

# RUTGERS

Mason Gross School  
of the Arts

MUSIC DEPARTMENT

## Rutgers University Jazz Lab Big Band

**Dr. Anthony D.J. Branker, Conductor**

*The Music of Anthony Branker*

with guest soloists

**Abraham Burton, tenor saxophone**

and

**Dr. Alex Norris, trumpet/flugelhorn**

**Wednesday, April 17, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.**

New Brunswick Performing Arts Center  
New Brunswick, New Jersey

# PROGRAM

Dance Like No One is Watching

Crystal Angel (arr. Ralph Bowen)

Praise

Beauty Within

Slave States

Sacred Song

Forgotten Peoples (arr. Ralph Bowen)

*All compositions & arrangements by  
Anthony Branker  
except where noted*

# RUTGERS JAZZ LAB BIG BAND PERSONNEL

## **Saxophones**

Ariana Hartunian-Sowa – Alto 1

Aidan Chen – Alto 2

Dominick Dzierczyk – Tenor 1

Edward Crisonino – Tenor 2

Tristan Voitcu – Baritone

## **Trumpets**

Charlie Barber

Tahj Walsh

Aiden O'Shea

Ryan Colarusso

Julia Guarnaccia

Anthony Fazio

## **Trombones**

Kyle Courter

Stef Haas

Melanie Shultz

Grant Dillon

## **Guitar**

Joe Rinaldi

## **Piano**

Jacob Hurlock

## **Piano**

Jiaming Chen

## **Bass**

Zachary Dessel

## **Drums**

Donald Solomon

## **Drums**

Logan Bogdan

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Professor Abraham Burton's** early jazz tutelage was under the watchful eye of jazz legend Jackie McLean at the University of Hartford's Hartt School, where Burton received his bachelor's degree in music and performance, graduating with honors. His professional career began with the renowned drummer Arthur Taylor, with whom he toured throughout Europe and at New York clubs such as The Village Vanguard, The Blue Note, Sweet Basil, Condon's and Birdland.

In 1989, Burton was the alto saxophonist in an all-star quintet that was awarded best jazz combo by *DownBeat Magazine* and won Burton an award for outstanding soloist. That same year, Burton won the McDonalds Jazz Combo Competition in a trio with Eric McPherson. Burton went on to form The Abraham Burton Quartet, which recorded the albums *Closest to the Sun*, *The Magician*, and *Cause and Effect* (with McPherson) on the Enja Records label. The group received worldwide acclaim, performing across Europe and Asia and at the North Sea, Moors, JVC, Panasonic, and Pori jazz festivals.

Burton has toured and recorded with such notable musicians as Roy Haynes, Louis Hayes, Walter Bishop Jr., Horace Tapscott, Kenny Barron, Jimmy Smith, John Hicks, Santi Debriano, Bill Saxton, Gary Bartz, Victor Lewis, Michael Carvin, Mulgrew Miller, Steve Nelson, Cindy Blackman, Ray Drummond, Terumasa Hino, Billy Hart, Peter Washington, Conrad Herwig, Steve Davis, Grisella Oliphant, Rein De Graff, Nasheet Waits, Eddie Henderson, David Murray, Antoine Roney, James Carter, Yosuke Inoue, James Hurt, Marc Cary, Sam Newsome, Duane Eubanks, Wynton Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, Wallace Roney, Donald Edwards, Mark Whitfield, Cyrus Chestnut, and Christian McBride.

Since 1998, Burton has been part of the Mingus Family, performing in the Mingus Big Band, Mingus Dynasty, and the Mingus Orchestra. He still tours and records with the Abraham Burton-Eric McPherson quartet, which features young pianist David Bryant and bassist Dezron Douglas.

Arriving in New York in 1992, **Dr. Alex Norris** found work with the Village Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Toshiko Akiyoshi's Jazz Orchestra, Maria Schneider's Band, and served as musical director in 1998 as a member of Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead. Norris later performed and recorded extensively with Lonnie Plaxico, Jason Lindner, Ralph Irizarry's Timbalaye, Slide Hampton, Joshua Redman, Brad Mehldau, Chris Potter, Carl Allen, John Patitucci, Mulgrew Miller, and Brian Blade. Norris is active in Afro-Cuban jazz, having worked with Andy and Jerry Gonzalez, Manny Oquendo, Paquito D'Rivera, and Chico O'Farrill. Norris performs all over the world with his own jazz group and with Ron Carter's Great Big Band, the Mingus Big Band, Alan Ferber's Big Band, Kyle Eastwood, Helen Sung, Miguel Zenon, Amina Figarova, and many other jazz and Latin jazz artists.

