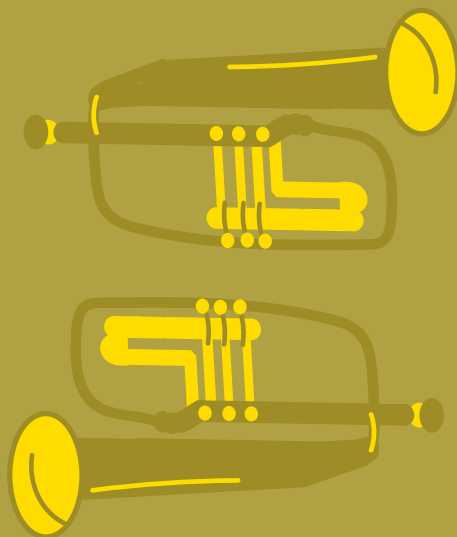


Valdosta Symphony Orchestra  
2021 - 2022 Season

# “Casual Classics”

*Brubeck, Blues, And American Roots*



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 2021-2022 Valdosta Symphony Orchestra season at Valdosta State University. We are celebrating 32 years of changing lives through the power of music, and we are delighted to have you join us from your favorite seat in Whitehead Auditorium for what promises to be five exceptional concerts.

When the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra performed its first concert in November 1990, VSU was the only institution of higher education in Georgia to have its own university-affiliated symphony orchestra. Today we remain committed to leading development in and serving as a resource for arts that support the growth of our 41-county service area across South Georgia — because the arts play a central role in driving innovation.

The American Prize-winning Valdosta Symphony Orchestra serves both the cultural life of Valdosta and the regional academic mission of VSU. The high standard of performance of the orchestra enables it to attract guest soloists of national and international renown to the Valdosta community. Its membership is a unique blend of resident artist-faculty, students studying professional music disciplines, talented community performers, and carefully selected professionals from a five-state region.

The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra has become an important part of the cultural life of the entire region. In addition to its concert performances, it offers musical enrichment grants to support VSU students pursuing creative endeavors. It provides exploratory string classes for children and adults through the South Georgia String Project, offers a special Youth Concert Series for school children and their teachers, and introduces the instruments of the orchestra to young children during the annual Tunes for Tots.

The ongoing global pandemic has created opportunities for all of us to pivot and find unique ways to thrive during this time of unexpected challenge. It has also shown us that music plays a pivotal role in uplifting our lives, helping us maintain a sense of connectedness, and healing our souls.

We are grateful for every member of the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra — especially our Department of Music students, faculty, and staff — for their tireless dedication to the musical arts and their willingness to share their talents with others. We are also grateful for the many individuals, families, and corporations who generously support, protect, and nurture the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra's and VSU's tradition of musical excellence.

Thank you for being a part of our audience.

Enjoy the performance!



**Richard A. Carvajal, Ph.D.**  
President of Valdosta State University



Greetings.

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the thirty second season of the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra. The 2021-2022 performances reflect a wide variety of stylistic vision and will provide wonderful experiences for our audiences. We are so fortunate to be able to feature talented guest performers as well as showcase the outstanding artistry of our faculty through solo performances, and collaborative leadership.



One of my favorite quotes I share with my students comes from the recently deceased artist, Chuck Close. Discussing the topic of inspiration, he says “Inspiration is for amateurs. The rest of us just show up and get to work. If you wait around for the clouds to part and a bolt of lightning to strike you in the brain, you are not going to make an awful lot of work. All the best ideas come out of the process; they come out of the work itself.”

I want to commend the many individuals who have spent the past year rolling up their sleeves and getting to work addressing the problems at hand, and discovering creative ways for us to be able to perform, create, and share with our patrons. The results of this work reflect the vision of the college and the talented individuals committed to artistic excellence, who believe in the strength of creative capital and its impact on our community. We are so grateful for the continued support of our advisory boards, benefactors, audiences, our faculty and students, and the support of Valdosta State University.

This great orchestra continues to evolve, sharing a spirit of inspiration, and creativity. Our goal is for that spirit to continue and we are delighted that you have chosen to be part of this effort. Together we reaffirm our mission to expand opportunities for the public to experience this unique art form throughout the region.

We appreciate your attendance and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Blake Pearce". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**A. Blake Pearce**

Dean, College of the Arts

## Concert Sponsor

# Houston and Tittle Family

Mary Erneste Houston of Nashville, Georgia, was a founding member of the Valdosta Symphony Guild and member of the Valdosta Symphony Board.

