

The Journal of the
DePaul School of Music

conPrio

FALL 2009

SERIOUS
DePaul Jazz Students Mix It Up
MIX

SERIOUS PLAY:

DePaul J

A jazz musician is called upon to do remarkable things — to interpret written arrangements which are themselves imprecise, to perform in a manner that requires stylistic validity and consistency with his or her ensemble collaborators, to demonstrate familiarity with a vast repertory of classic jazz materials and recordings, and to improvise — to spontaneously and concurrently create compelling music from three different sources: the harmonies, rhythms, and melodies of the piece being performed; the contributions of the other musicians performing, and the recorded performances of other jazz musicians at other times. For those new to the task, it can be more than daunting: it can be downright overwhelming. For those who have learned to listen and appreciate jazz as a high art form, the experience can be euphoric.

In the academy, jazz has often been treated as an orphan, and without dedicated personnel to

provide real advocacy, programs in jazz education can wither. Jazz is wonderfully alive in Chicago, though, and the program of jazz education at DePaul remains thoroughly vibrant in its energy and rather extraordinary in its output. What, though, allows jazz to flourish here and not elsewhere? That's the question we seek to explore through this issue of *Con Brio*.

We begin with some reflections on the quite wonderful partnership that has grown between the DePaul jazz program and legendary jazz saxophonist Phil Woods over recent years. Through many rehearsals, recordings, and performances, the DePaul Jazz Ensemble and the master have developed a great respect for one another — to the benefit of jazz patrons everywhere — and meaningful collaborations with a true jazz great help to elevate students and their program toward their ultimate potential. And Phil Woods is just the most

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Jazz Students Mix It Up

recent of a long list of collaborators who have come to DePaul to make music with the students and faculty here. Bob Lark, director of our jazz studies program, chronicles his impressions of a handful of jazz masters recruited to campus and the impressive discography that includes recordings made by DePaul students, faculty, and these legendary musicians. Through interviews with Chicago jazz arrangers (and DePaul faculty members) Tom Matta and Kirk Garrison, we also seek to understand the specific role of the jazz composer/arranger. Jeremy Smith of Duke University writes of the importance of maintaining scholarly collections of jazz materials. Finally, inspired by the famous poem by Carl Sandburg entitled “Jazz Fantasia,” we spend a moment in reflection of a few of this one university’s jazz progeny, and ask them how they came to be where they are in this field.

In *The Joy of Music*, Leonard Bernstein notes that though we often speak of “playing” music, in the case of jazz, the phrase is especially apt, for the jazz musician plays with notes — “fools around with notes” so to speak. It is serious music made in a playful cast. To that, Phil Woods would add “If it isn’t fun, it isn’t jazz.” And we would agree. We think it’s a matter of spirit, and in part, that’s what we find so compelling about this music. It is exuberant and mournful, communal and independent, prescribed and inventive, all at the same time. It’s also reflective of how we do our best work — with spirit.

DEAN DONALD E. CASEY
DePaul School of Music





PRINTS
INNOVATIONS

By Rosalie Harris

Call him “Dr. Woods.” DePaul School of Music Dean Donald Casey conferred upon famed alto saxophonist Phil Woods an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree at the June 2009 commencement ceremonies.

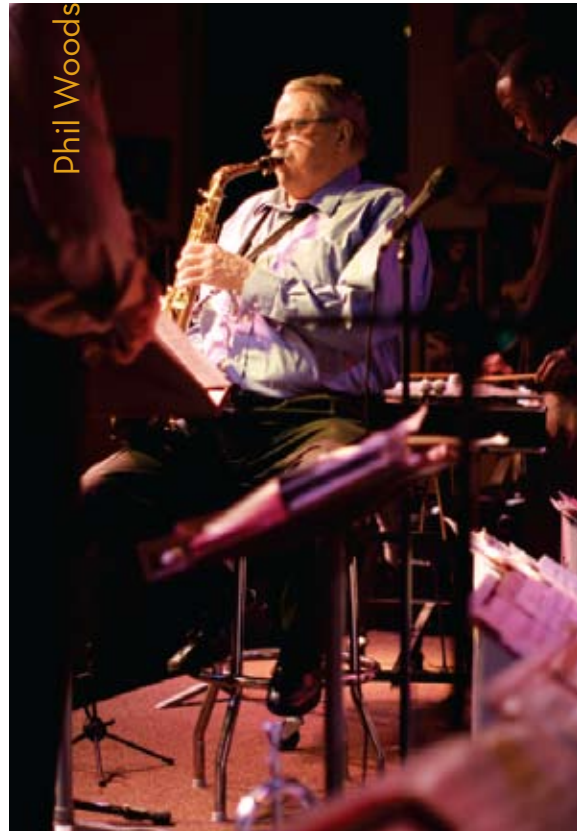
But when Woods first encountered a sax lying in his grandmother’s wicker basket in her home in Springfield, Massachusetts, all he could see was the prospect of melting it down to make toy soldiers.

The year was 1943 and like many young Americans, 12-year-old Phil had an older brother fighting in World War II. The war was foremost in his mind and melting metal into toy soldiers was a hobby he lived and breathed every day. When told that the sax was a gift from his late Uncle Norman, he couldn’t have cared less. But his mother insisted that such a legacy couldn’t go ignored — or unplayed. “I had no interest in music and neither did she. But she insisted I give it a try,” Woods said.

“So I looked in the Yellow Pages under ‘Music Teachers’ and found a listing for a Mr. Harvey LaRose, on State Street in Springfield. I called him up, made an appointment, and asked him whether I should bring in the saxophone. He replied, ‘Yes, that would be a good idea.’ That’s when my life changed. Because of Harvey, I found I was blessed with a good tone. Within six weeks I fell in love with music and, at age 14, I knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.”

Due in great part to LaRose’s influence, Springfield was a town well known for a distinctive jazz sound. Many musicians who went on to a significant professional career lived only a few blocks from Woods’s boyhood home — including pianist Hal Serra, guitarist Sal Salvador, drummer Joe Morello, and saxophonist Chuck Anders. The friends took many trips to New York City, at the height of what Woods calls the “bebop revolution” in the mid-to-late 40s.

“The more I learned from Harvey, the more I heard jazz in the Big City clubs, the more I realized I didn’t know,” said Woods. In those



days, there were no jazz programs in schools and the saxophone was perceived as too limited to be taught in universities. After high school, Woods entered the Manhattan School of Music as a clarinet major and later majored in clarinet and minored in composition at The Juilliard School, where he received his degree.