After receiving a master's degree in 1995 from the Manhattan School of Music, Norris taught at the New School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, Towson University, and the City College of New York. In 2007, he received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Miami Frost School of Music and taught at the University of Miami. He is also a member of the Jazz Studies faculty at the Peabody Conservatory of Music. Norris' latest release, *Alex Norris – Fleet from the Heat* was released fall 2021 on the Steeplechase label. His 2015 recording, *Alex Norris Organ Quartet – Extension Deadline*, was released on Brooklyn Jazz Underground Records label to a 4.5-star review in *DownBeat*. As a sideman, Norris has recorded on over 100 albums, several for labels such as Blue Note, Verve, Impulse, Steeplechase, Fresh Sounds/New Talent, Motéma, and Sunnyside. Norris has several of his Latin jazz compositions published by 3-2 Music in Fresno, CA.

**Dr. Anthony D.J. Branker** is an adjunct professor in jazz studies at Rutgers University Mason Gross School of the Arts where his teaching responsibilities include graduate and undergraduate courses and ensembles. Previously, he taught at Princeton University for 27 years, where he held an endowed chair in jazz studies and was founding director of the program in jazz studies until his retirement in 2016. He has also served as a U.S. Fulbright Scholar at the Estonian Academy of Music & Theatre in Tallinn and was a member of the faculty at the Manhattan School of Music, Hunter College-CUNY, and Ursinus College. Dr. Branker is a composer, conductor, bandleader, and an Origin Records recording artist who was named in DownBeat Magazine's 62nd & 63rd Annual Critics Poll as a "Rising Star Composer" with ten releases in his musically rich discography. They include *Spirit Songs* (Origin, 2023), *What Place Can Be For Us? A Suite in Ten Movements* (Origin, 2023), *Beauty Within* (Origin, 2016), *The Forward (Towards Equality) Suite* (Origin, 2014), *Uppity* (Origin, 2013), *Together* (Origin, 2012), *Dialogic* (Origin, 2011), *Dance Music* (Origin, 2010), *Blessings* (Origin, 2009), and *Spirit Songs* (Sons of Sound, 2006). Dr. Branker's next album for Origin Records is titled *Songs My Mom Liked* and will be released in June featuring tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin, trumpeter Philip Dizack, pianist Fabian Almazan, bassist Linda May Han Oh, drummer Rudy Royston, guitarist Pete McCann, and vocalist Aubrey Johnson. The inspiration for this project was to celebrate the beautiful life of his 88-year-old Mom who has been greatly challenged by the advanced stages of cognitive decline in the form of dementia for the past seven years.

Dr. Branker has received commissions, served as a visiting composer, and has had his compositions featured in performance throughout the world, including such venues as the Visioon Festival (Tallinn, Estonia), Roulette Intermedium (Brooklyn, NY), Sydney Conservatorium of Music (Sydney, Australia), Stanislaw Moniuszko Academy of Music (Gdansk, Poland), The Cutting Room (NYC), Pori International Jazz Festival (Pori, Finland), Hochschule für Musik und Theater (Hamburg, Germany), "Good Music" Festival, (Esbjerg, Denmark), Duc des Lombards Jazz Club (Paris, France), Sweet Basil's Jazz Club (NYC), Iridium Jazz Club (NYC), St. Petersburg International "Autumn Nights" Jazz Festival (St. Petersburg, Russia), Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture (NYC), and Symphony Space (NYC).

## ABOUT THE JAZZ LAB BIG BAND

**The Rutgers Jazz Lab Big Band** seeks to educate and expose both students and the community to the artistic and historical significance of jazz by presenting repertoire that is representative of the wide spectrum of styles and conceptual approaches found throughout the music's evolution. Students involved in the jazz studies program at Rutgers Mason Gross School of the Arts have the opportunity to participate in a variety of ensembles and academic courses that encourage the study of the historical, social, theoretical, stylistic, and creative issues that pertain to the jazz idiom.

## UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

### **Rutgers Jazz Ensemble | Jazz Ensemble I**

Friday, April 19

7:30 pm

New Brunswick Performing Arts Center

### **Rutgers Chamber Jazz Ensemble**

Saturday, April 20

2:00 pm

Shindell Choral Hall

### **Rutgers Chamber Jazz Ensemble**

Saturday, April 20

5:00 pm

Shindell Choral Hall

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