When the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra was just in the planning stages, Mrs. Houston heard of these plans. As a music lover and talented musician herself, she was thrilled at the possibility of a symphony orchestra in South Georgia. She knew that the orchestra would require financial support to become a reality, so she asked her son, N. G. Houston III, to become a sponsor. His immediate reply was, "Mama, you know I will!" The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra gained its first sponsor, and the Houston and Tittle family have remained sponsors for all 32 years of the VSO.

# About the Artists

## Triple Play

Triple Play is the name given to three outstanding and versatile musicians, Peter Madcat Ruth (on harmonica, guitar, jaw harp, percussion & vocals), Joel Brown, (folk and classical acoustic guitar and vocals) and Chris Brubeck (electric bass, bass trombone, piano & vocals). Collectively they bring a rare level of joy, virtuosity, and American spirit to the folk, blues, jazz and classical music they perform. Triple Play's musical roots go way back (nearly 40 years!) in each member's history. Chris and Madcat have toured and recorded together in different settings since 1969, first as young rock musicians in the group "New Heavenly Blue" (with albums on RCA and Atlantic Records), "Sky King" (on Columbia), and then as jazz musicians touring the world with Dave Brubeck.



Chris went on to form the group Crofut & Brubeck with the uniquely talented banjo player Bill Crofut and also featured Joel on guitar. A highly unusual and critically acclaimed CD, "Across Your Dreams" (Telarc) featuring famous mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade singing songs written by Chris, Dave & Lola Brubeck. Their next project was the recording of the acclaimed "Bach to Brubeck" (Koch International Classics) at Abbey Road Studios with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Sadly, Bill Crofut passed away in 1999, and Madcat joined Chris and Joel to form the group Triple Play. Their live performance is documented on their first cd, "Triple Play Live", recorded at one of their college concerts. In reviewing this disc, All Music Guide wrote: "This boundary stretching CD should be investigated by anyone who enjoys great American music."

Their second CD, "Watching the World" was recorded in studios across the country and according to All Music Guide: "It's great to hear a group that combines top-notch musicianship, potent originals, and a touch of humor, this CD is truly a Triple Play in any fan's score book."

With an ever-expanding repertoire, the Trio continues to play in concert halls, clubs and festivals all over the country, including performing many of Chris' symphonic arrangements with orchestras across the U.S. Recently they played a set at the Monterey Jazz Festival and later that evening were featured in the premiere of Dave Brubeck's Cannery Row Suite. Paul deBarros, writer for the Seattle Times and Downbeat, commented: "Triple Play is what jazz always was and always should be about: good-time rhythm, unbridled joy and the sweet release but bittersweet aftertaste of the blues. If there's a better old-time blues and jazz harmonica player out there than Madcat Ruth, I'd sure love to know where he lives."

# *About the Artists*

## **Peter Madcat Ruth**

Back in 1963, when Peter Madcat Ruth was a freshman in high school, he began taking guitar lessons at the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago. In 1964, his interest in guitar led him to an album by Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. Sonny Terry's harmonica playing inspired Madcat to pick up a harmonica and play along. He's been playing harmonica ever since.



In his early years of harp playing, Madcat practiced along with whatever blues albums he could buy or borrow. He also listened to the blues live whenever he could at places like the University of Chicago, and Chicago's Regal Theater. Too young to listen to the blues in bars, Madcat was a devotee of the Pervis Spann radio program on WVON, and the Big Bill Hill radio program on WOPA which featured occasional live broadcasts of blues performances from bars on Chicago's South Side.

In 1966, Madcat met the legendary Chicago blues harmonica player, Big Walter Horton. Madcat was able to arrange to take harmonica lessons from him periodically over the next few years. As Madcat put it, "He's the man who opened my ears and mind to the amazing potential of the harmonica."

During high school, Madcat played harmonica with several local folk groups, and later with several blues bands. In 1968 he met bass player and trombonist Chris Brubeck, son of jazz pianist Dave Brubeck. The two met at a jam session and an instant mutual respect sprang up between them. Madcat told Chris to let him know if he ever needed a harmonica player. Shortly after this meeting, a surge of wanderlust sent Madcat on a two-year hitchhiking stint. He studied Spanish in Mexico, played in a jug band in Albuquerque, and worked in a day care center for the children of migrant farm workers in central California. He also spent a lot of time by the side of the road playing harmonica. In the spring of 1969, Chris Brubeck tracked Madcat down in New Mexico and invited him to join his rock band, New Heavenly Blue, in Michigan. For the next two years, Madcat played with the band summers and weekends while attending Lake Forest College in Illinois. In 1971, he left college and moved to Ann Arbor to work with the band full time.