Jazz was the music of the day then, heard on radio and hit recordings, and performed in clubs all over New York City. But Woods experienced artists of all contemporary stripes: not only Artie Shaw and other jazz greats, but also John Cage, The Juilliard Quartet at its inception, Martha Graham’s revolutionary dance troupe, Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress*, the early genius of Leonard Bernstein, and the emergence of The Beats. He got drunk with Jack Kerouac, was befriended by Charlie “Bird” Parker, with

whom he became positively compared, ate spaghetti at Romeo's for 25 cents, and bought the latest 78s for 30 cents a pop.

But above all, "I studied to be a good musician," he said, "the best I could be." By the late 1950s, Woods had played with an array of renowned jazz musicians, ensembles, and producers, including Thelonious Monk, Buddy Rich, Quincy Jones, Clark Terry, and Dizzy Gillespie. With Benny Goodman, he went on a groundbreaking tour of the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War.

From 1968 to 1973, Woods lived in France, founding the *avant-garde* jazz European Rhythm Machine. Back in the United States, he founded a quartet, later a quintet, that still performs today. In the world of pop music, his saxophone soars in Billy Joel's "Just the Way You Are" and Paul Simon's "Still Crazy After All These Years."

Woods has written more than 200 compositions; received seven Grammy nominations and four Grammy Awards; and made dozens of worldwide tours and albums, frequently in collaboration with the greatest names in jazz, rock, and pop. In 2007, he received a Jazz Master Fellowship Award from the National Endowment of the Arts. A *New York Times* review of a performance at Dizzy's Club Coca Cola in March of this year began, "The alto saxophonist Phil Woods wore his mastery with nonchalance Leading his quintet, a working band with a wealth of accumulated knowledge, he kept a loosely efficient air: business casual, with equal emphasis on both words. There was wit and aplomb in his playing, and even an occasional flash of risk, as he willed himself away from comfort and cliché."

Woods combines that same professional inciviveness and relaxed demeanor he's famous for in an association with the DePaul Jazz Studies Program that has stretched beyond five years — including sessions in classrooms, recording studios, campus performance venues, and local clubs. During numerous return visits now, he has become trusted and treasured by students and faculty members for his wisdom and for his wit. "If jazz isn't fun, it's not jazz," he claimed.



THE DOCTOR IS IN

Trumpeter Clark Terry's introduction of Woods to DePaul Jazz Studies Director Bob Lark sparked his first collaboration with the university. Then 73 years old, he was ready for such an affiliation. "I learned at the feet of the masters, through the kindness of men like Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, and Goodman," he said. "It was time to pass on what the masters taught me. And music education is so important, not only to be a musician, but also to be a better student."

Lark said, "The DePaul Jazz Ensemble and Phil Woods began their association with a series of performances at Joe and Wayne Segal's Jazz Showcase in May 2004. The fruit of the week-long engagement produced *Woodlands*, a 'live' CD recording that received widespread critical acclaim within the jazz community. Since that time, Phil has performed with the band on several occasions, including many performances at area high schools, jazz festivals, and the Midwest Clinic. In 2006, we presented another engagement at the Jazz Showcase, producing *Swingchronicity*, the follow up 'live' recording. Beginning a series of three visits last fall, our goal was to produce a DVD documentary of the band and Phil in performances, rehearsals, and studio recording sessions. A studio CD recording also will be released, focusing on Phil's original compositions." These projects are co-sponsored by the DePaul School of Music, the Yamaha Corporation of America, and the Jazz Showcase.

Chicago Tribune critic Howard Reich, reviewing a performance by the jazz ensemble and Woods last October, wrote, "What happens when a fine college band shares the stage with a jazz master? The kids start playing at an entirely new level, as they did ... before a capacity audience at the Jazz Showcase When veteran saxophonist Phil Woods stepped up to the microphone ... all at once, a fine college band approached professional caliber."

"You can tell that there's fire in the belly of some students — you can see it in their eyes, the way they pick it up, their posture," said Woods. "Jazz

is a tribal, oral tradition, as well as an art form. When you learn about this music, you learn about life. Jazz opens up the world to you."

Saxophone student David Kromelow (Class of 2010) said he will treasure for the rest of his life the day he played with Woods in a master-class in 2008. "At the time, I wasn't in the top big band, but I was taking private lessons with Professor Lark, who picked me to be the 'lab rat.' Phil had me play an exercise to the chord progression of "Autumn Leaves" (Johnny Mercer and Joseph Kosma) and we also jammed on the Cole Porter standard, "What Is This Thing Called Love?" Phil played the first solo choruses, playing some of the most magnificent stuff imaginable. Then I played the next two 32-bar choruses. It was perhaps the greatest musical experience of my life, because everything seemed to flow naturally and I was just having fun being in the moment. After I finished, Phil said, 'Yeah, baby!' and we fist-bumped. That moment showed me the potential I really have as a musician."

Speaking about a recent recording sessions, Alex Beltran (MM Class of 2010), a graduate saxophone student, said, "it was really special to be around him, to play with someone who has first-hand experience of what it was like during the 1940s, '50s and beyond. I really enjoyed a filmed 'hang' with him and the jazz ensemble saxophonists, when we asked him questions about his life and people he's met and played with. More than anything, I think Phil's repertoire, the fact that he's so prolific, helped me write more original music than I've ever done before. Finally, his visits reinforced the concept of an 'original sound.' What I mean is that Phil has a very personal sound on the saxophone that's immediately recognizable as his own. He has helped me strive for a sound that is immediately recognizable as my own."

Woods, who has donated his extensive archives to DePaul, said, "DePaul's big band is one of the best bands in the college ranks, if not the best. That's thanks to the incredible faculty headed by Professor Lark. I always feel my batteries get charged at DePaul and — don't leave Joe Segal out of the equation! — at the Jazz Showcase."



GREATS

By Bob Lark

HEAD TO CAMPUS

Since Bob Lark's arrival at DePaul in the fall of 1990, dozens of acclaimed jazz musicians have shared their music-making and insight with students and faculty members, providing inspiration and wisdom. Who are these professional jazz artists? What did they teach? Following are Lark's observations of a handful who, like Phil Woods, made their way to DePaul's Lincoln Park campus.

