Close to the Music
25 Years of Magic Triangle Jazz Series
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Concept and Project Director: Priscilla Page
Founding Director of Magic Triangle: Glenn Siegel
Book and Cover Design: Rebecca Neimark, Twenty-Six Letters
Magic Triangle Posters: Ryan O’Donnell
Contributing Writers: John Bracey, Jason Robinson, Ed Hazell
Contributing Photographers: Jim Gipe, Ed Cohen, Maurice Robertson, Ben Barnhart, Parthasarathi Valluri, Frank Ward
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Glenn Siegel would like to thank: Dr. Fred Tillis, Director Emeritus of the UMass Fine Arts Center, who first put institutional resources behind our enthusiasm. Roberta Uno, founding Director of New WORLD Theater, for giving me entré to the world of presenting via the Bright Moments Festival and the Black Musicians Conference. Dr. Willie Hill and the entire FAC staff, for their unwavering support. The jazz djs of WMUA-91.1FM. The Pioneer Valley is blessed to have a college radio station so committed to real musical diversity. Bob Antil for nurturing the Series through its first decade. My beloved Priscilla Page, she hatched this book idea, and was its shepherd. Dave O’Connor and the staff at Hotel UMass, whose support and hospitality have gone a long way to putting musicians in a happy frame of mind. UMass Arts Council for their steadfast support. Dennis Steiner who formed the Archive Project to document these wonderful concerts. Ryan O’Donnell, whose design skills have made our posters pop for over a decade. Jason Robinson, Marty Ehrlich and Tom Giampietro, whose presence has enlivened the Valley jazz scene. Michael Ehlers, who remains a trusted collaborator. Chris Dixon, for his sound sound engineering. Jason, Ed Hazell and John Bracey for their thoughtful contributions to this publication. Photographers Frank Ward, Ben Barnhart, Jim Gipe, Ed Cohen, Maurice Robertson and Parthasarathi Valluri, whose commitment to craft benefits us all. Designer Rebecca Neimark who made this book come to life.
Just over 25 years ago, I took a proposal written by myself and four other WMUA-FM jazz djs (including Peter Sokolowski, Milan Levinson and Bill Rosenblatt), to Dr. Fred Tillis, then Director of the UMass Fine Arts Center, and Bob Antil, head of the Residential Arts Program. The proposal called for three concerts to be produced at Hampden Theater, a cool, black-box space in the Southwest Residential area of campus. With costs to be shared by the student and community radio station and the Fine Arts Center, our idea was to increase the type and amount of jazz activity at the University of Massachusetts,
Amherst, by presenting musicians in groups of three. Because both Fred and Bob were expansive in their thinking about the arts, the Magic Triangle Series launched on February 22, 1990 with a concert by Trio Unique: Steve Turre, Bob Stewart and Mulgrew Miller.

Our mission, then and now, has been “to provide the community with an intimate and unique performance experience at an accessible price, presenting artists whose critical reputation exceed their place in the public eye.”

What do I want to say about an endeavor that has given me unfettered access to the most illustrious, iconoclastic and creative musicians of our time? That it’s been a joy and privilege to bring these master musicians to Amherst each year to share their work with a couple hundred of my (old and new) friends.

As I look back over 25 years of programming, it is an impressive list, if I do say so myself. If you include our sister program, the Solos & Duos Series, it includes NEA Jazz Masters, such as Andrew Hill, Yusef Lateef and Randy Weston; Guggenheim Fellows like Bobby Previte, Rudresh Mahanthappa and Wadada Leo Smith; MacArthur Fellows, Cecil Taylor, Vijay Iyer and Anthony Braxton; Herb Alpert Award winners, James Carter, Nicole Mitchell and Steve Coleman, and Doris Duke Artist Award winners, William Parker, Miya Masaoka and Amir ElSaffar. But more than that, the list is full of serious artists on a mission: to convey, in their own voice, the full range of human emotions through sound. These artists have made Magic Triangle concerts, in William Parker’s words, “essentially a healing ceremony.” In as much as I have connected these musicians to appreciative audiences in Amherst, I am pleased.

