

A NEW SEASON OF THE COOP CONCERT SERIES SPOTLIGHTS MEMBER TALENT

November 18, 2025



Brad Shepik Trio Peace Light: Brad Shepik (guitar), Chris Tordini (bass), Allan Mednard (drums)

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By Leila Darabi

Photo story by Caroline Mardok

On a mild September evening in Park Slope, about 30 Coop members and neighbors filled ShapeShifter Lab, the music and arts space located diagonally across from the Coop. Inside, the lights were warm, the bar busy and the crowd ready for the first night of the new season of the Coop Concert Series.

This monthly series brings together member musicians and their friends to perform in a professional setting. Nearly everyone involved invoked the name of Bev Grant, who helped run an earlier Coop concert series at the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture. It ran for more than 15 years, from the early 2000s until it paused in 2020. Grant's work in those years inspired many who are now reviving the idea with fresh energy and a new venue.

Organizer Alexis Cuadrado, a bassist and composer, described the reboot as both homage and expansion. "We wanted to revamp it in a bit of a different way than what it had been before and open it to a more diverse group of performers and more, you know, at all levels—music, origin, style—so like diversity with a capital D," he said.

"THE COOP IS FULL OF MUSICIANS," ORGANIZER ALEXIS CUADRADO SAID. "WHY NOT TURN THAT INTO A REAL COMMUNITY PLATFORM?"

A MUSICAL COLLABORATION

The concerts take place at ShapeShifter Lab, founded by Coop members Fortuna Sung and Matthew Garrison. "It's special because it's really a partnership between the Coop and ShapeShifter," Sung said. "We provide the space, the sound, the bar; they bring the music and community. It's very organic."

Sung and Garrison lead operations and general coordination of the events, in addition to their roles at ShapeShifter Lab on performance days (at the September event, Sung could be found behind the bar). Singer-songwriter Annie Keating handles social media, Ave Carrillo serves as series producer, and Cuadrado and violinist Ludovica Burtone curate the series.

Each concert includes four short sets, about 20 minutes each, and the mix is wide-ranging: jazz, folk, cabaret, world music and experimental performances. Performers

can apply online and receive Coop work slot credit for playing. “The Coop is full of musicians,” Cuadrado said. “Why not turn that into a real community platform?”



The ShapeShifter Lab.



Food coop concert, September 2025.



Brad Shepik Trio Peace Light—Brad Shepik (guitar), Chris Tordini (bass), Allan Med-nard (drums).

A NEW HOME ACROSS THE STREET

Keating remembers the earlier concerts vividly. “I used to play the series back when it was a partnership with the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture,” she said. “We had this, like, crappy little, not even a portable PA. It was basically one mixer thing and like two mics... Now it’s at a proper venue with an amazing sound and light system.”

Keating now helps run the revived version, promoting each event on social media. “We’ve had some really good numbers and exposure on Instagram,” Keating said. “But I think the majority of people at the Food Coop don’t know that we have a concert series. That’s the next step: getting the word out. It’s such a great opportunity, it’s across the street from the Coop and the sound here is amazing.”

“WE HAVE TO NURTURE THE MUSIC SCENE AND PROTECT IT. SO, IT’S NICE THAT THE COOP IS INVOLVED IN THAT AND SEES IT AS VALUABLE,” SAID MUSICIAN BRAD SHEPIK.

FIRST NIGHT BACK

The September concert opened with the Brad Shepik Trio, featuring Shepik on guitar, Chris Tordini on bass and Allan Mednard on drums. Their set included a preview of Shepik’s recent album, *Human Activity: Dream of the Possible*, a ten-movement meditation on climate change.

“I think it’s great that this series is happening,” Shepik said afterward. “We need more live music, period. The number of venues that we’ve seen come and go over the last 30 years,” he reminisced. Noting that the music scene depends on community support, he added that “we have to nurture it and protect it. So, it’s nice that the Coop is involved in that and sees it as valuable.”