Playing with New Heavenly Blue enlarged Madcat's musical experience. Many of the tunes the group performed were in unusual time signatures such as 5/4 and 9/4. The group recorded two LPs: EDUCATED HOMEGROWN on RCA Records and NEW HEAVENLY BLUE on Atlantic Records.

In 1971, Dave Brubeck wrote the cantata TRUTH IS FALLEN which featured New Heavenly Blue. TRUTH IS FALLEN was performed with various orchestras, among them the Rochester Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. New Heavenly Blue also played the music for a touring company performing Jesus Christ

Superstar; Madcat played all of the saxophone parts on the harmonica.

When New Heavenly Blue disbanded in 1973, Madcat joined the Darius Brubeck Ensemble, a progressive jazz group led by Chris's older brother, Darius. This was a tremendous education for Madcat, who found himself playing harmonica with a horn section composed of clarinet, trombone, saxophone and harmonica. The Ensemble was often billed as opening act for the Dave Brubeck Quartet. At these concerts the performers from both groups would usually jam together on stage to close the show. Now Madcat was performing with such jazz greats as Gerry Mulligan and Paul Desmond, as well as Dave Brubeck. In 1974 when the Dave Brubeck Quartet disbanded, Dave invited Madcat to join his new group: Two Generations of Brubeck which featured Dave, and his sons Darius, Chris, and Daniel. At the same time Madcat joined Chris Brubeck's new rock group, Sky King. In 1975, Sky King released the album SECRET SAUCE, on Columbia Records, and made an extensive U.S. tour.

And so for a few years Madcat spent almost all of his time on the road playing jazz and fusion rock with the various members of the Brubeck family. One night, Madcat played at New York City's Bottom Line Cafe with Sky King early in the evening, dashed uptown in a taxi with Chris between sets to play with Dave Brubeck at the Newport Jazz Festival (held that year at Carnegie Hall), and made it back downtown in time to do Sky King's second set at the Bottom Line.

With Two Generations of Brubeck, Madcat performed in concert halls and at music festivals in the U.S. and in Mexico, Canada, Germany, Austria, Holland, Australia, and New Zealand. Mexico was delighted with "El Gato Loco," and Germany hailed "die Verruckte Katze." Madcat recorded on three Dave Brubeck albums: TRUTH IS FALLEN, TWO GENERATIONS OF BRUBECK, and BROTHER THE GREAT SPIRIT MDE US ALL, all on Atlantic Records. He also appeared with the group on the Mike Douglas Television Show on CBS, and on a National Educational Television Special filmed at Dave Brubeck's home in Connecticut.

In 1977, after ten years in other people's bands, Madcat realized that the time had come for him to do his own music, on his own terms. For the next few years he returned to his folk music and blues roots, playing his music at colleges and coffeehouses throughout the Midwest. Often he performed as a soloist and on other occasions he would be joined with various back-up musicians, including drummer Danny Brubeck, and the amazing electric bassist Jason Boekeloo. In addition to performing his own music, Madcat accompanied many other musicians and played in an impressive variety of musical styles. In 1984, Madcat released his first solo record called MADCAT GONE SOLO, and for the next few years continued to pursue a solo career, performing at night clubs, civic auditoriums, college campuses, and music festivals throughout the United States. It was also during this time that Madcat started performing children's concerts and school assembly programs.

On August 23, 1997, Peter Madcat Ruth was named Harmonica Player of the Year by The Society for the Preservation and Advancement of the Harmonica (SPAH). The award was presented to Madcat at the 1997 SPAH Harmonica Convention held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Romulus, Michigan. SPAH is an international, all volunteer, non-profit organization

dedicated to preserving the rich heritage of harmonica music, and advancing the appreciation of this very versatile musical instrument. SPAH currently maintains a membership of over 3000 harmonica players from all over the world.

In 1998, Madcat again joined forces with his old buddy, Chris Brubeck. Along with guitarist Joel Brown, they formed the trio: Chris Brubeck's Triple Play. Triple Play has performed in concert all over the USA, and has performed with several symphony orchestras. In the year 2000, Triple Play released their first CD: TRIPLE PLAY, LIVE which was recorded live at Skidmore College. Their second CD: WATCHING THE WORLD was released in 2003. TRIPLE PLAY LIVE AT THE ARTHUR ZANKEL MUSIC CENTER was released in 2011, and TRIPLE PLAY WITH THE SINGAPORE CHINESE ORCHESTRA (recorded in Singapore) was released in 2014.

In 2006 Madcat won a Grammy Award for being a featured soloist on William Bolcom's CD: SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE.