One day early in my jazz listening experience, I heard Charles Mingus’ “Better Get Hit in Your Soul.” The energy, drive and sheer exuberance of that music triggered an epiphany: what ever else to the music, to serve the music the best way I could. That led me to radio and arts administration, two career paths I would have never considered, if not for the music.

Glenn Siegel has been producing concerts and radio in the Pioneer Valley since the late 1980s. He has produced more than 175 concerts, under the auspices of the Solos & Duos Series, A World of Piano Series, Pioneer Valley Jazz Shares and the Magic Triangle Series. His Friday morning jazz program, Jazz in Silhouette, airs on WMUA-91.1FM, where he serves as Administrative Advisor.
Music is a communicative art. The receptivity and enthusiasm of the audience is what allows the art to reach its highest potential. 25 years of magical concerts at Magic Triangle has built the kind of audience that enables musicians to surpass their limits: knowledgeable, ready for something new, and unafraid to show their appreciation.

Ray Anderson
FEBRUARY 14
Ricky Ford Quartet: George Cables, Reggie Workman, Pete ‘LaRocca’ Sims

MARCH 7
Renee Rosnes Quintet: Steve Wilson, Walt Weiskopf, James Genus, Tony Reedus

APRIL 18
Billy Bang Sextet: Ahmed Abdullah, Takeshi Yamaguchi, Thurman Barker, Juni Booth, Zen Matsuura
1992

**FEBRUARY 27**
**Ed Blackwell Trio:** Dewey Redman, Cameron Brown

**MARCH 26**
**David Murray Quartet:** John Hicks, Ray Drummond, Tani Tabbal

**APRIL 30**
**Brian Lynch Quintet:** Javon Jackson, David Hazeltine, Christian McBride, Tony Reedus
I recall being very excited for this concert. I had received a 5 Star review from Downbeat for Song for Septet released by New World Records. The Hampden Theatre was great; Glenn Siegel and staff were wonderful. An amazing added note—admission was $5 for students and $7 for general admission!

Mario Pavone

1993

**FEBRUARY 25**
Mario Pavone Septet: Thomas Chapin, Marty Ehrlich, Peter McEachern, Bill Ware, Peter Madsen, Steve Johns

**APRIL 1**
Sonny Fortune Quartet: Larry Willis, Santi DeBriano, Billy Hart

**APRIL 29**
Lester Bowie NY Organ Quintet: James Carter, Frank Lacy, Amina Claudine Myers, Don Moye
“
I am compelled to play, write and study music. I knew for sure at a young age that if I had any special insight or gift in life, it was music. It was clear what I was supposed to do. I was clear about that, if nothing else at times! Music has taken me almost everywhere I have been and has embedded me in a world of magic, mystery and profoundly interesting people. The collaborations are completely fulfilling, whether it is through inviting others to play my music, being invited to help interpret their music or through teaching.

Michele Rosewoman

1994

FEBRUARY 24
Hamiet Bluiett Quartet: Ted Dunbar, Clint Houston, Ben Riley

MARCH 31
Michele Rosewoman & Quintessence: Steve Wilson, Tim Warfield, Lonnie Plaxico, Gene Jackson, Eddie Bobé

APRIL 28
Ricky Ford: Hot Brass: Clifton Anderson, Greg Gisbart, Richie Vitale, Danilo Perez, Brian McCree, Alan Dawson
Separation by Oliver Lake, 2005

first the salad
then the meat
then the vegetables...
“WAIT”
bring all my food on the same plate!

Dixieland, Be-bop, Soul Rhythm & Blues, cool school,
Swing
Avant Garde, Free Jazz, Rock
WHAT KINDA MUSIC YOU PLAY?
“GOOD KIND”

Aretha Franklin & Sun Ra is the same folks
Coltrane, Dixie Humming Birds the same folks
Muddy Waters same, there is no...there is no...

LABELS DIVIDE! SEPARATE
THE ORAL AND THE LITERARY

One music different feelings & experiences
but SAME...
TOTAL sound—Mass Sound—hear all
the players as one

THE HISTORY OF AFRICA WAS
MEMORIZED, LIVED
EXPERIENCED,
NOW-ED!
WE DIDN’T READ IT,
WE DID IT!

