Los Angeles and in Havana, Cuba, and with Orquesta Aragon, the world’s most acclaimed Cuban Charanga ensemble.

Susie began studying classical violin at the age of six with her father, James Hansen, who was a violinist in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for 37 years. In Boston she studied violin with Eric Rosenblith, string department chair at New England Conservatory, and she studied jazz and bebop with legendary jazz instructor Charlie Banacos. She also pursued an education in math and computer science, ultimately earning two Masters degrees in Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). After graduation, her musical career took precedence.

Susie formed her own jazz group in Chicago in 1982 which she led for several years. Following a successful concert of her band in Grant Park in 1986, she was invited by Victor Parra, leader of the Mambo Express All-Stars, to replace their violinist, and she soon discovered her passion for Latin music. When she moved to Los Angeles in 1988, she embarked on an in-depth study of everything and anything to do with Latin music. As can be seen from the extensive critical acclaim she has received, Susie has succeeded in turning the heads of even the most skeptical.

As Mark Holston wrote in JAZZIZ Magazine, “her violin speaks the language of Latin Jazz with total fluency.” A long-time favorite in Los Angeles, Susie and her band play 150 live performances per year, including such events as the Playboy Jazz Festival, Fiesta Broadway, San Jose Jazz Festival, LA Salsa Festival and Newport Beach Jazz Festival. She has toured nationally with her band, and has appeared with Tito Puente, Giovanni Hidalgo, Paquito d’Rivera, Orquesta Broadway, Vikki Carr, Jose Rizo’s Jazz on the Latin Side All-Stars, Orquesta Aragon, El Gran Combo, Los Van Van and Sonora Ponceña.

Susie is a recording artist on Jazz *Caliente* Records with three releases, [Representante de la Salsa](#), [The Salsa Never Ends](#) and [Solo Flight](#). Susie’s music receives extensive airplay in the United States, Europe, South America and Asia, and has charted well with radio and club DJs throughout the world.