# Manhattan School of Music





# MSM JAZZ ORCHESTRA Celebrating the Music of Thad Jones

Dennis Mackrel, Conductor

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2023 | 7:30 PM NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL



Manhattan School of Music's public programs are made possible in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

# MSM JAZZ ORCHESTRA Celebrating the Music of Thad Jones

Dennis Mackrel, Conductor

PROGRAM

Thad Jones

Crackdown

Little Pumpkin

The Biddle-De-Bop Samba

Live Life This Day

Blues for the Wee One

The Waltz You Swang for Me

Jerome Richardson (arr. T. Jones) Groove Merchant

Thad Jones

A Child Is Born

**Juan Tizol** (arr. T. Jones) Perdido

Thad Jones

*Return Journey Suite* I. Return Journey II. Ritual III. Rejoice

Cherry Juice

# **MSM JAZZ ORCHESTRA**

Dennis Mackrel, Conductor Adrianna Viera, Conductor Assistant

TRUMPET Evan Dalling Toronto, Canada

**Grace Fox** Cherry Hill, New Jersey

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JJ Mazza, drums Broomfield, Colorado

Daniel Peterson, percussion Johannesburg, South Africa

VOCALS Tyler Bassett Tualatin, Oregon

**June Cavlan** Santa Cruz, California

# ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

# **Dennis Mackrel**

Dennis Mackrel, a child prodigy, was born in 1962 and began playing the drums when he was two. He became a professional musician at the age of ten, when he performed in the Anchorage Community Theatre's production of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

As a student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he was a member of the acclaimed UNLV Jazz Ensemble, his drumming and arranging skills caught the attention of vocalist Joe Williams. In 1981, at 19 years of age, Dennis moved to New York City and landed a gig as a drummer on Broadway. His Broadway credits include *The First* and *A Chorus Line*.

Developing his craft in various playing situations, Dennis received numerous awards, including a listing in "Who's Who in Music" in 1979 and a National Endowment for the Arts grant for composition in 1983. In January of 1983, Dennis joined the Count Basie Orchestra on the personal recommendation of Mr. Williams. He would become the youngest member of the orchestra and the last drummer to be hired by Mr. Basie personally. Dennis traveled extensively and worked alongside Mr. Basie until his death in April 1984. He continued with the orchestra under the direction of interim leader Eric Dixon followed by Thad Jones. In 1985, under Mr. Jones's leadership, the Count Basie Orchestra recorded a composition of Dennis's entitled *And That's That*.

When Frank Foster took over as leader, Dennis stayed with the band until December of 1987. Dennis's composition *Bus Dust* was included on the CD *Long Live the Chief,* which was recorded during Mr. Foster's tenure as leader. After leaving the Orchestra, he returned to New York and would soon become the drummer of choice for a number of large ensembles, including the American Jazz Orchestra, the Carla Bley Big Band, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Buck Clayton's Swing Band, and the Dizzy Gillespie All Star Big Band.

Dennis's transition from sideman to leader continued with his frequent trips to Europe as a guest conductor, arranger, and/or soloist for such outstanding ensembles as the Kluvers Big Band in Aarhus, Denmark; the Danish Radio Big Band in Copenhagen, Denmark; and the WDR Big Band in Koln, Germany. In 2010, he returned to the Count Basie Orchestra, serving as its leader and chief conductor until 2013. Named chief conductor of the Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Holland in 2015, Dennis toured extensively with the orchestra, including performances in Europe, China, Russia, Indonesia, and the United States until the global pandemic of 2020. The orchestra was awarded the prestigious Edison Award for their double CD *Crossroads* in 2019.

In addition to being a seasoned musician, Dennis is a highly respected composer/ arranger. His commissioned works have been recorded by the United States Military Academy at West Point's Jazz Knights Big Band, the University of North Florida Jazz Ensemble 1, the Temple University Jazz Ensemble, the Columbus Jazz Orchestra and, most notably, the McCoy Tyner Big Band, whose Grammy-winning CDs *The Turning Point* and *Journey* included four of Dennis's arrangements.

As an educator, Dennis continues to conduct master classes, seminars, and workshops throughout Europe, Asia, Canada, and the USA. Dennis served as a guest professor at the Royal Conservatory in Aarhus, Denmark from 2002 to 2003, and was the Visiting Artist in Jazz Studies at Eastman School of Music from 2012 to 2013.

Currently an assistant chair and professor of jazz studies at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College in Flushing, New York, he is also a member of the jazz faculty at the Birch Creek Summer Music Academy in Egg Harbor, Wisconsin and the Skidmore Jazz Institute in Saratoga Springs, New York.

# ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its more than 1,000 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a highly competitive and professionally oriented Saturday music program, dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 5 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

# Your gift helps a young artist reach for the stars!

To enable Manhattan School of Music to continue educating and inspiring generations of talented students and audiences alike, please consider making a charitable contribution today.

Contact the Advancement Office at 917-493-4434 or visit giving.msmnyc.edu

# Land Acknowledgment

We want to acknowledge that we gather as Manhattan School of Music on the traditional land of the Lenape and Wappinger past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.

The Galaxy Society

# What Will Your Legacy Be?

Through a bequest or other planned gift, you can help to ensure that Manhattan School of Music will provide a music education of the highest quality to exceptionally talented young artists for generations to come while also strengthening the School's long-term financial health.

Bequests are one of the easiest ways to create a living legacy and to help MSM meet important priorities, including increasing our scholarship endowment and supporting our world-class faculty.

For further information and to join our Galaxy Society, which honors those who have committed to making a planned gift to the School, **please contact Susan Madden**, **Vice President for Advancement**, at **917-493-4115**, or visit: **msmnyc.edu/galaxy-society**.

# Help a young artist reach for the stars!





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The Centennial Project was an ambitious program of improvements to the School's architecturally distinguished campus coinciding with MSM's 100th anniversary. The centerpiece of the Project was the renovation of Neidorff-Karpati Hall, which has been transformed into a state-of-the-art venue to showcase our talented students. The Project also included a dramatic and welcoming new campus entrance on Claremont Avenue, new practice rooms, and an expansion of the main entryway and lobby.

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