ORAL—LITERARY:
ORAL
DO
EXPERIENCE
IMPROVISE
ADJUST
CREATE
LITERARY
catalog
label
divide
read
interpret
criticize

NO SEPARATION..
Yeah, don’t put me in no bag...I’m open, may do anything
“PUT ALL MY FOOD ON THE SAME PLATE!”

AFRICAN concept of color
If it has light it’s yellow
NO SUBTLETIES!

He must be colorblind
NO WAY! Right, Picasso?
Read the music, play the music, create
the music!
Is there a chance of you changing
this notation?

1995

FEBRUARY
Andrew Cyrille Quartet: Oliver Lake,
Adegoke Steve Colson, Fred Hopkins

MARCH 30
Rodney Kendrick Quartet: Justin
Robinson, Tarus Mateen, Taru Alexander

APRIL 27
Tom Varner Quintet: Ed Jackson, Rich
Rothenberg, Drew Gress, Bobby Previte
Thinking about the Magic Triangle series makes me smile. It makes me smile not only because it brings essential art to the Pioneer Valley, but also because it brings together a community of individuals who love the music. Each visit to the series has been special to me, and enhanced a particular aspect of the art that has helped me to grow as a musician. I love the area and Magic Triangle is a big part of that.

Dave Douglas

What was always “magic” for me was the symbiosis that happened between the performers and the audience. That is, I feel Magic Triangle has, over many years, cultivated and educated an audience in that region of the United States; their concerts are very well attended by an informed, interested, open hearted and listening audience. This inspires the performers, which in turn inspires the audience. Wonderful. Their model, if spread wider, could enrich the cultural and thus inner lives of so many.

Adam Rudolph

1996

FEBRUARY 27
John McLaughlin & Free Spirits: Joey DeFrancesco, Dennis Chambers (Bowker Auditorium)

MARCH 14
Dave Douglas Sextet: Chris Potter, Josh Roseman, Ethan Iverson, James Genus, Jeff Ballard

APRIL 25
Gary Bartz Quintet: Tom Williams, George Colligan, James King, Greg Bandy
1997

**FEBRUARY 27**
Alvin Batiste Quartet: Jim Pryor, Rufus Reid, Herman Jackson

**MARCH 27**
Mark Helias Quartet: Ellery Eskelin, Andy Laster, Tom Rainey

**APRIL 24**
Marty Ehrlich Quintet: Tony Malaby, Michael Cain, Michael Formanek, Bobby Previte

Alvin Batiste workshop, February 27, 1997, photo: Frank Ward
Blues People in The Valley
by John Bracey

In the Spring of 1972 when I accepted Michael Thelwell’s invitation to join him in the fledgling W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies I saw it as helping out a friend and comrade from the civil rights and Black Liberation Movements. I had had an interview a year earlier at Amherst College and thought that New England was much to staid and barren a place for one who had been raised in Washington, D.C. and had spent the 1960’s in Chicago. My initial thoughts were do I have enough money to load up lp’s on the various genres of Black music that were in the air in those cities. Thinking back on D.C.—no Abart’s Jazz Mecca, no Bohemian Cavarans, no Casbah—an Afro-Cuban club on U Street where I got to sit in and play on Wednesday nights when the house band was off. No Howard Theater, no lounge in the Dunbar Hotel, no Mr. Henry’s on Alabama Avenue where you could hear Roberta Flack for a $1.00 cover charge and one drink minimum.

Chicago offered a banquet of sounds from the sometimes kind of rough blues clubs on the Southside and Westside, to McKies Lounge on 63rd and Cottage Grove where I went to hear John Coltrane every night he was booked. On Sundays after church services you could go to DuSable High School auditorium to hear The Staple Singers, the Soul Stirrers, the Swan Silvertones, Albertine Walker and the Caravans featuring Shirley Caesar, and an array of the nation’s top Gospel artists. The Regal Theater had your r&b and doowop popular groups. Even Rochester, N.Y., where I taught for a year, was the home of Son House and a strong group of Blues players, and during that one year Miles Davis came through with his fusion group- a lot of amps, loud guitars, etc. that sent me home to put on “Sketches of Spain” just so I could remember why I liked Miles in the first place.