Currently, Madcat continues to play music with Chris Brubeck's Triple Play, with The Madcat Midnight Blues Journey and on his own as a solo artist, and as a guest artist with numerous other groups. For more information on Madcat, see his website: [madcatmusic.net](http://madcatmusic.net)

## Joel Brown

*"...sensuality and emotional warmth characterize his extraordinary musicianship. He makes music that both soothes and excites. It is the union of opposites that makes Brown so special."* (Albany Times-Union)

Guitarist Joel Brown's actively eclectic performances as a soloist and chamber musician have included appearances with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Festival of Contemporary Music at Tanglewood, the Saratoga Chamber Music Festival, the Caramoore Festival, and the Killington Festival. Internationally, he has played in British Columbia at the Music in the Mountains Chamber Music Festival, in the Czech Republic at the Mikulov Guitar Festival as concerto soloist with the Martinu Chamber Orchestra, and in Asia with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra. Notable appearances in the United States include Carnegie Hall with soprano Dawn Upshaw, recitals on both coasts with mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, and with the Boston Pops Orchestra. Brown has also performed on NBC's *Today*, CNN's *Showbiz Today*, on NPR, and on the BBC.

Brown is the founding member of Tritonis, a flute, guitar and cello trio that appeared at the Guitar Foundation of America conference in Miami, at National Flute Association conventions in New York and Boston, and in universities and recital halls across the nation. Brown also commissioned new music for their critically and





internationally acclaimed CD, *Five Premieres—Chamber Works with Guitar* (Albany).

Brown performs regularly as a member of Chris Brubeck's Triple Play, a crossover group blending jazz with blues and folk music. The trio has played in almost every state of the Union, and in 2006 performed at the Monterey Jazz Festival with the legendary Dave Brubeck Quartet. Their CDs—*Triple Play Live* and *Watching the World* (Blue Forest Records)—have won them fans around the world.

Brown's recordings also include *Bach to Brubeck* (Koch International) with the London Symphony Orchestra, *Chords and Thyme* (Dorian Records)

## Chris Brubeck

Grammy-nominated composer Chris Brubeck continues to distinguish himself as an innovative performer and composer who is clearly tuned into the pulse of contemporary



music. Respected music critic for *The Chicago Tribune*, John von Rhein called Chris: *“a composer with a real flair for lyrical melody—a 21st Century Lenny Bernstein.”*

In addition to creating an impressive body of work, including several band pieces, chamber pieces, 3 concertos for trombone, a trombone quartet, and several concertos for stringed instruments and other ensembles, Chris maintains a demanding touring and recording schedule playing bass and trombone with his two groups: the Brubeck Brothers Quartet, with brother Dan on drums, Chuck Lamb on piano and Mike DeMicco on guitar ([www.brubeckbrothers.com](http://www.brubeckbrothers.com)); and Triple Play, an acoustic jazz-funk-blues-Americana trio with Joel Brown on guitar and Peter Madcat Ruth on harmonica and Chris on bass, trombone and piano ([www.chrisbrubeckstripleplay.com](http://www.chrisbrubeckstripleplay.com).) Additionally, Chris performs as a soloist playing his trombone concertos with orchestras and has served as Artist in Residence with orchestras and colleges in America, coaching, lecturing, and performing with students and faculty. Once a year he tours England with the group Brubecks Play Brubeck along with brothers Darius (on piano) and Dan as well as British saxophonist Dave O'Higgins. Chris had been a long-standing member of the Dave Brubeck Quartet, writing arrangements and touring and recording with his father's group for over 20 years. Dave and Chris co-wrote the orchestral piece “Ansel Adams: America” which has received dozens of performances and in 2013 was a Grammy finalist for Best Instrumental Composition.

# About the Music Director

PHOTO BY PAUL LEAVY



## Howard Hsu

Howard Hsu is the Music Director of the Valdosta (GA) Symphony Orchestra and also serves as Associate Professor of Music and Director of Orchestra Studies at Valdosta State University. Under his leadership, the Valdosta Symphony was selected as the 2014 winner of the American Prize in Orchestral

Performance (community division), and has had performances aired statewide on Georgia Public Broadcasting Radio's "Midday Music" and "Orchestras of Georgia" programs. Hsu has performed with the Canadian Brass, Robert McDuffie, Simone Dinnerstein, Jennifer Frautschi, Wendy Warner, Christine Brewer, Rachel Barton Pine, Orion Weiss, Stanford Olsen, Alexander Ghindin, Alexander Schimpf, Katia Skanavi, Awadagin Pratt, Elena Urioste, Amy Schwartz Moretti, the Empire Brass, and the Melodica Men. He conducted the world premiere of James Oliverio's Trumpet Concerto No. 1: World House, the U.S. premiere of Ned McGowan's Concerto for iPad and Orchestra (Rotterdam Concerto 2), and has given the Georgia premieres of Fernande Decruck's Sonata for Saxophone and Orchestra, several of the Debussy/Matthews Preludes, and Jonathan Bailey Holland's Motor City Dance Mix.

