

Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center

Davis Hall

April 25, 2022

6:00 pm

Alexander Pershounin, double bass and bass guitar

Sean Botkin, piano

Michael Conrad, piano and keyboard

Christopher Merz, soprano saxophone

Josh Hakanson, drums

Program

Lied ohne Worte, Op. 109.....Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy
(1809-1847)

Concerto for String Bass and Piano, Op. 3.....Sergey Koussevitzky
(1874-1951)

I. Allegro

II. Andante

III. Allegro

Meditation, from the opera "Thaïs"Jules Massenet
(1842-1912)

Sean Botkin, piano

Upon A Time.....Alexander Pershounin

Tales Of The East

Teen Town.....Jaco Pastorius
(1951-1987)

Love Of My Life.....Freddie Mercury
(1946-1991)

Christopher Merz, soprano saxophone

Michael Conrad, piano

Josh Hakanson, drums

About the artists

Dr. Alexander Pershounin has performed extensively throughout Europe and United States in both classical and jazz settings and has been featured as a performer and composer on such internationally recognized music events as Montreaux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, Pori Jazz Festival in Finland, Europe's Jazz Contest in Belgium, and New Orleans Jazz Fest, among many others. His performing credits include collaboration projects and appearances with world-class artists ranging from Bob Berg, Mulgrew Miller, Conrad Herwig, and Benny Golson to Itzhac Perlman, Yo Yo Ma, and Ray Charles, among many others. He also has recorded several commercially released compact disc albums and music to four full-length motion pictures. He holds DMA and MFA degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi and MFA and BM degrees from Russia's most prestigious music institution: Gnessins' State Academy of Music in Moscow. Before joining the UNI faculty as a bass studio and music theory instructor Dr. Pershounin had taught at Columbus State University, Minnesota State University Moorhead, Westfield State College, University of Southern Mississippi, and various music institutions in Russia. His students won national and international competitions, were accepted in most prestigious music institutions, and successfully developed their own professional music careers.

Pianist **Sean Botkin** began studying the piano at age five with his mother, making his first orchestral appearance four years later with the Honolulu Symphony. He went on to study privately with Neal O'Doan at the University of Washington and, under his direction, performed with the Seattle Symphony, Spokane Symphony, and Seattle Philharmonic Orchestra. Sean has garnered prizes in an impressive list of international piano competitions: William Kapell International Piano Competition, Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition, Busoni International Piano Competition, Cleveland International Piano Competition, World Piano Competition in Cincinnati, Dong-A International Music Competition of Korea, International Music Competition of Japan and the Washington D.C. International Competition. A graduate of Stanford University, the Juilliard School, and Indiana University at South Bend,

Sean has studied with eminent artists Adolph Baller, Martin Canin, and Alexander Toradze.

Sean has performed extensively in the United States, Europe, Central and South America, Asia, and Russia. Concerto and recital performances include Kazan and St. Petersburg, Russia; Tbilisi and Kutaisi, Georgia; Salzburg Festival, Ravenna Festival, Stresa Festival, Ruhr Klavier Festival, Gilmore Festival, London, Cagliari, Rome, Florence, Bologna, Palermo, Lisbon, Tokyo, Seoul, Bogotá, and San José (Costa Rica). He made his New York debut at Alice Tully Hall in 1993 performing Bartók's *Concerto No. 2* with the Juilliard Symphony, conducted by Carl St. Clair. In 2009, he made a CD recording of Rachmaninoff's *Piano Sonata No. 1 in D minor* and performed a series of concerts in Europe sponsored by Alexander Rachmaninoff and the Rachmaninoff Foundation. In 2012, also sponsored by the Rachmaninoff Foundation, he performed Rachmaninoff's *4th Piano Concerto* with the Chicago Symphony at Ravinia, conducted by Gianandrea Noseda, and in 2013 with the Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and guest conductor, Alexander Sladkovsky. In May 2015, Sean performed in Tbilisi, Georgia as part of the Easter to Ascension Festival. Equally active in chamber music, reactions to Sean's performances typically are expressed with phrases such as "multidimensional talents", "superb musicianship", and "beautiful and rare musical experience". Other recent performances include Rachmaninoff's *Trio élégiaque No. 1 in G minor* on the New York Philharmonic Ensembles concert at Merkin Hall and a solo recital at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York. Upcoming performing performances include a solo recital at McPherson College in Kansas.