Other acts that evening included Brittain Ashford; the Department of Jazz and Human Services, whose set celebrated the first birthday of saxophonist Andrew Brin-Spicer’s baby; and Dolly Trolly closing the night with playful rock harmonies and inventive guitar work from Tara L. Mallon, whose bandmates shared that she became fascinated with unique tuning during the pandemic.

Photographer Caroline Mardok, Shepik’s wife, documented the night, weaving

through the small crowd that mixed longtime Coop members and the friends and families of the performers. The atmosphere felt friendly and informal—a family affair in every sense.



Brittain Ashford (acoustic guitar), Jay Chakravorty (piano, electric guitar).



Dolly Trolly—Tara L. Mallon (guitar), Gerard Kouwenhoven (guitar), Walter Boppert (bass), Lyla Vander (drums).



Chris Tordini (bass) and his daughter after the concert.

THE TEAM MAKING IT HAPPEN

Bringing the series to life each month depends on a small crew of professionals offering their time and talent to the Coop community. Sung and Garrison handle venue operations; Cuadrado curates performers; Keating manages social media and other promotion. “It’s like a small production every month,” Sung said. “We’re artists, too, so we know what performers need to feel comfortable.”

She and the team continue to push for inclusivity. “We really want to expand our di-

versity of the performers,” Sung said. “We don’t see a lot of Black musicians or performers. So this is one of the things we want to overcome and let people know: Hey, don’t think it’s just one genre. It’s not just jazz. We want other things.”

“PLAYING MUSIC WITH OTHERS IS ONE OF THE MOST HUMAN THINGS THERE IS,” SAID SHEPIK. “IT REMINDS YOU THAT YOU’RE PART OF SOMETHING LARGER THAN YOURSELF. THAT’S WHAT THE COOP IS ABOUT, TOO: COMMUNITY, COOPERATION, CONNECTION.”

Cuadrado emphasized that goal, too. “The Coop is full of creative people,” he said. “This is about celebrating that diversity—of music, of culture, of background. It’s what makes the community so rich.”



Matt Garrison, owner of Shapeshifter lab.



Audience members enjoying the show.



Food Coop concert, September 2025.

MUSIC AS CONNECTION

The concerts have become a way to rebuild community after years of restrictions and uncertainty around public gatherings. “There was a certain kind of isolation that we all had to contend with,” Keating said. “A lot of our in-person, real, not-Zoom connections to community were severed, and what we’re trying to do is rebuild that human connection. And I think this concert series is a beautiful avenue.”

Shepik agreed: “Playing music with others is one of the most human things there is,” he said. “It reminds you that you’re part of something larger than yourself. That’s what the Coop is about, too: community, cooperation, connection.”

Many attendees said the evening underscored just how much musical depth exists within the Coop. The musicians, sound engineers, photographers and organizers all came from the same cooperative, and collectively help keep the store running.



Department of Jazz and Human Services—Andrew Brin-Spicer (saxophone), Pete Martin (trumpet), Aidan Scrimgeour, (piano), Nathan Haselby (bass), Dan Sieber (drums).



Department of Jazz and Human Services.

WHAT'S NEXT

The series continues monthly at ShapeShifter Lab. The October show featured the Jameh Daran Ensemble, Stoddard Blackall, Maggie Carson and Paula T, an evening that ranged from Iranian traditional music to indie pop. The squad shares the lineup for future events on Instagram and their website. All shows are \$10 and start at 6:30 p.m., with doors opening at 6 p.m. The next event is December 5.

Cuadrado added that the group is planning to include performance art and possibly a

children's concert next year.

A STAGE FOR THE COMMUNITY

An idea once nurtured by Grant and other early members has found new life across the street from the Coop. The monthly concerts showcase the remarkable range of musicians who stock shelves, ring up groceries, and share shifts. The Coop Concert Series continues to grow, offering a space where members can share their art, build connections, and keep live music thriving close to home.



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