Howard Hsu has appeared as guest conductor with the Hartford (CT), Fox Valley (WI), Wyoming, Macon (GA), and New Britain (CT) Symphonies, as well as the Bronx (NY) Arts Ensemble, with whom he conducted the world premiere of Eleanor Cory's O'Keeffe's Flora. He was a Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Connecticut and Associate Conductor of the University of Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, and was Visiting Instructor of Music and Director of the Orchestra at Connecticut College.

Howard Hsu has worked closely with groups dedicated to training young musicians, including the Lake George (NY) Opera Festival, where he served as Associate Conductor and Music Director of the Apprentice opera scenes concerts. Hsu has conducted the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association All State Orchestra, Georgia Music Educators Association All State 9/10 Orchestra, and the Georgia Governor's Honors Program Orchestra and String Ensemble. Through the Hartford Symphony's Mentoring Program he served as a Master Teaching Artist, and was a faculty member with The Harlem (NY) School of the Arts. Howard Hsu received his D.M.A. from the University of Connecticut, his M.M. from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and his B.S. from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

# The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra ~ 32nd Season

Howard Hsu, Music Director

## *VSO Casual Classics*

### “Brubeck, Blues, And American Roots”

February 12, 2022

*This concert is sponsored by Houston and Tittle Family*

#### **Ragtime | 7 minutes**

Scott Joplin (arr. Peter Lawson)

Neil Rao, conductor

#### ***Blues Suite for Harmonica* | 10 minutes**

Chris Brubeck, Bill Crofut, & Bill Keith

#### ***Feel So Bad, Feel Like a Ball Game on a Rainy Day* | 5 minutes**

Chuck Willis (arr. Joel Brown, Chris Brubeck, & Peter Madcat Ruth)

#### ***Black and Blue* | 5 minutes**

Fats Waller (arr. Chris Brubeck)

#### ***Travelin' Blues\** | 6 minutes**

Dave and Lola Brubeck (arr. Chris Brubeck)

#### ***Koto Song* | 5 mins**

Dave Brubeck (arr. Russell Gloyd)

#### ***Unsquare Dance* | 5 minutes**

Dave & Chris Brubeck

~ *INTERMISSION* ~

#### **Concerto for Bass Trombone | 18 minutes**

Chris Brubeck

I. Paradise Utopia

II. Sorrow Floats

III. James Brown in the Twilight Zone

Chris Brubeck, bass trombone

#### ***Polly* | 6 minutes**

Dave Brubeck (arr. Chris Brubeck)

### ***The Road to Thomasville\** | 5 minutes**

Joel Brown, Chris Brubeck, & Peter Madcat Ruth (arr. Chris Brubeck)

### ***Take Five* | 6 minutes**

Paul Desmond (arr. Chris Brubeck)

### ***Blue Rondo a la Turk* | 6 minutes**

Dave Brubeck (arr. Chris Brubeck & Darius Brubeck)

## **Triple Play**

Peter Madcat Ruth, (*harmonica, guitar, jaw harp, percussion, and vocals*)

Joel Brown, (*folk and classical acoustic guitars, and vocals*)

Chris Brubeck, (*electric fretless bass, bass trombone, piano, and vocals*)

Howard Hsu, conductor

*\*Arrangement World Premiere*

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## ***About the Assistant Conductor***

### **Neil Rao**

Neil Rao is the Assistant Conductor for the Valdosta (GA) Symphony Orchestra and concurrently serves as the Graduate Assistant to Dr. Howard Hsu at Valdosta State University.

A 2021 recipient of the Valdosta Symphony's Musician Enrichment Grant, Neil participated in the Monteux School and Music Festival in Hancock, Maine. Neil's teachers at the Monteux School include Michael Jinbo; Ludovic Morlot, former music director of the Seattle Symphony; and Neal Gittelman, Music Director of the Dayton Philharmonic.



Neil has an extensive background as a freelance composer, educator, and percussionist. Neil's compositions have been commissioned or performed by groups including the Louisville Orchestra, Lineage Percussion, the University of Louisville Percussion Ensemble, and musicians at the Pierre Monteux School. A fervent advocate for new music, Neil has performed dozens of world premieres and has commissioned solo percussion music which is now standard repertoire for the genre. Neil's career as a percussionist has taken him from Louisville's Brown Theater to the Salzburg Mozarteum, where he has performed solo, orchestral, and chamber music with equal fluency. He holds the B.M. in Timpani/Percussion from the Curtis Institute of Music.

