

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

October 28, 2024, 7:30 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Jon De Lucia *Rediscovering the music of the Dave Brubeck Octet*

<i>Curtain Music</i>	Dave Brubeck
<i>Love Walked In</i>	George Gershwin, arr. Dave Van Kriedt
<i>Let's Fall in Love</i>	Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler, arr. Dave Van Kriedt
<i>Fugue On Bop Themes</i>	Dave Van Kriedt
<i>What is This Thing Called Love?</i>	Cole Porter, arr. Bill Smith
<i>September in the Rain</i>	Harry Warren, Arr. Dave Van Kriedt
<i>IPCA</i>	Bill Smith
<i>Prelude</i>	Dave Van Kriedt
<i>I Hear a Rhapsody</i>	George Fragos, Jack Baker, Dick Gasparre, Arr. by Dave Van Kriedt
<i>The Way You Look Tonight</i>	Jerome Kern, arr. Dave Brubeck
<i>Love Me or Leave Me</i>	Walter Donaldson and Gus Kahn, arr. by Dave Van Kriedt
<i>Curtain Music (Mambo Reprise)</i>	Dave Brubeck

The Dave Brubeck Octet Project

Brandon Lee - Trumpet
Jon De Lucia - Alto Saxophone
Scott Robinson - Tenor Saxophone
Becca Patterson - Trombone
Jay Rattman - Baritone Saxophone, Clarinet
Danny Fox - Piano
Daniel Duke - Bass
Keith Balla - Drums

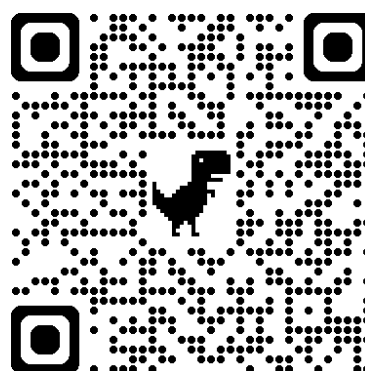
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

The Brubeck Octet Project is available on CD,
Vinyl and Digital at

More information can be found at



<http://jondelucia.bandcamp.com>



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This concert has been paid for in part by the Baisley P. Elebash Fund.

The Dave Brubeck Octet was a short lived collective ensemble that existed in San Francisco from 1946 to 1953. The group, formed at Mills College, performed regularly at venues like the Blackhawk, and included as its core members Paul Desmond, Dave Van Kriedt, Bill Smith, Jack Weeks, Dick Collins, Bob Collins, Cal Tjader, and Brubeck himself. The group's guiding light was French composer Darius Milhaud, who had been teaching at Mill's College since 1939. The working group was a place for the young composition students (Brubeck, Van Kriedt, Weeks, Smith, and Dick Collins) to workshop their ideas in the framework of a jazz band, something actively encouraged by Milhaud, who himself had shown great interest in incorporating jazz music into his work.

My own encounter with this music came from listening to the reissued CD version of the Dave Brubeck Octet, a compilation of all of the group's recorded output. As an alto saxophonist, I had always admired Paul Desmond's sound, and collected most of his recordings. In 2016 I discovered that within the Dave Van Kriedt papers, housed at the University of the Pacific, lay all, or almost all, of the handwritten parts for the original octet. I requested scans from the archive and began performing the music, with slightly different instrumentation, over the next few years. The parts were sloppy and hard to read, and I always wanted to find time to copy them into Sibelius to make performance more approachable.

Thanks to funding from the Elebash Fund and two PSC-CUNY Enhanced Grants, I was able to digitally engrave the octets into scores for the first time and record an album of this music. In the *New York Review of Books*, Philip Clark, Brubeck's biographer, called the project an "accomplished piece of musicological archaeology that brings lost pieces of jazz history back to life." In 2025, the Brubeck Octet Project will record more of the unrecorded material from the Octet book, and the preparation of these scores will serve as the primary material for my dissertation in Musicology at the Graduate Center. I hope you enjoy the music!

Notes on the Program

Curtain Music

“Curtain Music” is only 30 seconds long, and sounds stylistically much like Milhaud’s jazz-inspired “La Creation du Monde,” which Brubeck also apparently arranged for the Octet at one time. Released originally as “Closing Theme,” the opening of the piece is written in 4/4, but emphasizing a 6/4 phrase. The chords that Brubeck hits every 6 beats are polytonal, as Philip Clark describes, an A major chord in the right hand with a G major in the left, only resolving at the end on an “unambiguous chord of pure A major.” The music moves from 6/4 to 4/4 then back to 6 at the end, foreshadowing famous Brubeck compositions like “Three to Get Ready”, recorded 10 years later.

Love Walked In

The resident contrapuntalist of the group was Dave Van Kriedt, who arranged this Gershwin theme with canon at the fifth, along with suspensions in the solo backgrounds.

The trumpet send off towards the end quotes Bill Smith’s “IPCA,” which you’ll hear later in the set.

Let’s Fall In Love

For this arrangement, I wanted to capture a bit of the small group interplay I’ve experienced playing with Scott Robinson in the past. We open with an improvised duet, before heading into Van Kriedt’s arrangement.

