

UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTHERN COLORADO



College of Performing  
& Visual Arts



UNC/Greeley

# Jazz Festival

April 19-21, 2007



Painting, Darrell Anderson

Northern  
Colorado Voices

m-pact!

Kevin Mahogany  
with UNC Lab Band I

Geoffrey Keezer Trio

Bob Mintzer  
with UNC Lab Band I

Clayton-Hamilton  
Jazz Orchestra

The Jazz Festival  
All-Stars with  
Gene Aitken



UNC  
*Jazz*



TheTribune

# He's Back!!



by Ann Diaz  
UNC/Greeley Jazz Festival, 2007

As far as introductions go, he hardly needs one in this town. That in itself is a good thing, because any attempt at defining his life's work would be an exercise in oversimplification. His impact on the world of jazz fills volumes. Anyway, a mere "Gene's comin' back" is enough to get toes tapping around here.

Since retiring from his post as Director of Jazz Studies at UNC in 2002 (after some 27 years), Dr. Gene Aitken has faithfully returned each April to serve as Director of the Jazz Festival All-Stars-"an ensemble-in-residence;" as festival coordinator Managing Producer and Jazz Studies professor Erik Applegate calls it.

Aitken's tenure at UNC was historic. The highlight reel features countless *Down Beat* magazine awards, National Endowment for the Arts grants, recognition in U.S. News and World Report, and the only higher-education nomination for a Grammy (Vocal Jazz). Aitken who has produced dozens of records and CDs with United Jazz Artists Records, was presented the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, and in 1995 was the 32nd individual inducted into the International Association of Jazz Educators Hall of Fame (along with Doc Severinsen and Ella Fitzgerald, joining others such as Count Basie, Woody Herman, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington.)

His impact has been equally significant in Southeast Asia. Aitken recently retired in October 2006 as Director of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore, and now splits his time between Thailand and the U.S. In May he will conduct China's top military band, the Military Band of the Peoples' Liberation Army of China in

Beijing. Prior to his appointment at the Conservatory, Aitken was Advisor to the Director of the College of Music at Mahidol University in Bangkok, Thailand. There he established several music programs, helped design curricula, and was involved with the building design of the new Multimedia Center, Music Museum, and 300-seat auditorium at the University. In 2003, Gene co-founded the Southeast Asian Youth Orchestra and Wind Ensemble Project, a significant program from a musical as well as a cultural relations perspective.

"Retired" once again (and still overachieving), Aitken graciously made time for an online interview recently. It's clear that he's looking forward to his return as much as we are.

### **LET'S TAKE IT FROM THE TOP. WHO'S IN THIS YEAR'S ALL-STAR LINEUP?**

**GA:** Saxophones (in alphabetical order): Don Aliquo (Middle Tennessee State Univ.), Andy Dahlke (UNC), Dan Gailey, (Univ. of Kansas), Randy Hamm (Southwest Missouri State Univ.), Glenn Kostur (Univ. of New Mexico), Peter Sommer (Colorado State Univ.)

Trumpets: John Davis (Univ. of Colorado), Chuck Dotas (James Madison Univ.), Rob Murray (UNC), Vern Sielert (Univ. of Washington), Chris Winans

Trombones: Dave Glenn (Whitman College), Paul McKee (Univ. of Missouri at Kansas City), Donn Schaefer (Univ. of Utah), Nat Wickham (UNC)

Rhythm Section: Dana Landry, piano (UNC); Erik Applegate, bass (UNC); Jim White, drums (UNC)

### **THERE ARE SOME SIGNIFICANT MILES TRAVELED (TENNESSEE, VIRGINIA, NEW MEXICO...). HOW DO YOU PULL THIS "DREAM TEAM" TOGETHER?**

**GA:** The 'dream team', which is put together by Dana Landry, Director of the Jazz Studies Program and Erik Applegate, Director Managing Producer of the UNC/Greeley Jazz Festival, represents some of the finest musical talent in the United States. The core of the group is usually fairly consistent, but sometimes the musicians have other commitments and so Dana and Erik locate other musicians to fill the vacated positions.

About half the band this year, eight to be exact, are UNC alums who have received either their bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degrees from the UNC School of Music. All the musicians in the Jazz All-Stars are very experienced in both performing and teaching—that's why it works so well. This also provides the adjudicators at the Festival the opportunity to 'practice what they have been teaching' during this three-day event.

### **CAN YOU SHARE DETAILS ABOUT THE ARRANGEMENTS/COMMISSIONS YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR THIS YEAR?**

**GA:** We have five commissions this year for either original works and/or arrangements. David Caffey, Chuck Dotas, Paul McKee, Eric Richards, and David Glenn are this year's composers/arrangers. Each individual will have a different genre to write for based on what is needed to have a final program that is a challenge to the musician, has audience appeal, and

shows off the talents of the musicians in the All-Star Band. The five different genres featured for the evening are: a shuffle, a contemporary work, a ballad, a jazz waltz an up-tempo, and a Latin piece. We don't have titles yet as they are determined by the writer; many times the title comes after the composition is completed.

### **HOW DOES THIS GEOGRAPHICALLY SCATTERED GROUP PREPARE FOR THIS ONCE-A-YEAR PERFORMANCE?**

**GA:** All the compositions will be finished by April 1, 2007. At that time, the composer/arranger makes PDF files of all the parts and e-mails them to each musician in the band, whether in or out of the US. Between that time and our only rehearsal on Thursday, April 19, the musicians prepare both the written part and/or solo parts.

At the rehearsal we have only about 20 minutes to prepare each chart. A MIDI realization (computer generated performance of the composition) is sent to the conductor and the drummer so they have an idea of the writer's concept of the music. If possible, we will send a copy of the MIDI realization to the soloist as well. All soloists must memorize their solos prior to arriving in Greeley.

When the composers/arrangers are asked to write for the band, they are asked to place solos in specific parts. That way we're assured that the solos are spread as equally as possible throughout the band. However, given the minimum number of charts we perform, not every outstanding soloist will get a chance to perform. The following year we will try to make an adjustment to feature some soloists we missed the preceding year.

### **YOUR ANNUAL RETURN AND THE ALL-STAR PERFORMANCE IS A GREATLY ANTICIPATED SEGMENT OF THE FESTIVAL. CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU?**

**GA:** For me, the opportunity to conduct the Jazz Festival All-Stars is the highlight of every year. From the commissioning of new works, to seeing great friends, to conducting some of the best and most talented musicians in the US, to performing for a wonderful and enthusiastic audience, and to be able to hear all the outstanding school groups during the day. For 27 years, as former Director of the Jazz Festival, the evening concerts had an electricity, excitement, and enthusiasm that is unique to Greeley and hard to find in any festival setting. Nothing has changed... This is a result of the positive atmosphere of the adjudication process, the number and quality of the clinics/workshops that are free to all students, the outstanding adjudicator/musicians and guest artists that perform each year, the continued support of the University, the Greeley Tribune and the City of Greeley, and the highly organized format of the Festival to which the UNC Jazz Studies Program deserves accolade after accolade. The noncompetitive format of the festival makes every jazz group and every student a winner. And this happens only in Greeley, Colorado!