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# THE VALDOSTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Howard Hsu, *Music Director • Lougenia and William Gabard Chair*

Clell Wright, *Chorusmaster*

Neil Rao, *Assistant Conductor*

## Violin I

Nina Lutz, *Concertmaster*  
**Leona Strickland Hudson**  
**Chair**

Kristin Pfeifer Yu,  
*Acting Concertmaster*  
Alexander Reshetnichenko,  
*Assistant Principal*  
Catherine Yara  
Carissa Walker  
Edward Charity  
Sergio Sabillon  
Kevin Chaney  
Elma Sanabria  
Nicholas Hatt  
Kamille MacLean

## Violin II

Kenneth Davis, *Assistant*  
*Principal*  
Petra Bubanja  
Taylor Giorgio  
Quisqueyana Griffith  
Megumi Terry  
Amelia Pharis  
Jennifer Clyde  
Madison Brown  
Hannah MacLean

## Viola

Laurel Yu, *Principal*  
**Brantley and Barbara**  
**Jenkins Chair**  
Andrew Collins, *Assistant*  
*Principal*  
Luiz Barrionuevo  
Hunter Sanchez  
Ronald Lopez  
Jonathan Drawdy

## Violoncello

Steven Taylor, *Principal*  
**Daniel and Carolyn**  
**Coleman Chair**  
Shea Kole, *Assistant Principal*  
Amber Den Exter  
Jared Cooper  
Jordan Galvarino

## Contrabass

Tod Leavitt, *Principal*  
Gabriel Monitcello, *Assistant*  
*Principal*  
Trent Harper  
Abishai Diaz  
Supushpa Mahadeo

## Flute

Jessica Sherer, *Principal*  
Kaitlyn Calcagino

## Piccolo

Elizabeth Goode

## Oboe

Susan Eischeid, *Principal*  
**Allan and Joan Dear Chair**  
Lindsay Miller

## Clarinet

Peter Geldrich, *Principal*  
**Kay Jennett Chair**  
Kasey Cote

## Bass Clarinet

Colton Smith

## Bassoon

Nina Scheibe, *Principal*  
Kassandra Ormsby  
Emily Young

## Horn

Kristen Johns, *Principal*  
Paul Basler, *Acting Principal*  
William Schaffer  
Samantha Gowen  
Brooklynn McGonagle  
Riley Prichard

## Trumpet

Javian Brabham, *Principal*  
Christopher Heden  
Jacob Wood  
Jorge Flores

## Trombone

Douglas Farwell, *Principal*  
**Jerry Jennett Chair**  
Oscar De La Rosa  
Franklin Carmona

## Bass Trombone

Paul Henry

## Tuba

Brandon Smith, *Principal*  
Ernesto Moor

## Timpani

Ryan Smith, *Principal*

## Percussion

Theodore Drakopoulos  
Tucker Prestridge  
David Donohoe  
Noah Landrum

## Keyboard

Valerie Holton Smith,  
*Principal*  
BeiBei Lin

# Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

## *ABOUT THE MUSIC*

### Symphonic Jazz – From Dvořák to Brubeck

by Alan M. Rothenberg

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Jazz has taken many forms over the years; its emphasis on improvisation allows for flexible instrumental groups depending on the circumstances of performance (a small basement club, a large dance hall, an outdoor festival) or available musicians. One form of jazz—symphonic (or orchestral) jazz—is a multifaceted story.

#### **It starts with Dvořák...**

The idea of mixing the most American music—jazz—with that European invention called the symphony orchestra can be traced to Antonin Dvořák. In 1892 the composer was engaged to lead the National Conservatory of Music in New York. Dvořák's view of his role was "not so much to interpret Beethoven, Wagner, or other masters of the past, but to give what encouragement I can to the young musicians of America...I am convinced that the future music of this country must be founded on what are called Negro melodies. These can be the foundation of a serious and original school of composition, to be developed in the United States."

