

Wednesday, Mar 07, 2018

Oakland University Jazz Band to present 'A Tribute to Thad Jones'

The Oakland University Jazz Band will finish their season at Varner Recital Hall with a night of exciting big band music and a tribute to legendary jazz trumpeter Thad Jones starting at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 21.

The evening concert will also feature performances by the Oakland University Jazz Singers, under the director of Scott Gwinnell, as well as the Oakland University Trumpet Summit with special guest artists Rayse Biggs, John Douglas, Anthony Stanco and "Future Golden Grizzlies" Kurton Harrison III from the Detroit School of Arts and Jabril Johnson from Ann Arbor Huron High School.

A trumpeter, composer, arranger, producer, sound engineer and recording artist, **Rayse Biggs** is a Detroit native and OU alum who is best known for his duel horn playing technique. Often referred to as "Trumpeter Extraordinaire," Biggs honed his skill under the tutelage of several legendary jazz musicians, including Marcus Belgrave, Herbie Williams and Freddie Hubbard.



Rayse Biggs

Combining his passion for music and mentoring youth, Biggs has designed various music programs with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Plymouth Education Center, and others throughout Metro Detroit. He continues to be a sought-after artist and can be heard on recordings by Kem, the Dramatics, Kid Rock, Althea Rene, Alexander Zonjic, Fred Hammond, Bob Dylan and many more.

John Douglas began his performance career while studying at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and expanded into Detroit in the early 1990's when he and five others formed the band Jazzheads. The success of Jazzheads' self-entitled debut recording earned the group 1999's Detroit Music Award for Best Jazz Recording, as well as Best Jazz Group Deserving Wider Recognition, and Best Modern Jazz Group, which they would go on to win again in 2002.

Douglas continued on to touring in the U.S., Canada, and Europe with notable fellow performers, including Gladys Knight, Marshall Allen, Kevin Good of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and the R&B icons The Chi-lites. Returning home, he formed his current ensemble, the John Douglas Quintet, which features Ibrahim Jones on bass, Mike Malus on piano, TaJaun "Butter" Hawkins on drums, and Kris Kurzawa on guitar.

Anthony Stanco started playing trumpet in the fifth grade in the Fraser Public School System. His musical education was elevated when he joined the Detroit Symphony Civic Orchestra and Civic Jazz Orchestra under the direction of Marcus Belgrave and Rodney Whitaker. When Stanco was in high school, he established himself as a professional musician in the Detroit area.

After graduating in 2007, Stanco was accepted at the prestigious Manhattan School of Music to pursue his bachelors in jazz performance and also studied privately with trumpet technician Laurie Frink. In 2014, he finished his graduate degree at Michigan State University where he had the chance to learn from jazz greats including Rodney Whitaker, Reginald Thomas, Michael Dease, and Etienne Charles.

Stanco's professional work has consisted of concerts, workshops, and studio sessions. In 2008, he recorded a live album with Manhattan School of Music / Cuban Jazz Orchestra under the direction of Bobby Sanabria called Kenya Revisited LIVE! The record was nominated for a Latin Grammy. He has also recorded with renowned trombone player Michael Dease and performed with world class musicians such as Winard Harper, Michael Feinstein, Tye Tribbett, and Aretha Franklin. Anthony is also an established composer and in 2013 premiered his five-movement suite entitled *Look up Hannah: A Suite for the Protester*.



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John Douglas



Anthony Stanco

The March 21 concert will also feature a special tribute to renowned jazz trumpeter and Pontiac native **Thad Jones**, who began performing professionally at age of 16.

After serving in the U.S. Army bands during World War II (1943-46), Jones continued his professional music career and became a member of the Count Basie Orchestra in May 1954. He stayed with Basie for nine years and was a featured soloist on such well-known tunes as “April in Paris,” “Shiny Stockings” and “Corner Pocket.”

Jones left the Count Basie Orchestra in 1963 and in 1965 he and drummer Mel Lewis formed the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, which won a Grammy Award in 1979 for their album Live in Munich. That same year, Jones suddenly moved to Copenhagen, Denmark where he became the leader of the Danish Radio Big Band.

In February 1985, Jones returned to the U.S. to take over the leadership of the Count Basie Orchestra, upon the former leader’s death. He fronted the band on numerous tours until he had to step down due to ill health. He returned to his home in Copenhagen for the last few months of his life, and died of cancer on Aug. 20, 1986.

Tickets for the concert are \$8 for all seats and are available at the Varner Box Office, by phone at (800) 585-3737 or at startickets.com without a service fee.

Varner Recital Hall is located at 371 Varner Drive in Rochester, Mich. For more information, call (248) 370-2030 or visit oakland.edu/mtd.



Thad Jones