CLARK TERRY *Trumpet*

A true pioneer in jazz education and a jazz icon, Clark recorded two CDs with the DePaul Jazz Ensemble and performed in concert with the band on a number of occasions, including the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE) International Conference held in Chicago in 1997 and the "Jazz is for Lovers" program at the Merle Reskin Theatre. Clark's recommendation secured the ensemble's participation in the International Duke Ellington Conference, featuring several former members of the Ellington Orchestra. Among my favorite comments from Clark to our band: "Just because the notes are on the page, doesn't mean that you have to play them all," and "When the lead voice is above the staff (e.g. lead trumpet), then you know to play the music pretty loud; when the lead voice isn't above the staff, don't play loud."

BOB BROOKMEYER SLIDE TROMBONE, *composer, conductor*

Legendary for being a taskmaster, Bob is a true perfectionist when rehearsing a band. When accepting our invitation to perform and record with the jazz ensemble in 2001, he required that we devote three long days to rehearsing his music with him prior to the first performance. At the conclusion of the first rehearsal, he turned to me with a look of surprise, commenting, "I don't believe that we need to rehearse tomorrow; I've never heard a band so prepared to play my music!" He repeated a simple mantra to the band in reference to jazz style and interpretation: "Elongate." Bob observed that the best of musicians sustain notes full value, and encouraged our students to "make eighth-notes longer, make sustained notes longer."

LOUIS BELLSON *Drums*

Louie was a true gentleman and jazz ambassador. In addition to recording a CD with him (*Legacy*), at Louie's request, the jazz ensemble twice performed with him on trans-Atlantic cruises aboard the Queen Elizabeth II ocean liner and once aboard the S.S. Norwegian Sun. Addressing an audience aboard the Q.E. II that included Dave Brubeck and other jazz luminaries, Louie said, "This is the best college band that I've ever played with — they swing and play like pros!"



JIM MCNEELY *Piano*

Jim has visited campus more than any other guest jazz artist. His workshop presentations, concert performances, compositions, arrangements, and CD recordings with our jazz ensemble have been significant in the development of our students and program. An artist who is respected by both professional musicians and students, Jim has had a profound impact on my development as a musician and educator.

SLIDE HAMPTON *Trombone, composer, arranger, educator*

Slide brings a depth of tradition and history to his music-making and in his talks to our students. He said to them, “Jazz is an important part of American culture, our American heritage. Study the masters and understand the tradition of jazz music.” DePaul Jazz Ensemble performances with Slide span more than a dozen years, including those aboard the S.S. Norwegian Sun and at Chicago’s Jazz Showcase.

STEVE GILMORE *Bass* BILL GOODWIN *Drums*

Steve and Bill have formed the core of Phil Woods’s rhythm section for the past 35 years, working with our students on occasion in recent years. They have a knack for getting students to listen attentively to the people with whom they are performing.

BOB MINTZER *Saxophone*

A contemporary saxophonist, composer and arranger, Bob has visited our campus several times, performed with the band on and off-campus, and composed commissioned works for our band. He has been consistent in his praise and encouragement of our student soloists and the ensemble’s attention to detail.

BYRON STRIPLING *Trumpet*

A charismatic presence, articulate speaker, gifted vocalist and musician, Bob is a true artist/showman who has performed with the jazz ensemble a number of times. His advice to students is, “Prepare yourself to be a professional.”

RANDY BRECKER *Trumpet*

Randy was the first guest artist I invited to DePaul, and he has visited campus and played with the jazz ensemble a number of times. He is fluent in performing many styles of contemporary and traditional jazz music at an artist level and is always an inspiration to our students and the faculty.

TIM RIES *Saxophone, composer, arranger*

Tim is a contemporary jazz performer and composer who also performs with the Rolling Stones. His workshop presentations have provided insight to the “networking” associated with creating professional opportunities. And his saxophone playing and compositions are inspiring.

Among other artists who worked with DePaul students are famed trumpeters **Tom Harrell** and **Bobby Shew**, vocalist **Nancy Wilson**, and the **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis**. A final observation on a comment that has been consistent with almost every jazz artist involved with our program: When asked by students, “What do you think about when you’re improvising?” to a person they answer, “I listen.”

Trumpeter Robert Lark, Ph.D, is DePaul’s director of jazz studies and the DePaul Jazz Ensemble, and teaches jazz trumpet, jazz pedagogy, and jazz style. He received his bachelor’s degree in music education from The Ohio State University and his master’s degree in music education and his doctorate in musical arts from the University of North Texas. He is a past-president of the Illinois Unit of the International Association of Jazz Educators, an active clinician, composer, guest trumpeter, and guest conductor.

49 TROMBONE

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"BASIE"

PRESE

By Jeremy A. Smith

ST

Not until the late 1960s did the study of jazz consistently begin to find an accepted place in academic institutions. Since then, jazz performance and research have grown into respected areas at many colleges and universities throughout the U.S. A number of conservatories and schools of music now offer degrees in jazz performance and even more provide ensemble opportunities for interested performers, most prominently through the large jazz ensembles sponsored by universities.

Moreover, research into jazz has increased in recent decades, with a proliferation of interdisciplinary courses and degrees in jazz history and culture offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. A recent search of the ProQuest dissertation database revealed that nearly 300 doctoral dissertations directly related to jazz have been completed in the U.S. since 2000 alone.

Helping to enable and sustain this growth of jazz studies is the increasing presence of unique jazz-related materials in a variety of archives and special collections libraries.

The first formal jazz archive began in 1952, when scholar and jazz advocate Marshall Stearns founded the Institute of Jazz Studies (IJS) out of his residence in Manhattan. The IJS, which continues today as a branch of the library system at Rutgers University, has since been joined by jazz archives at the University of Chicago, Tulane University, University of Idaho, Duke University and many other academic institutions. According to a recent tally by the Chicago Jazz Archive, no fewer than 51 institutions list jazz-related materials in their special collections libraries.

These materials range from paper-based items — such as music manuscripts, correspondence, concert playbills, recording contracts, posters, advertisements, and newspaper clippings — to photographs, audio recordings, and moving image materials, as well as books, magazines, and journals. Such items help document jazz's

historic and ongoing significance by making available rare or unique primary source materials that would otherwise be lost to the historical record.

Jazz archival holdings are valuable both for scholars interested in the minutiae of original jazz research and also for aspiring arrangers and performers. Professional arrangers can attest that only a fraction of jazz arrangements for big bands and other ensembles are available for commercial purchase. Unless these items are preserved and made available in research archives, future access will be severely restricted, if not eliminated altogether.

