

Jessica Felix back at helm of Healdsburg fest

Jesse Hamlin, Special to The Chronicle
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Healdsburg Jazz Festival founder and artistic director Jessica Felix, dumped last month by the nonprofit's board, is back in charge - and the board has quit.

Faced with an overwhelmingly negative response to its decision to oust Felix and put the cash-strapped festival on hold for a year, the five-member board turned the operation back over to Felix and resigned.

Felix, who started the notable wine-country jazz bash 12 years ago, said she and her lawyer recently received an e-mail from the board's lawyer telling them the members had unanimously elected Felix to the board and were all resigning.

"There was an outpouring of support from all parts of the community," said Felix, who's pleased to be back in action. She's putting together a new board and a fundraising committee to pay off this year's \$30,000 debt and raise operating capital. Assuming money can be found, Felix plans to put on the 2011 festival.

The former board had canceled next year's festival and talked of expanding the musical offerings beyond "pure" jazz. That, coupled with the ouster of Felix - who has brought top artists like McCoy Tyner, Bill Frisell and Joshua Redman to town - triggered a rash of criticism on the festival's website.

"To the chorus of boos, we add our own," wrote Scott and Sally Evans of Santa Rosa. "We are shocked at how incredibly short-sighted the board has been in addressing the legitimate financial concerns they describe. By 'pausing' the festival and dumping Jessica, [board President] Pat Templin has lost the community..."

Considering the public response, "I think it would've been a burden to the festival to have me and other board members remain," said former board President Pat Templin. "The people who support Jessica wanted to take hold of it and make it work."

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/09/21/DDPQ1FG6G9.DTL>

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