I arrived at New Africa House in the Fall, 1972, and when I asked who else was joining the department, Mike informed me that, at the initiative of Acklyn Lynch, the department had hired a group of artists that included Max Roach and Archie Shepp. My response was “bull —.” I was already here and had signed a contract, there was no need to make up stuff to make me feel good. Lugging boxes up four flights of stairs (we only got an elevator four years ago) and spreading my books and papers on desk and bookshelves I saw walking past my door: Max Roach. I had been listening to him and collecting his recordings since I was in high school, so I knew what he looked like. His office was in the corner of the third floor next to mine. I sat down, caught my breath, restored the necessary cool and casually looked in on him and introduced myself. I began to bring in one of his albums a day, saying that I ran across it unpacking and would he mind autographing it for me. After about a week, Max said “John bring in your damn albums so I can sign them all at once and get this over.” I was thinking that possibly I could survive in the Pioneer Valley after all.

I met Archie Shepp who knew friends of mind at the University of Buffalo and in left movements...
in Chicago. He was closer to my age, but since he had recorded with John Coltrane, he was in the upper echelons in my pantheon of artists and cultural innovators. I later met Reggie Workman who was living in a dorm on Orchard Hill, Marion Brown who was at Amherst College for a while, Roland Wiggins an accomplished artist and brilliant thinker who was trapped in a UMass School of Education which had no idea what he was talking about.

The New Africa House classrooms and hallways and Yvonne’s Place in the basement experienced a constant flow of musical giants who came up to play or to visit or to just hangout a while with their friends. An hour or so listening to Max Roach and Jo Jones talking about the politics of the music business was an eye-opener even for one as cynical as me. Replacements for Archie Shepp’s class when he went on tour included George Russell, who assured me with a straight face that he thought he could handle the history of Black music. And of course I met that great and gentle soul Yusef Lateef. I know few people who have made such a significant impact with no ‘noise’ or bombast. Every time we talked I walked away with a sense that I had just done something special. I know I bugged him about 1940’s bebop and John Coltrane too much, but he knew things that were not in the books.

During those early years the presence of African American music of all genres established a substantial foothold in the Valley. The student led Black Mass Communication Project gained substantial air time on WMUA. WFCR expanded their offerings with programs on Black classical music (Jazz) and the current forms of Black popular music. Prior to the arrival of Horace Boyer I hosted “Great Black Music: the Gospel Sound” on Sunday mornings on WFCR in an attempt to remedy the absence of a venue for one of my favorite forms. Again during the early 1970’s you had the “Bright Moments” concerts staged around the campus pond free and open to the public. That was too good to last and attendance fees were attached and the audience and vibe changed.

All of these wonderful events and the annual Black Musicians Conference, begun in 1971 with the years from 1989–1999 chronicled in Such Sweet Thunder: Views on African American Music by Mark Baszak and Edward Cohen, were part of the critical mass of African American musical expression that was continuing to grow.

All of this would have been fleeting without the institutional forms that allowed the music to persist after the inevitable decline of the initial burst

“I saw walking past my door: Max Roach. I had been listening to him and collecting his recordings since I was in high school, so I knew what he looked like. . . . I sat down, caught my breath, restored the necessary cool and casually looked in on him and introduced myself.”
of energy. A key element in that survival since 1990 has been the Magic Triangle Jazz Series and the Solos and Duos Series. The list of artists is a who’s who of Black Classical Musicians—young and old. I can’t say that I went to every concert or even most. But that was true when I lived in D.C. and Chicago.

What was important was that the music was there, part of the landscape, always available helping to shape the tone of life in the valley. I became comfortable here because the sounds that I was raised on and had become accustomed to were an integral part of this world. The Magic Triangle Series has become a staple, outlasting fads and negotiating successfully shifts in tastes. To be this good for this long is a major achievement.

John H. Bracey, Jr. has taught in the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst since 1972. His major interests are African American social history, radical ideologies and movements, and the history of African American Women; more recently his interests have focused on the interactions between Native Americans and African Americans and Afro-Latinos in the United States. He previously taught Afro-American history at Northern Illinois University and at the University of Rochester. During the 1960s, he was active in the Civil Rights, Black Liberation, and other radical Movements in Chicago. His publications include co-edited volumes, including Black Nationalism in America (1970), African-American Women and the Vote: 1837–1965 (1997), Strangers and Neighbors: Relations Between Blacks and Jews in the United States (1999), and African American Mosaic: A Documentary History from the Slave Trade to the Present (2004). Professor Bracey has co-edited (with the late August Meier and Elliott Rudwick) a number of other volumes on various aspects of African American experience.