Important institutional collections, including those at Library of Congress and Duke University, contain rare and otherwise unavailable arrangements by Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, Frank Foster, and others. Additionally, since jazz has historically relied more on improvisation than on written scores, audio materials from commercial and noncommercial sources are vital documents for performers and scholars interested in understanding the full breadth of the music's history and stylistic development. In their role as audio repositories, archives including the IJS, the Felix E. Grant Jazz Archives at the University of the District of Columbia, and the Los Angeles Jazz Institute have important collections that are helping to preserve this otherwise ephemeral art form.

In these and other ways, jazz archives are playing a key role in acquiring, preserving and making available primary documents that enable the growth of jazz research and performance. As the presence of jazz continues to increase in universities throughout the U.S., jazz archives will take on an ever-expanding role in helping to ensure that this music will be studied and valued for generations to come.

Jeremy A. Smith completed a Ph.D degree in musicology (jazz studies) at Duke University, where he currently serves as Jazz Archivist in the Special Collections Library.



MAKING ARRANGING

DePaul Jazz Studies alumni and faculty members Tom Matta and Kirk Garrison regularly arrange tunes performed by DePaul's jazz groups. Bass trombonist Matta came to DePaul in 1992 to pursue a Certificate in Performance degree. He played in the jazz ensemble, served as a graduate assistant, and studied with the impressive lineup of Charlie Vernon, Paul McKee, and Frank Mantooth, who is now deceased. After graduating in 1994, he started subbing for Mantooth's "Intro to Jazz Arranging" course, which he took over in 2005. Now an assistant professor, he teaches the entire jazz composition and arranging sequence for undergraduate and graduate jazz studies students. Garrison moved to Chicago in 1992 with Mantooth's encouragement, after almost 10 years in the United States Air Force bands. He completed his master's degree in jazz studies in 1995 and came back to DePaul in 2002, conducting the jazz workshop ensemble and a jazz combo. Garrison, a trumpeter, is a member of the Lt. Dan Band, a popular music ensemble formed by actor/musician Gary Sinise and Chicago musician James "Kimo" Williams.

CON BRIO: Isn't improvisation what's distinctive to jazz? What is the relationship between composition and improvisation?

TOM MATTA: Improvisation is a central component to jazz, certainly. Furthermore, I think good jazz composition and arranging put a frame around improvisation. They create a setting — a leadsheet, combo arrangement, or

full-blown big band orchestration — that features and highlights the improviser. There is a bit of composing in every arrangement and a bit of arranging in every composition, to varying degrees. Indeed, the improviser, even when limited by formal and/or harmonic restrictions within a piece, still has an impact on the composition and arrangement both, sometimes profoundly.

CB: When you're composing, setting, resetting jazz tunes for students, what do you need to keep in mind, relative to their level of talent and experience?

TM: At DePaul, we have some very gifted instrumentalists in our program, especially in the jazz ensemble. I can pretty much write anything I hear and fully expect the band to "nail it down." Given that Bob Lark is as capable, inspiring, and efficient a director as you will ever find fronting a big band (and I say that having seen lots of educators leading big bands over the years), I know the music I write will be performed as closely as possible to the ideal of the "perfect" performance I hear in my head when conceiving it. The level of playing has always been very high at DePaul, but now it is deeper. Don't just look at how good our top jazz ensemble is, but also look to our jazz orchestra and jazz workshop ensemble.



GEMENTS

CB: As you prepare students for performances, what, if any, are the differences when someone like Phil Woods is coming to campus, as contrasted with a students-only performance?

KIRK GARRISON: Preparation for concerts is always thorough. However, an opportunity for young jazz musicians to perform with a world class artist like Phil Woods is rare indeed. We did spend a lot more time getting the tunes together, so there was no doubt that the performance would be a very musical experience. I wanted the band to be comfortable enough with their parts so they could enjoy what was happening around them.

CB: What's particularly rewarding about arranging Phil Woods tunes?

TM: Phil is an especially keen composer. Everything he writes, like everything he plays, is so singable and hummable, yet sophisticated. His choices, whether melody, harmony, rhythm — all are seemingly inevitable: there just isn't a better solution from note to note or from phrase to phrase than what he plays or writes. And like Billy Strayhorn or Duke Ellington, his leadsheets are just amazing canvases in which the music, even in its barest form of chords and melody, jump off the page and suggest their new setting themselves.

KG: How did I approach writing for Phil? Very carefully! The composition I was asked to arrange is called "Flowers." As an arranger, you always search for a song that moves you in some way or that sparks your imagination. When the composition is strong, coming up with musical ideas is actually relatively easy. The beauty of "Flowers" is its simplicity. I listened to the original recording dozens of times to study what sounds and textures I would use within the ensemble. I also really became attached to the tune and wanted nothing more than to paint a musical portrait that only would be complete with Phil placing the final strokes. The arrangement, like the tune, is not technical. It is the balance and blend of unique instrumental combinations that accompany the melody and the improvised solos.

CB: The DePaul jazz faculty seems extremely close and supportive of one another. What do you think fosters this?

KG: Every member of the DePaul jazz studies faculty is an accomplished, highly respected musician and we all enjoy hearing each other for play. Bob, Tom and I have known each other for about 20 years. Tom and I performed in the DePaul Jazz Ensemble as students, under Bob's direction. With common goals and a genuine love for music, it is easy to grow very close. We truly have a special bond.

DEPAULL'S
JACKMAN'S

GO TO IT!

JAZZ FANTASIA – Carl Sandburg (1919)

Drum on your drums, batter on your banjos,
Sob on the long cool winding saxophones.
Go to it, O jazzmen.

*Sling your knuckles on the bottoms of the happy tin pans,
Let your trombones ooze,
And go hushahusha-hush with the slippery sand-paper.*

*Moan like an autumn wind high in the lonesome tree-tops,
Moan soft like you wanted somebody terrible,
Cry like a racing car slipping away from a motorcycle cop,
Bang-bang! you jazzmen,
Bang altogether drums, traps, banjos, horns, tin cans –
Make two people fight on the top of a stairway
And scratch each other's eyes in a clinch tumbling down the stairs.*

*Can the rough stuff ...
Now a Mississippi steamboat pushes up the night river
With a hoo-hoo-hoo-oo ...*

*And the green lanterns calling to the high soft stars ...
A red moon rides on the humps of the low river hills ...
Go to it, O jazzmen.*

The jazz musicians rhapsodized by Carl Sandburg exactly 90 years ago had little, if any, formal training. But many jazzmen working today, represented by the DePaul alumni who tell their stories below, share the common bond of emerging from university jazz studies programs. How does that choice affect them as performers, composers, recording artists, and teachers? Their stories reveal that both undergraduate and graduate-level classes, curricula and off-campus experiences make a continuing impact on their jazz and their lives.