I’ve added a rare thing for the Brubeck Octet: a bass solo. In fact, there are no bass solos in any of the arrangements, nor any for trombone, baritone saxophone or drums. The lack of bass and drum solos is standard to most of Brubeck’s music until 1957, when in-demand drummer Joe Morello told Brubeck that he’d have to be allowed to solo if he joined the Quartet. The trombone not only never solos, but also is left out of many sections of the arrangements. This is probably due to the fact that Jack Weeks doubled on bass and trombone in the group, often switching between the two. On the record however, Bob Collins, trumpeter Dick Collins’ brother, played trombone while Ron Crotty played bass. Still, the recorded arrangements lack a clear trombone voice. Bill Smith played the baritone saxophone, but it was a double for him as well. If he has any solos, they are on the clarinet, his primary instrument.

Canon is again employed here, as well as the more “modern” addition of the distinct turnaround employed at the ends of the A sections and accented with hits in the drums. This bIII⁺maj7 bVI⁺maj7 bII7 V7 progression reminds me of those used on Birth of the Cool, for example the parallel structures found in the turnarounds on “Move.”

Fugue On Bop Themes

Paul Desmond said that “Van Kriedt writes fugues like some people write post cards.” There are at least four fugues in the Brubeck Octet book, and Stravinsky allegedly used this piece in his class at UCLA in 1952 to show a perfect example of contrapuntal writing. I’ve added a freely improvised solo section to feature Robinson, making use of the very hip ostinato in the original arrangement.

What is This Thing Called Love?

This arrangement is by clarinetist Bill Smith, known in the classical world as William O. Smith, composer of many works for clarinet in the second half of the 20th Century. The mysterious intro references Milhaud *Creation du Monde* along with Duke Ellington's "Caravan." Here, there is a five-beat phrase happening against the 4/4 time. Later on, the piece moves into a waltz time against a 4/4 melody. Smith, in an interview with Doug Ramsey, said that "I was trying to broaden my horizons as a jazzman, use 7/4 time and an atonal style—in other words, no harmonic changes and sort of a semi 12-tone technique—and was heavily influenced by Stravinsky's 'Ebony Concerto' In New York, I had heard the Woody Herman band play the premiere...With the Octet, we determined that we could do anything we wanted. We had no idea of achieving fame or fortune."

September in the Rain

This contrafact obscures much of the original melody for "September in the Rain." In 1948 trumpeter Collins, bassist Weeks, and Van Kriedt would often play and hang out at Milhaud's apartment in Paris where famed bop drummer "Kenny Clarke and Milhaud got along swell. Milhaud loved his playing." Collins recorded a tune with the group called "Boppin' and Oilskin," another contrafact on "September in the Rain" which was certainly still ringing in their ears when they returned in '49. It is faster and more angular than Van Kriedt's later melody, and Collins sounds more mature on the Octet recording.

IPCA

When I emailed Bill Smith in 2018 about the title of this piece, his reply simply stated, "the record label came up with it." It was first released under the title, "Indiana," as it is a contrafact on "Back Home in Indiana." Smith recalls, "We'd play gigs in Chinese restaurants, but no one was interested in hiring a group called "the eight." we would show up one week as the Bill Smith Octet and get fired; we'd go back a while later as the David van Kriedt Octet and get fired again. eventually it became obvious that we needed to call ourselves the Dave Brubeck Octet if we were going to get any regular work."

Here we find polytonality, odd meters, use of melodic fourth structures and many of the musical devices found in the music of Lennie Tristano, George Russell, and the other modernist jazz composers of the late 1940s. Smith was, after all, the only member of the octet that had spent time in New York hearing bebop firsthand before the formation of the Octet in 1946.

Originally from the Pacific Northwest, in 1945 he attended Juilliard as a classical clarinetist, had a regular jazz gig on tenor saxophone at Jimmy Ryan's, and was exposed to the bebop sounds being developed on 52nd St. including those of Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday. In 1946, he heard that Darius Milhaud was teaching at Mills College, and inspired by Milhaud's recent composition, "The Household Muse," (1943) he returned to the West Coast to study with him around the same time that Brubeck was discharged from the army.

Prelude

The melodic and harmonic sophistication of this composition is unique in the 1940s, and rivals anything that Gil Evans had written to that point, maybe even approaching the depth of a Strayhorn or Ellington ballad. Sadly, there are no other compositions like it in the Octet book.

I Hear A Rhapsody

A feature for Scott Robinson, originally Van Kriedt, this hard swinging chart is from the Octet's earliest recording session in 1946. The modulation and shout chorus are the most unique features here.

The Way You Look Tonight

In the early 2000s, Brubeck revived the Octet with Bill Smith for a series of performances. However, they did not have the original parts now found in the Van Kriedt papers, and instead were working off of transcriptions. The only recorded Octet arrangement that I have been unable to find is this one. Probably the most difficult piece in the set, I had to transcribe it from the original recording. Brubeck describes "The last 8 bars of the piece, Bill will be playing the bridge while Lew (Soloff, trumpet) is playing the first theme, so you've got the two themes together. And when we were studying with Milhaud he'd say, 'try at the end to bring the music for the conclusion, bring in the different themes.' And I changed harmony on the second eight or the bridge on every beat. There's been some guys doing that lately, I wonder where they heard it. But that's what makes this tough to try and take off the record, it is really difficult. I'm sorry."

Apology accepted! A version of this arrangement lived on in the Brubeck Quartet.

Love Me or Leave Me

This arrangement, likely by Van Kriedt, had never been recorded. Like many of the unrecorded charts, it is just a melody, with no backgrounds or further arrangement. Some of these likely postdate the final Octet recording session in 1950, as the Octet played on until 1953. Eventually Brubeck's management insisted that he stick to the more lucrative and practical quartet format, and that was the end of the Octet. Here we will feature everyone in the band.