He is currently Associate Professor of Piano at the University of Northern Iowa.

Christopher Merz, Professor of Music, has served as Director of Jazz Studies and Director of the award-winning UNI Jazz Band One at the University of Northern Iowa since 2002. Under his direction, the band has traveled to Thailand as well as the east coast of the US, and has recorded 13 CDs featuring many original compositions and arrangements by student and faculty writers.

The 2006 recipient of the CHFA University Book and Supply Outstanding Teaching award, Merz was the 2016 recipient of the John L. Baker Faculty Development award, and was inducted into the Iowa Jazz Educators' Hall of

Fame in 2015. He is a Past President of Jazz Educators of Iowa (JEI), and the founder and director of the UNI Combo Camp, an annual event for high school jazz students and music educators, which takes place each June.

His recording credits include Steve McCraven, Darius Brubeck, John Rapson and Jon Snell, as well as his own projects; Counterculture, the Chris Merz/Bob Washut Duo, The X-tet, and Equilateral. His 1997 release with the X-tet, *Mystery is My Story*, prompted Dave Brubeck to write, "I am very pleased with this wonderful band. Naturally I would admire a group like yours that, to me, is a grand extension of what we were doing...when we were the 'new thing'". Current projects include Colossus Central (an exciting new big band led by UNI alum Michael Conrad) and the quartet, Christopher's Very Happy Band., which performs Merz's originals exclusively. CVH.B.'s debut cd, *We Are Bathed in Sunlight*, was recently released on RealTown! Records. An accomplished composer/arranger for large jazz ensembles, Merz has received commissions from university and high school big bands throughout the country, and is published through UNC Jazz Press and ejazzlines. He is also a highly sought after guest soloist, clinician and conductor at university and high school jazz festivals nationwide, and is endorsed by D'Addario and TM Custom tenor saxophones.

Dr. Mike Conrad joined the UNI Faculty in the Fall of 2018. He has been recognized for his arranging and composing with four ASCAP Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Awards and seven DownBeat Awards, as well as awards and commissions from organizations like the Bundesjazzorchester of Germany, the West Point Jazz Knights, and the American Society of Music Arrangers and Composers. Conrad's arrangements have been performed all around the world, including a 2014 premiere at Carnegie Hall, and a performance at the US Presidential Inauguration in 2013. Recently, Conrad was selected to participate in the 2017 Metropole Orchestra Arrangers Workshop with Vince Mendoza and was chosen as a finalist for the "Spheres Of A Genius" composition competition through the Vienna Radio Symphony.

As a performer, Dr. Conrad has toured China, played at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, and appeared at various jazz festivals and venues all over the United States. He has enjoyed playing piano in ensembles like the Alexa

Tarantino Quintet, Dave Chisholm's Calligraphy, and Christopher's Very Happy. Band. (a quartet led by UNI Director of Jazz Studies Chris Merz). Equally accomplished on both trombone and piano, Conrad truly loves collaborating with other musicians, and always brings his creativity and expressiveness to every performance he gives and every composition that he writes.

From 2013 to 2015, Conrad was the Head Band Director at West High School in Waterloo, Iowa where he directed the Wind Symphony and Jazz Ensembles and taught Music Theory and Jazz Improvisation. He has also led his own large jazz ensemble called COLOSSUS and released an album of original music featuring Alex Sipiagin with his 15-piece group, the All Angles Orchestra. Dr. Conrad is in high demand as a clinician and guest director for jazz bands, and he continues to come up with fresh and exciting works for a wide variety of ensembles. Many of his compositions and arrangements are published by UNC Jazz Press, ejazzlines, and his own website, www.mconradmusic.com.

Dr. Conrad earned degrees from the University Northern Iowa (BM and BME), the Eastman School of Music (MM), and the University of Northern Colorado (DA).

Josh Hakanson is a musician and educator based in Cedar Falls, IA. On drum set, Hakanson has played professionally in the Northwest and Midwest in a range of musical styles, encompassing jazz, rock, hip-hop, and fusion. As a student and professional performer, he has made appearances with such musicians as Bobby Shew, Adam Kolker, John Wojciechowski, Luis Bonilla, Benny Green, Steve Owen, Idit Shner, Joe Manis, Bob Washut, Chris Merz, Dave Rezek, Don Jaques, and many others. As an educator, he has taught private lessons to all ages, coached large and small jazz ensembles at the collegiate level, and administered music clinics at the middle and high school level.