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Jazz Seminar will feature multi-generational line-up

Wednesday, October 16, 2024

The 54th annual Pitt Jazz Seminar and Concert, from Oct. 28 to Nov. 2, will feature performances and workshops by jazz masters, a film about drummer Max Roach and a tribute to Sam Rivers, whose archive was recently acquired by the University Library System.

The week of activities — put together by the new artistic director for Pitt Jazz Studies Chad Taylor — culminates with a concert at 8 p.m. Nov. 2 at Bellefield Hall Auditorium. Tickets for the Saturday concert are \$20 and \$5 for any student with a valid ID, and are available at www.jazz.pitt.edu.

The Jazz Seminar Concert will feature bassist and composer Reggie Workman and Pittsburgh's own percussion master Roger Humphries, alongside vocalist Jessica Boykin-Settles, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, guitarist Jeff Parker, tenor saxophonist Brian Settles, pianist Sumi Tonooka, and alto saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins, along with Taylor on drums and new Department of Music chair Aaron Johnson on trombone.

Taylor said it was his goal for the lineup at this year's event to be multi-generational.

"Having established musicians like Reggie Workman, who is 87, and Roger Humphries (who will be marking his 80th birthday) collaborate with younger musicians like Jeff Parker and Immanuel Wilkins will demonstrate how the language of jazz can evolve," he said. "We can also honor the masters while they are still with us and also be excited about the future of this music."

For Taylor, one of the more exciting elements of the main Saturday concert is that these musicians have never shared a stage together and will do so following just one rehearsal.

"I'm always intrigued how musicians who have never collaborated before can perform such amazing music live on stage," he said. "These musicians I have selected all have their own sound, style and approach."

Another slate of national musicians will perform at a concert Oct. 29 in the Hill District to celebrate the Sam Rivers Archive acquired by the University Library System. Everything on the schedule, except for the Nov. 2 concert, is free and open to the public.

PITT JAZZ WEEK EVENTS

Oct. 28

Noon: Big Band Performance, William Pitt Union, Lower Lounge. Members of the student-based Pitt Jazz Ensemble, under the direction of Ralph Guzzi, will perform a selection of jazz standards.

4-5:30 p.m.: Panel discussion on “Reflections on Sam Rivers: Jazz Musician, Master Improviser, Composer and Friend,” Hillman Library, Third Floor, Archives & Special Collections Room. National musicians who performed with Sam Rivers’ RivBea Orchestra discuss what it was like to know him as a musician and friend. Participants will include Craig Davis (trombone), Joe Daley (tuba), Steve Coleman (saxophone) and Doug Mathews (bass).

Rivers’ extensive archive, which includes hundreds of scores and unreleased audio and video performances, was recently acquired by Pitt’s University Library System. Kathryn Haines, who heads up Pitt’s Center for American Music, will moderate the discussion and display materials from the archive.

Oct. 29

7 p.m.: Big Band Tribute to Sam Rivers Concert, Ebenezer Baptist Church, 2001 Wylie Ave, Hill District. This free concert will feature Davis, Daley, Coleman and Mathews along with local jazz musicians.

Oct. 30

7 p.m.: Jazz film, “Max Roach: The Drum Also Waltzes,” Cathedral of Learning, Room G24. This documentary explores the life and music of the legendary drummer and activist, his creative peaks and personal struggles from the post-war jazz days to hip hop and beyond.

Nov. 1

3 p.m.: Lecture, Benjamin Barson on “Maroon Ecologies and the Jazz Commons: Fugitive Musicianship in nineteenth-century Afro-Louisiana,” Frick Fine Arts Auditorium. Barson, saxophonist, composer, historian, musicologist and assistant professor of music at Bucknell University, earned his Ph.D. in music at Pitt. The event is part of the Pitt Department of Music’s Visiting Scholar Series.

7-8:30 p.m.: DJ Jeff Parker and meet & greet with musicians participating in Pitt Jazz Week, Cloisters Area, Frick Fine Arts Building.

Nov. 2

Musician on-campus seminars: 1 p.m., Ingrid Jensen, trumpet; 2 p.m., A Conversation with Reggie Workman, interviewed by Chad Taylor and A.J. Johnson; and 3 p.m., Chad Taylor, drums. All at Frick Fine Arts Auditorium

Community seminar: 3 p.m. with Brian Settles, drums, and Jessica Boykin-Settles, vocalist, Afro-American Music Institute, 7131 Hamilton Ave., Homewood

The Pitt Jazz Seminar and Concert was founded by the late Nathan Davis, longtime director of Pitt Jazz Studies. It was the first academic jazz seminar in the country to feature international artists connecting with aspiring students in a free seminar format, then performing together as an ensemble at the end of the week.

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University of Pittsburgh
Craig Hall, fourth floor
200 S. Craig St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

412-648-4294
utimes@pitt.edu

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