

Phillips Exeter Academy Music Department



Jim Howe Memorial Jazz Concert celebrating Les Harris, Jr.

Featuring PEA Jazz Faculty and special guest performers

Sunday, September 28, 2025
4:00 PM

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

Welcome

Today, we gather to honor the enduring legacy of Jim Howe, a cherished former faculty member of the music department. Jim played a pivotal role in introducing and nurturing jazz at Phillips Exeter Academy and throughout the New Hampshire community for many decades. His influence continues to resonate in the music we share and the lives he touched.

This year's concert holds even deeper meaning as we celebrate the remarkable career and contributions of our dear colleague, Les Harris, Jr. In tribute to Les, we've brought together not only our talented jazz faculty but also a group of local musicians who have shared the stage with him over the years. Their presence today reflects Les's profound impact—not just as an extraordinary musician, but as a compassionate and inspiring human being whose legacy will endure in the hearts of students, colleagues, and friends.

In true jazz tradition, tonight's program will unfold with spontaneity, soul, and swing. We invite you to lean in, enjoy the ride, and join us in celebrating our dear friend, Les Harris, Jr.

Thank you for being here!

Marcus D. Rabb, Music Department Chair





from left to Jim Howe, Tommy Gallant, Les Harris, Jr.

This photo was taken in 1987 of the legendary Tommy Gallant, alongside the remarkable bassist we honor tonight, Jim Howe, and myself, Les Harris, on drums. Although I officially joined the faculty at PEA as a drum instructor in the fall of 1989, I was already deeply involved in the local music scene, performing concerts, holiday events, and other engagements with Tommy's trio around New England and here at the Academy. While tonight is dedicated to celebrating Jim Howe's memory, it's important to note that during those years, if you attended a Tommy Gallant gig, Jim was always on bass. Whether it was at the Metro restaurant or the iconic jazz venue The Press Room in Portsmouth, the trio—Tommy, Jim, and I—regularly backed world-class artists such as Art Farmer, Snooky Young, Clark Terry, Nick Brignola, Scott Hamilton, Al Grey, and many other giants of jazz.

After Tommy's passing in 1998 at the age of 63, Jim Howe took the reins of the newly renamed "Jim Howe Trio," continuing the tradition of featuring top-tier artists for the next nine years.

Following Jim's untimely death in 2007 at age 61, Ryan Parker respectfully stepped in to lead the trio. He rebranded the group as "The Press Room Trio" and carried the legacy forward for 14 more years, culminating in the celebration of 40 years of *Sunday Night Jazz at The Press Room* in 2021. Although jazz still thrives at The Press Room, the continuous Sunday night series concluded with that milestone. We owe deep gratitude to Tommy, Jim, and Ryan

for sustaining and enriching Portsmouth's Sunday night jazz tradition across four remarkable decades.

You may notice a strong Beatles influence, which began when guitar instructors Eric Sinclair, Bobby Squires, and I found ourselves sitting around a second-floor table overlooking Tan Lane, sharing our deep love for The Beatles. We soon enlisted Eric's longtime bandmate from high school and college, Andy Inzenga, to play bass, and together we formed the band Merseyside. We performed summer school concerts here at the Academy and toured throughout New England; from Connecticut to Maine spreading the joy of Beatles music and having an absolute blast.

What Tommy Gallant started in 1967 here as the sole jazz instructor teaching piano and combos, eventually expanded to add Jim Howe, me and Charlie Jennison. For many years, that was the entire jazz faculty until Marcus Rabb became the first director of Jazz Studies and Eric Schultz became the first director of Electronic and Emerging Music, validating both styles at Phillips Exeter Academy. Tommy and Jim would be incredibly proud to see how jazz and contemporary music have been embraced as legitimate art forms at PEA, flourishing under a faculty that reads like a "Who's Who" of the New England jazz and contemporary music scenes. Welcoming Zak King to the team is a true honor, especially since Zak was a four-year drum student of mine at UNH. Congratulations to Zak! The beat will most certainly go on here for many years to come.

I thank the Academy for the opportunity to have taught here for 36 amazing years. I've been truly blessed to work at this institution with amazing colleagues and students.



To quote the great Clark Terry,
"Keep on keepin' on!"
I'll miss you all, Les Harris, Jr.

Program

selections will be announced

PEA Jazz Faculty

Marcus Rabb, *trumpet & vocals*

Chris Klaxton, *trumpet*

Taylor O'Donnell, *vocals*

Eric Klaxton, *saxophone*

Eric Schultz, *saxophone*

Jacob Hiser, *piano*

Tim Ray, *piano*

Mike Mele, *guitar*

Keala Kaumeheiwa, *bass*

Zachary King, *drums*

Les Harris, Jr., *drums*

About Jim Howe (1946-2007)



Jim Howe was born in 1946 in Old Town, Maine, and graduated in 1964 from Old Town High School. He began playing the upright bass in sixth-grade. He fell in love with jazz and played in many local jazz groups throughout Maine. Jim went on to study music and earn his degree at the University of Maine in Orono where he gained recognition as a consummate

musician and bassist while performing with the Bangor Symphony Orchestra.

After college, Jim moved to Boston in 1972 to play with the Tony Bruno Orchestra. As a member of the orchestra, he played in and around the Boston area and in the house band at the Mount Washington Hotel in N.H., during the summer months.

Jim was the band director at Parkside Junior High School in Manchester, N.H., in the late 1970s and early 1980s, where he instilled an appreciation of jazz music in many young people.

It was during this time that he also began a long career as a renowned musician in the Seacoast NH area. He became bassist in the Tommy Gallant Trio in the late 70's, which was one of the most accomplished and influential jazz groups in the Seacoast area during the 80's and 90's. After Tommy Gallant passed away in 1998, Jim formed the Jim Howe Trio with pianist Ryan Parker and drummer Les Harris, Jr. to continue on with Tommy's legacy. As the bassist for both trios, Jim enjoyed 26 years as a mainstay of Sunday Jazz at *The Press Room* in Portsmouth, N.H. The Jim Howe Trio released three albums, and Jim was the bassist on many more recordings. He played with some of the giants of jazz including Clark Terry, Al Grey, Snooky Young, Herb Pomeroy and he was in the opening act for Elvis Presley at Boston Garden in 1968.

Following a move to Portsmouth, N.H. in 1982, Jim flourished not only as a musician playing regularly at The Press Room and The Metro but as a professional photographer, opening The Jim Howe Photography Studio on State Street. In the late 80's, Jim began teaching bass at Phillips Exeter Academy.

After an illness in the spring of 2000, Jim closed his photography studio and moved to his cabin in the woods of Hanover, Maine. Weekends were spent traveling to play the music he loved and to teach his bass students at Phillips Exeter Academy. Jim passed away in October of 2007 at the age of 61.

One of Jim's favorite sayings was, "Jazz Lives." The music of his life lives on in all who knew him and tonight we pay tribute to Jim and his contribution to jazz and jazz education.

Concert Series Information



We have posted our fall term performance calendar. Click the QR code or visit www.exeter.edu/music-department-concerts for upcoming concert dates, livestream links and program details.

Do you know someone looking to join our email list to be notified of upcoming concerts?

Share this QR code with your family and friends to sign up for our email list