There are damn few places anymore where audiences can hear world-class jazz and creative music. The Magic Triangle Series has brought it to Western Mass for 25 years, and against all recent trends is growing the scope and quantity of its programming. The first Magic Triangle concert I attended in 1995 (Andrew Cyrille Quartet) was a direct inspiration for my own grassroots concert series and for Eremite Records. History will remember Glenn & his triangle for providing a sustained engagement with creative music.

Michael Ehlers
Although Soul Note released a 1992 Magic Triangle concert featuring the Ed Blackwell Trio (Walls-Bridges), Michael Ehlers, former host of WMUA’s Transnational Jazz Conspiracy and head of Eremite Records, ramped up the concert releases by arranging these three recordings.

The Music emerges from the speakers like some sort of wonderful, piano-less version of Coltrane’s mid-60s band, taking the music everywhere that implies in terms of rhythm, scale, and power.

*Byron Coley,* Review of 2 *days in april,* published in *Jazziz.*
1998

FEBRUARY 26
Frank Lowe Quintet: Jack Walrath, Bertha Hope, Steve Neil, Ralph Peterson

MARCH 26
Gerry Hemingway Quartet: Ellery Eskelin, Herb Roberston, Michael Formanek

APRIL 30
FEBRUARY 5

APRIL 1
Edward ‘Kidd’ Jordan/Fred Anderson Quartet: Hamid Drake, William Parker

APRIL 29
Andrew Hill Sextet: Greg Osby, Greg Tardy, Ron Horton, Andy McKee, Billy Drummond

Since 1999 all concerts have been produced in Bezanson Recital Hall unless otherwise noted.
It was the premiere performance of the compositions I wrote for Marionettes On A High Wire, the CD I recorded five months later. I remember the warm greeting, the wonderment of first walking into the beautiful Bezanson Recital Hall, and hanging out on the UMass campus after the sound check. The band and I were excited with the anticipation of putting our previous rehearsing to the test. The first couple of minutes of the show were extremely anxious for me, which always happens when I’m presenting newly written compositions for the first time. The band immediately exploded into a creative expression that reaffirmed my entire reason for committing my life to this music. We simply had a ball. I didn’t want to stop. The standing ovation from the audience afterwards was extraordinary. 

Baikida Carroll

2000

FEBRUARY 24
Hasidic New Wave: Frank London, Greg Wall, Brad Shepik, Fima Ephron, Aaron Alexander

MARCH 30
Jemeel Moondoc & the Jus Grew Orchestra: Zane Massey, Michael Marcus, Roy Campbell, Lewis Barnes, Steve Swell, Tyrone Hill, Bern Nix, John Voight, Cody Moffett.

APRIL 27
Baikida Carroll Quintet: Erica Lindsay, Adegoke Steve Colson, Michael Formanek, Pheeroan akLaff
2001

**FEBRUARY 22**
William Parker and the Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra: Rob Brown, Ori Kaplan Charles Waters, Darryl Foster, Dave Sewelson, Alex Lodico, Masahiko Kono, Steve Swell, Roy Campbell Jr.,

**MARCH 27**
Sam Rivers

**APRIL 12**
Yusef Lateef/Von Freeman Quintet: Alex Marcelo, Kamal Sabir, Tim Dahl (Bowker Auditorium)
2002

FEBRUARY 17
Uri Caine Ensemble, performing Bach’s “Goldberg Variations”: Ralph Alessi, Joyce Hamman, Dave Binney, DJ Olive, Barbara Walker, Cornell Rochester, Drew Gress. (Buckley Recital Hall, Amherst College)

MARCH 7
Brew: Miya Masaoka, Reggie Workman, Gerry Hemmingway. (Buckley Recital Hall, Amherst College)

APRIL 3
FEBRUARY 27

MARCH 27
Charles Tolliver and Music, Inc.: Stanley Cowell, Cecil McBee, Billy Drummond. (Northampton Center for the Arts)

