

Phillips Exeter Academy Music Department



Tommy Gallant Memorial Jazz Concert

Tuesday, May 6, 2025
7:00 PM

“the Bowld”
Forrestal Bowld Music Center
29 Tan Lane
Exeter, NH

PEA Faculty Jazz Ensemble

Taylor O'Donnell, *voice*

Eric Klaxton, *saxophone*

Eric Schultz, *saxophone*

Tim Ray, *piano*

Mike Mele, *guitar*

Keala Kaumeheiwa, *bass*

Les Harris, Jr., *drums*

Program

selections to be announced

Meet the Musicians



Taylor O'Donnell

Known for her exploratory use of vocal color and texture, and sincere delivery in her musical stylings, Taylor O'Donnell is a contemporary vocalist, educator, and conductor who uses her roots in R&B, folk, jazz, rock, and classical music to communicate her musical

dialogue. Growing up in Colorado and living all over the country from Florida to Maine, her performing experience has taken her from playing with her own jazz trio on cruise ships and throughout New England to performing as a guest artist with symphony orchestras. Her musical diversity informs her deep love for vocal improvisation and for exploring a plethora of sounds and colors to connect more deeply to her audience.



Eric Schultz

Eric Schultz is a musician and educator whose diverse body of work frequently jumps between two opposing worlds: acoustic and electronic, mainstream and experimental, and academic and non-academic.

Trained as a composer, Eric is a producer, saxophone player, technologist, recording engineer, occasional percussionist, and conductor. Eric's academic music has been performed by the San Jose State Wind

Symphony, the Iowa State University Symphony Orchestra, the Missouri Fine Arts Academy Choir, and acclaimed pianist Steven Spooner. Eric is one of the founding members of Crossing 32nd Street, in which he has served as technologist, saxophonist, percussionist, and conductor. For a brief but memorable stretch, Eric was the baritone saxophonist in the Ray Price Country Stampede Orchestra in Branson, Missouri. Eric is the Director of Electronic and Emerging Music at Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. Eric received his doctorate in composition from Arizona State University, where he studied primarily with Glenn Hackbarth.



Eric Klaxton

A multi-instrumentalist and composer residing in the stretch of seacoast where New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts meet. Eric has become a recognizable figure in a broad and prolific community of musicians and artists. Working as a freelance saxophonist, pianist, and educator, he has played with and arranged for a substantial number of ensembles. When he isn't performing or teaching, Klaxton is an active producer and studio engineer. Eric is a founding member of The Soggy Po Boys, a group known for their personal and exciting presentation of the music of New Orleans. The Po Boys tour nationally and have 5 studio releases to date since 2012. As a sideman, Eric can be found playing a variety of reeds in Sojoy (a chordless septet featuring the music of drummer and composer Jonny Peiffer) and OurBigBand (a collective large ensemble intent on debuting new works that support the evolution of the big band tradition). In recent years, Eric has performed with renowned musicians and composers including: Dave Douglas, Ben Allison, Matt Wilson, Frank Carlberg, Matt Ulery, and Curtis Hasselbring.



Tim Ray

Tim Ray's wide-ranging skills as a soloist and accompanist have afforded him the opportunity to perform with legendary performers from all walks of music. Ray served as music director and pianist for the legendary Tony Bennett from 2016 until the singer's retirement in 2021. Before that, he performed on the road with singer-songwriter Lyle Lovett, touring for more than 15 years. Appearing on over 100 recordings, Ray has performed in concert with an extensive list of pop-music icons, notably Aretha Franklin, Bonnie Raitt, Jane Siberry, and Soul Asylum. He regularly performs with leading figures in the jazz world, among them Terri Lyne Carrington, Gary Burton, Esperanza Spalding, Kurt Elling, George Garzone, Dave Douglas, Lewis Nash, and Brian Blade, and his classical credits include solo performances and concerts with the Boston Pops, Gunther Schuller, and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. He has released six albums under his own name, including 2020's *Excursions & Adventures* featuring Terri Lyne Carrington and John Patitucci. Ray's busy schedule has included frequent tours throughout North America, South America, Mexico, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and has included performances at Carnegie Hall, the White House, the Kennedy Center, and the 1992 Presidential Inauguration. He is a grant recipient from the National Endowment for the Arts and continues to be in high demand as a musical director, composer, arranger, private instructor, and clinician.



Mike Mele

Guitarist Mike Mele graduated from Berklee College of Music in 1990 (Cum Laude). Mike is a prominent educator, and has taught guitar lessons through The Music Emporium in Lexington, Massachusetts for over twenty-five years. He has also taught at Berklee College of Music, Tufts University, Sharon Music Academy and Bentley College. He currently teaches guitar at Phillips Exeter Academy.