RUDRESH MAHANTHAPPA

MM, 1995

Guggenheim Fellow and 2009 Downbeat Poll Winner Rudresh Mahanthappa was born in Trieste, Italy, and raised in Boulder, Colorado. His brother, older by seven years, played classical clarinet and always regretted not being in a jazz band. The little third-grade brother, who took up the Baroque recorder in second grade, was urged to play jazz “because jazz looked like more fun.” Mahanthappa took up the saxophone because the fingering was similar to the recorder. Today, his jazz career has led to creating a synthesis of traditional jazz with Classical Indian music that reflects his ancestry. Writing in *The New Yorker* recently, Gary Giddins

stated, “Much as Dizzy Gillespie had wedded jazz chord changes to Cuban rhythms in the 1940s, Mahanthappa wrote music that blended Western harmony with South Indian traditions, searching for a style in which American and Indian players might find a common ground without sacrificing their respective improvisational approaches.”

I had a great teacher from the start. Mark Harris was a sophomore at the University of Colorado and I was his first private student. He was an open and creative guy and I think if I hadn't studied with him, I'd be a different kind of musician. He wasn't formulaic in his teaching but emphasized the individual strengths of his students. Mark saw lessons as a creative opportunity to develop ear training as well as technique. He'd have me record theme songs from TV programs such as *Welcome Back Kotter*, *Love Boat*, and *Dallas* for ear training exercises, because you can't tell a nine-year-old to listen to Miles Davis. Mark taught me that there's no such thing as “wrong” music, only poorly played music. He brought me all kinds of music — jazz, rock, classical. His concerts were always different, sometimes Afro Pop, maybe a kids' concert, even a wacky trio of two saxophones and percussion. Because of him, I decided I wanted to live a musical life.

The saxophone is a young instrument, only about 150 years old and began as a substitute for trombones in circus bands. It was often seen as a “joke” instrument. But jazz as an art form is a vehicle for those who are displaced. In the tradition of the African American experience, this music is an optimal voice for “confused” children of immigrants — and the saxophone!

I first studied at the University of North Texas and then transferred to Berklee College of Music in Boston, where I played in many ensembles, studied with great teachers such as Joe Viola, George Garzone, and Hal Crook, and got my bachelor’s degree. The usual pattern after finishing a major jazz program is to head to New York City, a pattern which I believe needs to be broken, as the “sameness” of this journey is not conducive to creating an individual sound. I had a friend from North Texas who was studying with bassist Larry Gray at DePaul. Since New York didn’t feel like the right thing to do at the time, I decided to come to Chicago — and moving there was the best thing I could have done.

Rick Peckam, director of a group I was playing with at Berklee, was best man at Bob Lark’s wedding. He called Bob to say I was interested in DePaul. The Chicago scene then — the clubs, the jam sessions — was comfortable and I felt I was doing the right thing for my career. I became a jazz composition major at DePaul, studying with Paul McKee, who was creative and open-ended. He saw my skills and was willing to let me experiment. I also studied classical sax with Scott Plugge and played gigs with my teachers, including Gray and piano faculty member Larry Novak.

New York always had been the goal for me and in 1997 I moved there permanently. Chicago jazz then was either very “straight ahead” or avant garde. I was interested in a place between. In fact, I became eager to explore Classical Indian music and became more enthralled when I heard Indian saxophonist, Kadri Goplalath, whose album, *Saxophone Indian Style*, was given to me at Berklee by my brother. In New York, I taught young students for nine years, but my student load was reduced year by year, as I became more active touring and recording. Eventually, with the support of the Asia Society and a Rockefeller Foundation grant, I was able



Rudresh Mahanthappa



Vance Thompson



Brian Culbertson

to work with Gopalnath to create the music that would result in the high acclaimed *Kinsman* album. Soon after, I was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, to further study South Indian (Carnatic) music. This entailed two separate trips, one of which lasted two months. My goal was to study with Gopalnath and others, learning specific structural elements of Indian music with regard to both melodic ornamentation and rhythmic cadence. As a result of this work, I've collaborated with him, written a body of new music and recorded several albums. I still have some private students, all college age. But I think the first sounds people make on the saxophone are so beautiful. They still give me a sense of wonder.

For more information, visit www.rudreshm.com

VANCE THOMPSON

MM in Jazz Studies, 1997

Trumpeter Vance Thompson was born and raised in Maryville, Tennessee, a small town just south of Knoxville. His father was the choir director at church and his mother played and taught piano. He is a member of the jazz faculty at the University of Tennessee and founder of a professional big band, the Knoxville Jazz Orchestra.

Music was part of my life from the beginning. I started on piano, took up trumpet in the grammar school band, and was in high school when Wynton Marsalis was beginning to gain national attention. His virtuosity definitely piqued my interest. I had two friends in high school whose parents had jazz record collections. I remember going to their houses and hearing Art Blakey's band — with Freddie Hubbard and Wayne Shorter — Miles and Coltrane, Bird, Monk, and Dizzy. I can still remember the feeling of awe I had the first time I heard Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie play "Bloomdido."

Around that same time, Mike Aycock, a student teacher from the University of Tennessee, started a jazz band at our high school. Mike was new to jazz himself, but since I showed such an interest, he recommended me as a student to one of his professors, famed jazz educator Jerry Coker. Jerry took me on as a student while I was still in high school. This was a turning point for me. I enrolled as a student at the University of Tennessee and

continued to work with Jerry. While at UT, I also had the good fortune of studying with pianist Donald Brown.

After completing my undergraduate music degree, I was ready for a change. With a few short-term exceptions, I'd lived my entire life in East Tennessee. I began to research different graduate music programs and quickly gravitated toward DePaul, because of the range of performance opportunities, faculty, and location. My time at DePaul was extraordinarily beneficial. Playing in the jazz ensemble three times each week was a great experience as a trumpeter, and having the opportunity to bring arrangements in to such a great band was invaluable. I also learned a great deal from studying with Bob Lark, Paul McKee, and Tom Matta. Each opened my eyes to new possibilities in music, and all were very gracious and encouraging.