Dvořák was partially right—a unique American music did evolve from the music of Black America, but not from Negro melodies. It began with Dixieland which evolved into ragtime, and as it moved from New Orleans to Chicago to New York it became the blues and jazz. For many, jazz was still considered a rather crude form of music. Music critic Richard Hadlock wrote, "In the twenties, most of those who listened at all regarded jazz as merely an energetic background for dancers; the few who sought more profound values in music tended to accept Paul Whiteman's concert productions...as the only jazz worth taking seriously." The most famous of Whiteman's concerts was February 12, 1924. Just a month earlier, an article in the New York Herald announced that an "Experiment in Modern Music" concert was going to include a "jazz concerto" by George Gershwin. This was news to Gershwin, but he quickly wrote *Rhapsody in Blue*. Most of the concert was anything but experimental, but the *Rhapsody* enchanted the audience. Critic Deems Taylor wrote that it "hinted at something new, something that had not hitherto been said in music."

Gershwin's new work, so strongly influenced by the rhythms, harmonies, and free flow of jazz, influenced other band leaders—particularly Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington—to write longer pieces informed by the formal structures of classical music. These works were intended for serious listening and played by a new kind of ensemble, the "jazz orchestra" (usually saxophones, trombones, trumpets, piano, bass, drums, and often banjo or guitar). To be sure, there were plenty of similarly structured groups through the thirties and forties—the "swing era"—but most of them were playing music intended primarily for dancing.

#### **Classical meets jazz...**

Meanwhile, composers of "serious" music had been considering jazz. In 1920, French composer Darius Milhaud encountered an American jazz band in London, then traveled to Harlem to hear more. His 1923 ballet *L'Création du Monde* ("The Creation of the World") is filled with blues harmonies and swinging rhythms. Leonard Bernstein once commented that the piece is "not a flirtation but as a real love affair with jazz."

In America, John Alden Carpenter composed the ballet *Skyscrapers* in 1926. The score incorporated blues and ragtime, and the "standard" orchestra was supplemented by three saxophones, banjo, and drum set. Classically trained William Grant Still, part of the Harlem Renaissance, played piano for Fletcher Henderson, Paul Whiteman, and jazz groups. His 1931 first symphony, subtitled *Afro-American*, blends

jazz, blues, and spirituals into a traditional four movement symphonic form. Other American composers incorporated jazz elements into their works including Bernstein, Aaron Copland, and Morton Gould. Nor was the influence of jazz on classical music limited to a handful of composers, predominantly Americans; the list of jazz-inspired composers includes the masters Paul Hindemith (German), Krzysztof Penderecki (Polish), Maurice Ravel (French), Dimitri Shostakovich (Russian), and Bohuslav Martinů (Czech).

### **Jazz meets classical and becomes Third Stream...**

In the fifties, jazz orchestras began adding symphonic instruments. Stan Kenton formed the Innovations in Modern Music Orchestra, a group of 39 musicians, including strings, winds, and french horns. The group was too large to be commercially successful, but it paved the way for more experiments in merging the two forms. In 1957, composer Gunter Schuller coined the term “Third Stream” to describe a fusion of jazz and classical that was neither one nor the other. He later wrote that the concept of Third Stream was “not designed to do away with jazz or classical music; it is just another option amongst many for today’s creative musicians.” When he became president of the New England Conservatory of Music, he created a Third Stream Department (now called Contemporary Improvisation) that emphasized development of a musician’s ability to move away from the printed page of music by improvisation while drawing inspiration from music outside of the Euro-centric symphonic tradition.

These days, the idea that a musician can be equally competent and comfortable improvising with a small ensemble or playing in a symphony orchestra has become commonplace. One musician in particular became known for his ability to push jazz into fresh territory, creating works that merged the symphony orchestra with the jazz combo. That person was Dave Brubeck.

### **Dave Brubeck...**

Dave Brubeck’s ability to hear and remember music was so keen that he was admitted to the music department at the College of the Pacific even though he could not actually read musical notation. Serving in the U.S. Army, he met alto saxophonist Paul Desmond. After his military service he studied with Darius Milhaud at Mills College. In 1951 he formed the first Dave Brubeck Quartet, which (after some personnel changes) recorded the album *Time Out* in 1959. It quickly became the first jazz record to sell over a million copies, and in 2005 was added to the Library of Congress’ National Recording Registry of significant American recordings.

One of Dave’s proudest achievements was performing with symphony orchestras. Dave’s older brother Howard, who also studied with Milhaud and taught composition, composed *Dialogues for Jazz Combo and Orchestra*, which the quartet premiered in 1959 with Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic. Dave also experimented with integrating jazz into classical forms. He wrote several oratorios, the most famous being *The Light in the Wilderness*, composed in 1968 for baritone soloist, chorus, full orchestra, and jazz combo. Additionally, he wrote pieces for orchestra, chorus, and chamber ensembles. When Brubeck became a Kennedy Center Honoree President Barack Obama said, “You can’t understand America without understanding jazz, and you can’t understand jazz without understanding Dave Brubeck.” Jazz critic John Fordham wrote, “Brubeck’s real achievement was to blend European compositional ideas, very demanding rhythmic structures, jazz song-forms and improvisation in expressive and accessible ways.”

