

[Front Page \(http://westviewnews.org/\)](http://westviewnews.org/) [About Us \(http://westviewnews.org/about/\)](http://westviewnews.org/about/)

[Subscribe \(http://westviewnews.org/subscribe/\)](http://westviewnews.org/subscribe/) [Advertise \(http://westviewnews.org/advertise/\)](http://westviewnews.org/advertise/)

[EXTRA \(http://westviewnews.org/extra/\)](http://westviewnews.org/extra/)



[\(http://westviewnews.org\)](http://westviewnews.org/)

[THIS MONTH ON WESTVIEW NEWS \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/THIS-MONTH-ON-WESTVIEW-NEWS/\)](http://westviewnews.org/this-month-on-westview-news/)

[FEATURED \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/FEATURED/\)](http://westviewnews.org/featured/)

[MONTHLY COLUMNS \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/MONTHLY-COLUMNS/\)](http://westviewnews.org/monthly-columns/)

[EDITORIALS \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/EDITORIALS/\)](http://westviewnews.org/editorials/)

[ARTICLES \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/ARTICLES/\)](http://westviewnews.org/articles/)

[BRIEFLY NOTED \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/BRIEFLY/\)](http://westviewnews.org/briefly-noted/)

[WESTVIEWS \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/LETTERS-2/\)](http://westviewnews.org/letters-2/)

[PHOTOS \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/PHOTOS/\)](http://westviewnews.org/photos/)

[HOME \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG\)](http://westviewnews.org/) › [ARTICLES](http://westviewnews.org/articles/)

[\(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/ARTICLES/\)](http://westviewnews.org/articles/) › [FOOD \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/FOOD/\)](http://westviewnews.org/food/) › [CAFFÈ](http://westviewnews.org/caffe/)

[VIVALDI CLOSES \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/2018/07/CAFFE-VIVALDI-CLOSES/\)](http://westviewnews.org/2018/07/caffe-vivaldi-closes/)

Caffè Vivaldi Closes

By Caroline Benveniste



HOPEFULLY IT IS NOT THE LAST ACT FOR THIS CULTURAL INSTITUTION: After 35 years in business, Caffè Vivaldi's closing is big news. *Photo by Darielle Smolian.*

When Ishrat Ansari posted the news on Caffè Vivaldi's website that the

café/restaurant/performance and community space would be closing on June 23rd, after 35 years, we received many emails from distraught readers alerting us to the fact. The closing was big news—articles

appeared in *The Villager* and *Gothamist*, and Jeremiah's *Vanishing New York* and *Eater* had posts about it. The closing was also featured on a number of TV news reports. I stopped by the café on its final evening. WPIX was outside interviewing musicians who had come to play there one last time.

Before opening Caffè Vivaldi in 1983, Ishrat was the proprietor of a magazine store on 7th Avenue South between Barrow and Bleecker Streets. When I first moved to the Village in the '80s I lived on Barrow Street and spent time there. I would go mostly to see the store's cat, Caesar, who was a very street-savvy feline and something of a neighborhood celebrity. He would greet customers and also spend part of each day perched in a tree outside the store. Once, a group of schoolchildren walked by and all shouted for Caesar. I did not realize, until I read the news reports, that Ishrat had decided to open Caffè Vivaldi in order to provide a more comfortable place to go for people who had congregated at the store.

While Caffè Vivaldi is now famous for its musical performances, music did not become a mainstay there until, after 9/11, Ishrat decided to add it in the hopes of attracting more customers in the evenings. It was a huge success: many musicians, local and not, got their start at the open-mic Mondays and jazz jam Sundays. There were also a number of celebrities—including Al Pacino, Bette Midler, Ethan Hawke, and John Cusack—who frequented, performed at, or filmed at Vivaldi (Woody Allen filmed three movies there).

In April, in a letter posted on the café's website, Ishrat wrote that, "In 2011, my tormentor, Steven Croman, became the new owner of the building where Caffè Vivaldi resides. From the beginning, his conduct has been belligerent and illegal, unilaterally breaking the renewed lease, which commenced on January 1, 2012. . ." I met with Ishrat's daughter Zehra the day after the café closed. We sat at the bar while the joyous sounds of the Pride celebration could be heard outside. She told me that about two years ago, in the midst of legal battles with Croman, Ishrat had had a stroke and she stepped in to run the café. She talked about how, before that, Croman had sued the café after a disagreement over the basement space and that the case was resolved in 2013 when Judge Lynn Kotler declared Caffè Vivaldi to be a "cultural institution" and dismissed Croman's case. Nevertheless, Zehra further explained, Caffè Vivaldi's problems with its landlord continued: Croman tried to raise the rent by 400% and, more recently (after being released from jail in early June after serving eight months of a one-year sentence for tax and mortgage fraud), he threatened to take the café to court again. Because of these challenges, and the fact that he was still recovering from his stroke, Ishrat finally decided to close the café.

The STOP CROMAN COALITION, organized by some of Croman's residential tenants in 2007, maintains a website: stopcromancoalition.org. In the "CROMANATED, THREATENED AND THWARTED" section, Caffè Vivaldi is featured as the latest casualty.

The restaurant's website encouraged people to share their stories; by the time the café closed 55 people had written in with appreciations. Some wrote about how special the café was to them, how it was a relic of Greenwich Village's bohemian past, and how they would miss it. Talented musicians who were discovered at Vivaldi wrote about how unique a place it was.

Zehra does not know what comes next for Vivaldi. First, her father still needs to rest and recover. And she is not optimistic about their being able to find a new venue because in this economic climate things are not easy for small businesses. While we know that to be true, we hope that Vivaldi's closing is not the last act for this cultural institution.

[\(/#tumblr\)](#) [\(/#twitter\)](#)
 [\(/#pinterest\)](#) [\(/#facebook\)](#)
[\(/#email\)](#) [\(/#printfriendly\)](#)

(<https://www.addtoany.com/share?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwestviewnews.org%2Fvivaldi-closes%2F&title=Caff%20Vivaldi%20Closes>)

APRIL 2019

« PREVIOUS POST

([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/2018/07/SEEN-NEW-PERAMBULATOR/](http://westviewnews.org/2018/07/seen-new-perambulator/))

Have You Seen My New Perambulator? (<http://westviewnews.org/2018/07/seen-new-perambulator/>)