After leaving Chicago, I moved back to Tennessee to teach at UT and started the Knoxville Jazz Orchestra. The band is organized as a nonprofit, much like a symphony orchestra, and puts on a series of concerts throughout the year. The idea for this group was given to me by Professor Bob Lark while I was at DePaul. We were talking one day in his office and he described to me the entire business model of how such an organization could work. He talked about what it took to form a 501(c)3 nonprofit, find grant money, develop corporate sponsors, and program the series. Before that moment, the thought had never occurred to me. When I arrived back in Knoxville, I got busy putting into action the plan Bob had described. This year will be the group's 10th anniversary. In that time we've recorded and released four CDs, performed in jazz festivals in the U.S. and Europe and presented dozens of local concerts featuring world renowned jazz artists. Attendance at our concerts continues to increase, with audience size ranging from 500 to 1,500+ people.

BRIAN CULBERTSON

1991-1994

Multi-instrumentalist, composer/performer, and recording artist/producer Brian Culbertson was born and raised in Decatur, Illinois, and has lived in Los Angeles since 1998. He recently "returned" to Chicago, where he studied at DePaul, via smooth jazz radio

station WLFM (87.7 FM), where The Brian Culbertson Morning Show airs weekdays from 6 to 10 a.m. Citing his latest CD, *Bringing Back The Funk* (co-produced by Maurice White of Earth, Wind & Fire) the Canadian Smooth Jazz Awards named him 2009 International Artist of the Year – the latest of many awards bestowed on him since the beginning of his career, which was launched during his student years at DePaul.

My father, trumpeter Jim Culbertson, has been band director at MacArthur High School in Decatur for 36 years. He's one of the most internationally-known jazz educators, a popular performer in and around central Illinois, and a frequent guest in my band. He's very detail-oriented, which has made me very focused, a perfectionist. I started playing piano at age eight, drums at nine, the trombone at 10, and bass at 12.

The late pianist and DePaul jazz faculty member, Frank Mantooth, was a friend of my dad's and I sent him a demo, which was passed on to Cliff Colnot. Soon after, while I was still a senior in high school, I began taking private lessons from Cliff. I continued studying with him at DePaul and learned not only about pop and jazz, but also commercial writing, arranging, notation, and composition. I eventually worked for Cliff's commercial music company as a writer, producer, and arranger. At DePaul, I studied jazz trombone with Paul McKee, classical trombone with Ed Kocher, and played lead trombone in Bob Lark's first DePaul Jazz Ensemble.

During the fall semester of my sophomore year, I was encouraged by piano faculty member Alan Swain, who recognized I had the 'right feel' for piano. Before then, I was concentrating on trombone. The next spring, I recorded a demo in an apartment above the Chicago Costume Company at Fullerton and Racine — four guys living in one of the world's crappiest buildings. But that demo led to a contract for my first recording, *Long Night Out*, which was released in February 1994 on Mesa/Bluemoon Records. Faculty member Mark Colby played saxophone on several tunes, one of which is aptly named "Fullerton Ave." I'd become a part-time student while recording the CD and launched my career full time after that year.

The city of Chicago itself is one of the greatest attributes of DePaul. I was able to play at many professional jazz clubs, as well as at weddings and corporate events, while going to school.

Because of those experiences, and also the music I've listened to all my life, I'd say that my music is a combination of instrumental pop, R&B, "sing-along" melodies, little bits of improvisation, with a jazz flavor. The "smooth jazz" radio format works well for me, that's where my CDs get a lot of play.

I've recently collaborated with vocalist Micaela Haley, as co-producer of her debut CD, *Syren*, which was released in May. It's a combination of electronica, pop, rock, classical, ethereal, dance, and opera — truly a new sound. My newest concert DVD, in stores October 20, is *Live from the Inside*, which includes documentary-style vignettes that give an inside peek at what makes me tick.

For more information on what makes Brian Culbertson tick, visit www.brianculbertson.com

DAN NICHOLSON

MM in Jazz Composition, 2008

Saxophonist Dan Nicholson was born and raised in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Now a resident of Chicago, he teaches at the Merit School of Music and Near North Montessori. He is musical director for *Front of House*, a local corporate band, and is lead alto sax for the Chicago Jazz Ensemble.

My mom used to take me to college jazz band concerts when I was young. I studied privately with some of the students and was inspired by them. I played in our high school jazz band, called the "stage band," and we played a lot of Chuck Mangione charts. Fortunately, I also played in some large and small groups at the University of North Carolina. I had many great, influential teachers when I was young. Jack Wilkins, Paul Murphy, and Joe Procopio all took extra time with me and taught with much enthusiasm and encouragement. They were never negative. I never responded to the football coach kind of teaching.

I was already living and working as a musician in Chicago when I decided to go back to DePaul for my master's degree. Bob Lark, Mark Colby, and Tom Matta were all terrific influences on me, very supportive of my artistic endeavors, and helpful with my finding employment in the city, both during school and after graduating. Playing in a variety of ensembles week in and week out was good for my technique and strength as a



saxophonist. Also, I was encouraged to feel free to write anything I could dream up.

There is no substitute for an accomplished musician with good ears and professional experience. Music should not be a purely intellectual study. It's my hope to find a full time teaching job in the future and I hope that technical advancements never threaten the jobs of quality music educators.

ORBERT DAVIS

BM in Music Performance, 1982

Trumpeter Orbert Davis, the 2003 DePaul School of Music Distinguished Alumnus, was born in Chicago and raised in Momence, Illinois. He is co-founder and executive director of MusicAlive!, a comprehensive music curriculum for at-risk youth. Davis currently is "shoulder-deep" in curriculum development and administration for his music education program, "Discover Music, Discover Life." He is composing a series of works for the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic and building a jazz program at the University of Illinois at Chicago. On the artistic side, he continues to perform in a variety of venues.



The only music in my high school was a choir and band. I played in the band until my junior year and fell in love with jazz sometime in high school, when I heard Freddie Hubbard play the trumpet. My early jazz heroes were Charles Danish, a fourth grade teacher who took me to Oak Park every Saturday when I was in high school to study with Mark McDunn, and McDunn himself, a DePaul professor of trombone (even though I play trumpet).

