



UNL Jazz Orchestra 2.0 performs its fall concert at Kimball Hall on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus on Dec. 10.

University of Nebraska—Lincoln Fosters Mentorship

LOOKING BACK OVER THE EVOLUTION OF the jazz studies program he directs at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln (UNL), Paul Haar recalls a turning point that came courtesy of vibraphonist Stefon Harris.

“Within the Glenn Korff School of Music, we had been discussing what we should do with our jazz program to compete,” said Haar, a Nebraska native. “What were the other programs doing that we should do? Stefon was here leading a master class and he really set us back on our heels by saying, ‘Why not concentrate on what you’re doing that’s different?’ The jazz program at UNL had a very mixed past; it had faltered a couple of times. Stefon’s comments really opened our eyes to how we might be able to move forward.”

Over the past decade, the school has differentiated itself by focusing on graduate courses, offering master’s and doctoral degrees in jazz studies (master of music and doctor of musical arts). At the undergraduate level, bachelor of music and bachelor of arts in music degrees are offered. But, although the university does not offer a specific jazz undergraduate degree, it encourages extensive interaction between its dozen or so graduate jazz students and undergrads in the broader music program.

“It’s a bit like a laboratory,” said Associate Professor Hans Sturm, a bassist who leads the Korff School’s strings area. “We like the cross-fertilization and really believe that mentorship is essential.”

The primary place where that interaction occurs is within the program’s two ensembles and eight combos. While undergrads are encouraged to compose a solo in the style of one musical genre, the graduate students might then illustrate how a specific musician who epitomizes the genre would typically voice the solo.

“The graduates serve as coaches,” said Sturm, noting that this approach is effective in demonstrating the breadth of jazz studies. “Undergrads at UNL have typically been the best players in any situation they’ve encountered at the high school level. What comes with one-to-one men-

torship is an expansion of horizons. To younger students who might be familiar with the better-known composers and bandleaders in jazz, we want to say, ‘Yes, but have you checked out Henry Threadgill?’”

Grads and undergrads also work closely in preparing and presenting four concerts each year—a kickoff performance, one with a historical focus, one featuring student compositions and one highlighting a guest artist. The guests, who also teach master classes, have included Ingrid Jensen, Poncho Sanchez and Ray Anderson.

The ability to work closely with undergrads is one of the things Haar looks for when evaluating applicants to the jazz studies program. Most of the doctoral students are looking to make the transition to teaching at the post-secondary level, while a number of those who apply to the master’s program seek to advance their careers as performers.

Haar said his goal is to equip the next generation of jazz teachers with an understanding of current technologies and prepare them to teach a wide variety of courses. Students are required to create a portfolio of resource materials with the aim of designing a comprehensive jazz program at either the high school or collegiate level.

Haar said future plans include the creation of a third jazz ensemble and the development of a final document that graduating students would leave with, combining a UNL-produced recording of the student’s original compositions and a collection of the student’s scholarly writing.

“I was a tenured professor at Ball State, where I’d been for 17 years, when I heard about this job,” Sturm said. “What made me want to move to Lincoln and start my career over again? It was the mentorship and personal attention that this program embodies. There is so much one-on-one interaction here—between the faculty and jazz studies students, and between them and the music undergrads. Learning about jazz is a long path, and this program really encourages exploration.”

—James Hale

Bill Charlap (left) performs with Tony Bennett.



Paterson Taps Charlap: Pianist Bill Charlap has been appointed director of the Jazz Studies Program at William Paterson University in Wayne, N.J. Charlap, who will join the university faculty on Sept. 1, becomes the fifth world-renowned musician to lead the program. Founded in 1973, the program has been directed by trumpeter and composer/arranger Thad Jones, bassist Rufus Reid, pianist James Williams and, most recently, pianist Mulgrew Miller, who died in May 2013. Charlap will direct six of the program’s 24 small jazz groups on a weekly basis. He will host the program’s dialogue days and participate in other activities and concerts. wpunj.edu

Bass Essentials: Larry Grenadier will conduct a bass master class at Rockwood Music Hall in New York City at 1 p.m. on Sept. 26. During the three-hour workshop, which costs \$150 per student, Grenadier will focus on aspects of jazz bass playing that he has found essential during his career, including bass line construction, soloing, practice ideas, rhythm section concepts, sound and overall technique. Space is limited, and students are encouraged to bring their instruments.

ticketfly.com/event/904201

New IJS Leadership: Rutgers University—Newark Chancellor Nancy Cantor has appointed Wayne Winborne as executive director of the Institute of Jazz Studies (IJS), the world’s largest and most comprehensive jazz archive. Vincent Pelote has been named the institute’s director of operations. Following the retirement of longtime director and former DownBeat editor Dan Morgenstern, the IJS leadership was restructured to transform the position into the two newly created posts. rutgers.edu

Preservation Ball: The Preservation Hall Foundation will hold its second annual fundraiser ball at the Civic Theatre in New Orleans on Oct. 3, with an expansion event to take place at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco on Nov. 6. Confirmed collaborators with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band for the concerts include Meshell Ndegeocello, Corey Glover, Deacon John Moore, Pinettes Brass Band and Beats Antique. Proceeds will benefit The Preservation Hall Foundation, whose education programs serve underprivileged children in the greater New Orleans area.

preshallfoundation.org