Mike has spent the last thirty years performing with many jazz and blues greats, including Roy Hargrove, Antonio Hart, Tony Monaco, Bill Pierce, Joe Hunt, Barry Ries, Marty Rowen, Melvin Sparks, Myanna. Mike has been a member of the Ken Clark Organ Trio, and recorded the albums *Eternal Funk* and *Mutual Respect* for the distinguished Severn Records label. Mike was also a long-standing member of Michelle Willson's Evil Gal Festival Orchestra, toured North America and Europe, and released the critically acclaimed album *Wake-Up Call* for Rounder Records.



Les Harris, Jr.

Les Harris, Jr. is a man who followed in his father's footsteps. Both grew up in Newburyport. Both are drummers, and both studied at Berklee College of Music in Boston. Both became music educators. Either of them could have gone off to New York or Los Angeles and enjoyed great national fame but preferred to remain here on the Seacoast. Growing up in a drumming family, Les,

Jr. developed his skills early, and by the age of 12, he was accompanying his Dad on gigs and sitting in with the likes of Teddy Wilson, Dick Johnson, John LaPorta, Don Doane, and other jazz luminaries. Already off to a good start, Les, Jr. headed to Berklee in the early '80s, where he studied drums with Joe Hunt and Robert Kaufman, then, after graduating, with the legendary drummer and educator Alan Dawson. Soon after, he became the drummer with the jazz vocal group "The Ritz," traveling and performing all over the world. Les, Jr. has also toured with the Artie Shaw Orchestra, which Dick Johnson directed for so many years, and with tenor saxophone great Scott Hamilton. Now living in Exeter, New Hampshire, Les performs regularly with many of New England's jazz artists and others beyond the region. He's a regular member of the Paul Broadnax Quintet and of the New Guitar Summit with Gerry Beaudoin, Duke Robillard and Jay Geils. And he continues to play often on Sunday nights at The Press Room. He is also a music faculty member at the University of New Hampshire, the University of Southern Maine, and Phillips Exeter Academy, teaching drums and ensembles.



Keala Kaumeheiwa

Bassist Keala Kaumeheiwa received a Bachelor's of Music Degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a diploma from the Thelonious Monk Institute (now known as the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz Performance).

Keala has performed with the New York String Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, as well as with Jimmy Heath, Jackie McLean, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Wynton Marsalis, Bobby Watson, Harry "Sweets" Edison, James Moody, Betty Carter and Joe Lovano. Since

2001, he has taught Jazz Combo Ensembles at MIT and bass at Phillips Exeter Academy since 2018, as well as freelancing with many groups throughout Boston and New England.

Remembering Tommy Gallant



Born July 14, 1935, in Exeter, NH, he was the only son of Thomas and Doris Gallant. By the time he was in high school, Tommy played piano with several local Jazz bands. On his own and often with his trombone-playing friend Phil Wilson, Tommy spent many hours learning new tunes and beginning the process of mastering his craft on the piano in his parents' living room.

After high school and his service with the United States Marine Corp, Tommy studied piano and music theory at the University of New Hampshire and the Berklee School of Music in Boston. Settling down in the New Hampshire seacoast, he proceeded to build a life-long career

as a performer, a teacher (at UNH, Berklee and Phillips Exeter Academy), and as a dedicated promoter of Jazz. But it was the two decades during which he presided over the Sunday night jazz scene upstairs at The Press Room in Portsmouth for which he is perhaps best remembered on the Seacoast.

The Sunday night jazz tradition began early in The Press Room's history, back in the late '70s, when the musician in charge was another Seacoast jazz legend, namely pianist Larry Garland. But, as Larry tells it, "These kids were coming in from Berklee with charts!" So Larry, being a self-taught player who doesn't read music, had some advice for owner Jay Smith. His advice: "Get Tommy Gallant!"

Larry, of course, went on to establish the Tuesday night jazz tradition downstairs at The Press Room, where for more than 30 years he has led River City Jazz, the host quartet for this popular and influential jam session. And Tommy Gallant continued the Sunday night tradition upstairs until he died in 1998. It was Tommy's bassist, Jim Howe, who took over the trio's leadership at that time. Then, when Jim passed on in 2007, Jim was succeeded by pianist Ryan Parker, who continues as the group's leader to this day.

Tommy Gallant will long be remembered for his commitment to promoting jazz on the Seacoast, for the scope of his musical activities, his personal integrity, enthusiasm, along with his love of humor and his ability to tell a good joke well. At the time of his death, the annual Portsmouth Summer Jazz Festival was renamed in his honor the Tommy Gallant Jazz Festival, the event we celebrate this week in Prescott Park.

Concert Series Information

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