McDunn lived what he taught and I was very blessed to study with him through high school and college. He is responsible for putting me on track, musically and business-wise. When he told me I was to go to DePaul, I said, "Yes, sir!" When I got there, he suggested I "hang out" at the Wise Fools Pub and rub shoulders with professional musicians — the rest is history (and many opportunities.)

Other DePaul influences were Ben Richardson, who also taught what he lived and became a huge influence for me, and Cliff Colnot, whom I highly admire for his musical accuracy and professionalism.

While at DePaul, I was solely interested in performing. I was bit by the "education bug"



later, mostly due to the plight of at-risk students whom I would meet. I believe that because of its location, community, schools — including DePaul — and of course, our musicians, Chicago will soon become the center for jazz.

For more information: www.orbertdavis.com

JON IRABAGON

BM in Music Business, 2000

Saxophonist Jon Irabagon was raised in Chicago's northern suburbs and graduated from Warren Township High School in Gurnee. In October 2008, he won the 21st annual Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition, receiving a \$20,000 prize and a contract with Concord Music Group. The award is "the most prestigious honor available to a young musician," according to The New York Times.

I was very lucky that Warren Township High School had a very reputable band and jazz band program, led by director Tom Beckwith. He stressed knowledge in both classical and jazz idioms and was a great teacher at both. He instilled a love of music in all the students and also encouraged us to work hard to make our music sound better.

My brother was going to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign when I was in high school and I would give him money to buy any Cannonball Adderley CD he could find down there because I couldn't get them up in Gurnee. I tried to copy Cannonball in every way I could, wore out those records and eventually started learning about the other greats, like Miles Davis and John Coltrane. I think living legends like Phil Woods give younger students a taste of what it's truly like in the performing arts world. Having these masters around can help accelerate students' musical growth, as well as provide inspiration.

Although I wasn't a jazz studies major when I was at DePaul, I did actively participate in the big band and combo programs, and mainly hung out with jazz students. I learned a lot from them and played with them every chance I got.

I just recorded a CD for Concord Records that features Nicholas Payton, Kenny Barron, Rufus Reid, and Victor Lewis. This was a definite "dream band" situation. I also lead an experimental drum/sax duo called I Don't Hear



Nothin' But the Blues. Our debut CD — one 48-minute track! — just came out on the Loyal Label. I'm trying to start booking that group as well.

For more information, visit www.jonirabagon.com.

MICHAEL STRYKER

MM in Jazz Performance, 1995

Pianist Michael Stryker was raised in Bloomington, Indiana, "where there were outstanding music programs at University Middle School and Bloomington North High School." He now is assistant professor, jazz piano, at Western Illinois University at Macomb, in the fourth year of a tenure track. Stryker conducts a big band, coaches two combos, and teaches subjects including jazz history, the jazz improvisation sequence, introduction to jazz piano, and applied jazz piano.

Jazz and classical music records were always on at the house as I was a kid. My oldest brother, Jeff, was a jazz saxophone player who now is an organic chemist at the University of Alberta. My fraternal twin brother, Mark, also was a jazz saxophonist, and now he's a music critic for the *Detroit Free Press*. My entrance into the music largely came through Mark. We played in the same jazz band ... he started winning some awards and I "wanted" some of that!

After receiving my bachelor's degree, I was freelancing in Indianapolis and was hired to teach jazz piano and improvisation at Purdue University. I enjoyed that very much but it was strictly as an adjunct — \$25-per-hour for teaching and no benefits. I started looking into places that offered master's degree programs in jazz studies, in cities where I might want to live, and that would be willing to take a non-traditional student. I was 28, with a bachelor of science degree in biology. I made a tape with a bass player named Paul Imm and mailed it to Bob Lark, asking if he might be interested in having me come to DePaul, as I wanted to get credentialed in order to teach at the college level. He responded very positively and we went to work seeing how to make attending DePaul possible. Also, Chicago was a place where I already knew a lot of great musicians and my hope was that I could use these connections to get some work in the city as a pianist.

My first serious jazz piano teachers were the late Frank Mantooh and Larry Novak at DePaul, who taught me about jazz harmony and

the melodic minor scale. From Bob, I learned the details of running a jazz program, as well as a great deal in terms of how to rehearse a big band. I played in his top band for three years, and I would watch him work with the ensemble, heard what he thought needed fixing and how he addressed musical problems in the band. He always had a knack for diagnosing problems quickly — getting to the heart of the matter. Every rehearsal was a masterclass.

One thing I'll always remember is getting to make two records with the band and Bob for Reference Records. Legendary jazz musicians Frank Wess and Clark Terry, who played with Basie, were on the first record and Terry, an alumnus with Duke Ellington's band, played on the second. I got to solo a lot, especially on the Basie record. Those kinds of experiences with master jazz musicians are priceless, and Bob provided those opportunities for me and many other students. I have nothing but the highest praise for Bob's work as a jazz educator and a first-rate improviser. That drive to be a better improviser each day you play your instrument — it's important to me, too.

After DePaul, I did doctoral work at Eastman School of Music and then headed to Western Illinois. It's a great job with wonderful colleagues and a growing jazz studies program. I play regularly in Todd Kelly's quintet in Peoria — Todd is the director of jazz studies here. I co-lead a hard-bop quintet called Condition Blue with Randy Salman, who teaches at DePaul University. This past summer I went to Birch Creek Music Camp in Door County, a performing and teaching gig run by a great bassist and friend from Eastman, Jeff Campbell. I've also been invited by Matt Pivec, who runs the jazz program at Butler University in Indianapolis, to make a visit to his school. And Mike Kocour, formerly the Director of Jazz Studies at Northwestern and now the Director of Jazz Studies at Arizona State University, asked me to travel to Arizona — all very exciting stuff, tentatively scheduled for Spring 2010.

THE REAL THING

The *Real Book* sounds like a musician's dream and a student's guide to gigs: 400 of the most popular entries in the jazz songbook, fully transcribed from well-known recorded versions. It's legal, it's cheap, it's available on Amazon.com. But is it jazz?

"Jazz, in many ways, is still an aural tradition," said pianist Jim McNeeley, speaking to jazz studies students attending an afternoon workshop on campus prior to an evening Jazz Showcase performance with Phil Woods, the DePaul Jazz Ensemble and the rest of Woods' famed rhythm section: base Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin. At the session, the trio performed (Johnny Mercer's "Days of Wine and Roses") and talked with and listened to students.