### **... and sons**

Four of Dave’s six children became professional musicians involved in many kinds of music and who, like their father, transcend the boundaries between jazz and orchestral music. Tonight’s special guest, multi-instrumentalist, arranger, and composer Chris Brubeck, has been called “a 21st century Lenny Bernstein.” He often performs with his siblings as part of the Brubeck Brothers Quartet, and with Triple Play, a group whose repertoire draws on folk, blues, jazz, and classical music.

Tonight’s concert includes Chris Brubeck originals, for both orchestra and Triple Play, and Chris’

*continued on next page*

arrangements of some of the most famous Brubeck Quartet numbers. The *Concerto No. 1 for Bass Trombone* comes from Chris' experience as an orchestral trombonist. He explains:

Having spent many years of my adolescence playing in youth orchestras, counting endless measures, playing trombone for only a few passages, and then frustratingly having to count more measures of rest yet again, I resorted to frequent musical daydreams. In fact, I used to have musical nightmares about not being able to contain myself any longer and would visualize myself jumping up from the back of the orchestra to unleash improvisations, much to the conductor's horror. So imagine how my wheels began turning when in 1991 I was approached by the Greater Bridgeport Symphony Youth Orchestra (in my home State of Connecticut) to compose a work utilizing their high-school aged students.

Being a veteran of that scene, and a strong advocate for the arts in our schools, I couldn't resist the chance to compose for these forces. My goal was to write a challenging work that would keep all sections of the orchestra on their toes, expose them to odd time signatures, polytonality, and above all, remind them that music was supposed to be joyous, energetic, beautiful, adventurous, powerful, and even humorous!

The name of the third movement, "James Brown in The Twilight Zone," might benefit from a note of explanation. The title refers to dual compositional elements used throughout; two bars from the "turn-around" of the Godfather of Soul's "I Feel Good," and an ascending chromatic passage (originating in the piano and pizzicato strings) which is reminiscent of the music used in Rod Serling's innovative TV anthology...The second movement, "Sorrow Floats," is a reflective Adagio... The first movement, "Paradise Utopia," is sizzling with American expansionist energy. I imagine a [real estate mogul] maniacally rebuilding the New York skyline. Jazz elements were inescapable, and realizing my old nightmare/dream, quite a bit of the trombone solo is meant to be improvised.

Triple Play's origins go back to 1969, when Chris Brubeck and Peter Madcat Ruth (harmonica, guitar, and more) began playing together in rock bands, and then touring with Chris' father. When guitarist Joel Brown joined Chris and Peter in 2000, Triple Play was born. Paul deBarros, a writer for jazz magazine *Downbeat*, commented: "Triple Play is what jazz always was and always should be about: good-time rhythm, unbridled joy and the sweet release but bittersweet aftertaste of the blues." Rhythm and Blues singer Chuck Willis—best known for the song "C.C. Rider"—wrote "Feel So Bad..." in 1954; Elvis Presley covered the song in 1961. "The Road to Thomasville" was inspired by Triple Play traveling to a concert in Thomasville, Georgia. Chris explained, "As we drove through the back roads of Georgia, we saw what looked like snow drifting across the road. After a few seconds of astonishment, we realized it was cotton blowing across the road. We wrote the music and lyrics in the car and performed the song that night." Chris' string accompaniment is getting its first performance tonight.

In 2020, Chris began a series of arrangements of songs made famous by the Dave Brubeck Quartet, most of them originally composed by his father. Chris writes that it was "the 60th anniversary of the release of *Time Out* and the juncture of my dad's 100th birthday on December 6, 2020, I felt it was the right time to create a symphonic arrangement that orchestras all across the world could play [with or without a jazz quartet] so they could celebrate my father's creativity and genius."

In all their musical endeavors, Chris Brubeck and the members of Triple Play celebrate the creativity of Dave Brubeck, and also the eclecticism of American music. If Antonin Dvořák was alive today, he would no doubt be pleased about how these talented musicians embody the spirit of American music.

Program Notes © 2022 by Alan M. Rothenberg [www.noteperfectnotes.com](http://www.noteperfectnotes.com)



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***EUPHORIA***

***March 26, 2022 • 7:30 pm***

***Whitehead Auditorium***

***Holland The Party Starter***

**Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E Minor, Op. 64**



***Maria Ioudenitch, violin***

**Schumann Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61**



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