

Dear PMEA All-State Jazz Orchestra Member,

Congratulations on being selected to perform in the 2022 PMEA All-State Jazz Orchestra April 6-8 in the Poconos. This is an honor for all of you. I hope you are as excited to make some great music, and have a rewarding experience in the process.

Conductor Bio – Saxophonist, composer and arranger Brian McCarthy is endorsed by Selmer-Paris saxophones and D’Addario (Rico) reeds and is a Truth Revolution Recording Collective artist. His debut nonet project, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, began with a Creation Grant from the Vermont Arts Council in 2014. Earning 4 ½ Stars from Downbeat Magazine, Brian Zimmerman called the work “a jazz album that makes a cavernous impression for its arresting beauty and conceptual brilliance.” Both the Huffington Post and DownBeat Magazine included the album in their “Best of 2017” lists. Renowned author and journalist Bob Blumenthal says the project “is both timeless (as is all great music) and could not be more timely. Brian McCarthy has assembled an ensemble of brilliant players and given them music of deep roots and resonant meaning.”

Offstage, Brian has laid down roots in presenting and education as saxophone instructor at the University of Vermont and adjunct Director of Bands at Saint Michael's College. In addition to his college involvement, Brian is active with students at the middle and high school level as a clinician, adjudicator and guest conductor with the Nassau County All County Festival, Green Mountain District Music Festival and Vermont All-State Music Festival. In 2011, Brian also established Jazz at St. Michael's College, a concert and educational series featuring artists such as Mulgrew Miller, Joe Locke, Brian Blade and The Fellowship Band, and The Dave Liebman Big Band.

Conductor Expectations – When we see each other for the first time in April, I’m expecting everyone to be able to play all their parts with confidence. It’s not enough to play your parts while feeling high anxiety. I want to spend our rehearsal days focusing on “the little things.” Attacks, releases, balancing, dynamics, and keeping your eyes on me (I literally come from the school of Thad Jones, and I take my lead from his example. If you watch the live “Groove Merchant” link, you’ll know what I mean). Come in prepared, and we’ll have a lot of fun and make some music along the way.

CONCERT PROGRAM

1. **Groove Merchant, by Jerome Richardson arr. Thad Jones (5:00-6:30)**

<https://marinamusic.com/product/groove-merchant/>

Album Recommendation – “Central Park West” Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra

YouTube – Album, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IU-TsZ0XnRM>

YouTube – Live, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZLvqXFddu0>

One of the classic charts from the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. Medium-Shuffle blues at its core. Solos can be opened up, and on-site auditions will determine how many, and what format (trading, stop-time, etc.). SAX SECTION, the (album time stamp 1:21) solo is not to be taken lightly (also, soprano lead if we can), difficulty is quite high upon first look. Best thing to do is to master it at ½ time, and eventually bringing it up to speed. Ultimate goal is to not see the 16th notes, but understand the music just as double-time 8ths.

2. **First Love Song, Bob Brookmeyer (5:30)**

YouTube – Album, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eI8H-opk5ZI>

Album Recommendation – Mel Lewis, Live at The Village Vanguard

The album version here is the prime example of how to play what seems like a simple chart, but is *quite* difficult because of its simplicity. Blend, intonation, attacking and releasing together, and lastly following my dynamics (which can change each time we play). The only solo here is for the piano, which is written out. There are some specific things to play in the written solo, and then I'll leave it to the pianist to either improvise or play the written solo in the other parts. We'll go over how much (or little) we feel comfortable doing when we get together. Have no fear, it's the easiest part of the whole piece!

3. **Leilani's Mirror, Geoff Keezer (7:30)**

<https://www.ejazzlines.com/leilanis-mirror-arranged-by-geoff-keezer>

An original by the great pianist Geoff Keezer. From what I remember, this was written for Mulgrew Miller's daughter, Leilani, when she was a young child. Mulgrew was very special to so many of us, Keezer included. It's a very “Bob Brookmeyer” type piece with Keezer's spin on this, with flourishes of Mulgrew in there. Blend is a big key on this chart, as well as really nailing your section. I would say this is the most challenging chart in the mix, but it'll be a very special

one to play (especially since I'm gonna let Keezer know we're playing it!).

4. April In Paris, Vernon Duke arr. Bob Mintzer (6:00)

<https://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/media-player.jsp?&type=audio&productID=2472236>

Keeping with the lineage of Count Basie and Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, this chart is a great crossroads of vintage and modern. The song itself is best known in the Count Basie Orchestra, but Bob Mintzer is a veteran of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. Dynamics and vibe will be the "Basie" part of this for us, while the modern harmonic version will be the "Thad" part. We'll play the chart as written with the piano and tenor solos as is.

5. Amazing Grace, Traditional arr. Rich DeRosa (5:00-6:00)

<https://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/media-player.jsp?&type=audio&productID=10051437>

Very straight forward latin chart here. We'll open the solo section (time stamp 1:48 from link above). This is a solo section we can open to anyone, and we'll audition on site. It's good to have chart that sounds fantastic but comes together easy in the program, but also recognizable by the audience.

6. Coolness, Brian McCarthy (5:45)

An original chart of mine that started out as a simple homework assignment to write a song in the "Cool Jazz" style, that became a fairly involved big band chart. Melody and counter melody eventually merging into ensemble textures. You'll be paired with counterparts in the saxophone, trombone, or trumpet section, so keep your ears open for them when we get together. Solo section at "7" everyone has changes here. We can bring in as many soloists as seem correct in a variety of formats (trading, ½ choruses, etc.). We'll audition people on site for this. The last solo is in the lead trumpet part. If the lead player feels this is too much on the chops, we can swap the solo with another trumpet quite easily. And again, we can audition that as needed.

See you all in the Poconos!

-BMack (my friends call me that, which you are all now...)