"It's a fact of history, for example, that Miles Davis changed the bridge when he recorded the Thelonious Monk standard, "Well, You Needn't." The way Miles played it wasn't the way others played it, he had to do it his way — the way a dog marks his territory. But you have to listen to the one who wrote the tune."

Goodwin advised, "If you want to learn songs from the American Songbook, listen to Ella Fitzgerald, become invested in the music." Gilmore agreed, commenting that "three guys who don't know each other should be able to play with each other after counting down, if they know the tunes. There probably are 500 to 600 standards and it's your business to know them," he advised.

All stressed the importance of the way a set is put together, but observed that the mastery of this comes only with experience, with playing and listening to others. McNeeley listed what jazz audiences listen to during a performance: sound, time, conviction, and "voice." Of the four, he said, conviction is paramount. "You don't ask permission from anyone."

A DEPAUL JAZZ ENSEMBLE DISCOGRAPHY 1992–Present

Compiled by Bob Lark

NEXT SEASON, a studio recording featuring DePaul Jazz Studies faculty saxophonist Mark Colby with the jazz ensemble (Recorded 2008)*

THAT BEING SAID (*Jazzed Media JM1036*), the jazz ensemble's second CD project with guest pianist/composer/arranger Jim McNeely. (Recorded 2007)*

CLARK TERRY—THE CHICAGO SESSIONS: 1995-96 (*Reference Recordings RR-111*), a re-issue of the recordings Big Band Basie and Clark Terry Express, made with the jazz ensemble. (Released 2007)†

SWINGCHRONICITY (*Jazzed Media JM1029*), the second “live” recording at the Jazz Showcase, with guest alto saxophone soloist Phil Woods and the jazz ensemble. (Recorded 2006)*

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY JAZZ ENSEMBLE & SLIDE HAMPTON, a dual disc recording that features the guest trombone soloist/composer/arranger in a “live” CD recording with the jazz ensemble at the Jazz Showcase, along with a DVD recording of the ensemble in concert performances in Abruzzi, Italy. (Recorded 2005)*

WOODLANDS (*DPUJE*), the first of the “live” recordings from the Jazz Showcase, featuring guest alto saxophone soloist/composer/arranger Phil Woods and the jazz ensemble. (Recorded 2004)°

TAO JONES (*DPUJE1281*), “live” recording featuring guest trumpet soloist Bobby Shew with the ensemble, at the Jazz Showcase (Recorded 2003)°

JUMP START (*DPUJE58552*), the first of the recordings featuring guest pianist/composer/arranger Jim McNeely with the ensemble, “live” at the Jazz Showcase (Recorded 2002)°

AMERICAN EXPRESS (*DPUJE75872*), with guest valve trombone soloist/composer/arranger Bob Brookmeyer and the jazz ensemble at the Jazz Showcase. (Recorded 2001)*

LIVE AT THE JAZZ SHOWCASE (*DPUJE004*), guest trumpet soloist/composer/arranger Tom Harrell is featured with the jazz ensemble in the first of their series of “live” recordings at the Jazz Showcase. (Recorded 2000)*

LEGACY (*DPUJE1372*), studio recording featuring guest drummer/composer/arranger Louie Bellson with the jazz ensemble. (Recorded 1999 and 2000)*

MILE BY JAZZ MILE (*Chicago Lakeside Jazz CLJ-608-2*), a collection of jazz music in support of the 1999 LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon, featuring recordings by several Chicago jazz artists. The DePaul Jazz Ensemble is the only university/school group represented on the recording.°

SHADE STREET (*Blue Birdland Records BBL8592*), studio recording by the jazz ensemble. (Recorded 1997 and 1998)*

SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR (*DPUJE003*), studio recording made by the jazz ensemble. (Recorded 1995 and 1996)°

CLARK TERRY EXPRESS (*Reference Recordings RR-73CD*), recording made in DePaul Concert Hall, featuring guest trumpet and vocal soloist Clark Terry with the jazz ensemble. (1995)°

NIGHT SCHOOL: 8 MINUTES TO THE LOOP Charles Vernon with the DePaul Jazz and Wind Ensembles (*Wild Ear Music*), featuring Chicago Symphony Orchestra member and DePaul faculty trombonist Charles Vernon with the DePaul Jazz and Wind Ensembles. (Recorded 1995)°

BIG BAND BASIE (*Reference Recordings RR-63CD*), featuring guest tenor saxophone and flute soloist Frank Wess and trumpet soloist Clark Terry with the jazz ensemble. (Recorded in DePaul Concert Hall 1994)°

THREE STEPS AHEAD (*DPUJE002*), Studio recording by the jazz ensemble. (Recorded 1993 and 1994)°

EBONY CONCERTO (*Reference Recordings RR-55CD*), featuring Chicago Symphony Orchestra clarinetist John Yeh as soloist with the DePaul Jazz and Wind Ensembles, recorded in Chicago's Medinah Temple. (1993)†

HAVE YOU HEARD? (*DPUJE 001*), the first CD recording by the DePaul Jazz Ensemble under the direction of Bob Lark, a studio recording (1992)°

*Recording available from the School of Music via Bob Lark (rlark@depaul.edu)

†Recording available through Reference Recordings (www.ReferenceRecordings.com)

°Recording out of print

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2009 | 8:00 PM

DePaul Wind Ensemble
DePaul Concert Hall

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2009 | 8:00 PM

DePaul Symphony Orchestra
DePaul Concert Hall

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2009 | 8:00 PM

DePaul Wind Symphony
DePaul Concert Hall

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2009 | 8:00 PM

University Singers
DePaul Concert Hall

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2009 | 3:00 PM

DePaul Chamber Players
Samuel Magad, violin; Robert Waters,
violin; Robert Swan, viola; Stephen
Balderston, cello; Daniel Horn, piano
DePaul Concert Hall

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2009 | 7:30 PM

DePaul Opera Theatre
presents Monteverdi's *The Return
of Ulysses to His Homeland*
DePaul Concert Hall

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2009 | 2:00 PM

DePaul Opera Theatre
presents Monteverdi's *The Return
of Ulysses to His Homeland*
DePaul Concert Hall

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2009 | 8:00 PM

Ensemble 20+
DePaul Concert Hall

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19 -

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2009 | 8:00 & 10:00 PM

DePaul Jazz Ensemble
with Tim Ries, saxophone
The Jazz Showcase



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