APRIL 11
David Murray and the Gwo-Ka Masters: Herve Samb, Klok Klaave, Philippe Makala, Hugh Ragin, Jaribu Shahid and Hamid Drake
From the Source is a very different ensemble. It consists of three musicians, a tap dancer and a healer who speaks in tongues. We were honored to be invited and given the artistic freedom to present our program to the audience. For the first time, we chose to do an actual healing in the middle of the performance. We segued from a musical piece that featured our tap dancer, into the healing, and then segued back into another musical composition. It flowed like water. It was amazing. The freedom of the series allowed us to do this. It is through artistic freedom that new ideas flourish and come to fruition.

Joe Fonda
2005

**FEBRUARY 24**
Graham Haynes’ Electric Church: DJ Hardedge (Velibor Pedevski), James Hurt, Nicole Jaquis

**MARCH 24**
Vijay Iyer/Mike Ladd *In What Language*: Ambrose Akinmusire, Stephan Crump, Latasha N. Nevada Diggs, Allison Easter, Liberty Ellman, Trevor Shaun Holder, Okkyung Lee, Rudresh Mahanthappa, Rizwan Mirza *(co-produced with New WORLD Theater at the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall)*

**APRIL 28**
Susie Ibarra’s Electric Kulintang: Roberto Juan Rodriguez
“... jazz (and African American music more broadly) ... [is] an instructive model of artistic and cultural experimentation, [whose lessons include] a discontent with categories and the boundaries they enforce, with the impediment to social and aesthetic mobility such enforcement effects.”
—Nathaniel Mackey

On several occasions I've had the opportunity to ask Glenn Siegel why he does what he does, why he tirelessly brings world-class musicians to our community here in the “happy valley.” You should ask him this, too. Those of us who are musicians or educators or event producers readily recognize the tremendous fundraising, logistical and publicity work that it takes to produce the concerts that occur each season as the Magic Triangle (and the related Solos & Duos) concert series. Each time I've asked Glenn why he continues to do this work, he pauses, seems to go inward, seems to reflect on numerous concerts that he has produced in the last twenty-five years at the University of Massachusetts and elsewhere in the Valley. Unerringly, a smile spreads from the corners of his mouth and he shakes his head in a knowing, ebullient nod. “I love it,” he replies.

I recall hearing about Magic Triangle around 1998, eight years after its inaugural 1990 season. I was in San Diego, California, some three thousand miles away, quite literally at the other corner of the country. I remember hearing about two aspects of the western Massachusetts jazz scene of that time: the fabled Magic Triangle concert series and the Fire in the Valley Festival (a now-defunct annual festival produced by Michael Ehlers of Eremite Records). Born and raised in California—I’m from the Sacramento area, went to college in the San Francisco Bay Area, and then attended graduate school in San Diego, all the while developing a performance career—I was inspired by stories I had heard from my good friend and musical collaborator Michael Dessen, who had studied with the late Dr. Yusef Lateef at UMass Amherst in the early 1990s.

In the summer of 2008, shortly after I joined the faculty at Amherst College, I contacted Glenn with high hopes. I felt that the wonderful musicians he brings to Magic Triangle would be a rich resource for students at the college. This has indeed since then, we’ve coordinated numerous workshops, lectures, and class visits. The presence of a vibrant, genre-bending concert series within the Five College community provides remarkable pedagogical opportunities, perhaps most importantly allowing students to encounter music that stretches their imaginations and expands their prior experiences with the broad musical tradition called jazz. It’s not surprising that Magic Triangle would emerge out of this Five College community—forward thinking musicians have long been a part of our educational and music scenes. Max

Roach, Archie Shepp, Marion Brown, Billy Taylor, Makanda Ken McIntyre, and, of course Dr. Lateef, all taught in the Five Colleges at one time or another, among many others. And it should also be noted that key UMass educators and administrators lent their generous guidance and support in the early years of the series, including Fred Tillis (who was director of the Fine Arts Center when Magic Triangle launched) and Roberta Uno (then director of the New WORLD Theater and producer of the Bright Moments Festival and the Black Musicians Conference.)

One thing’s for sure—taken as a whole, the music presented at Magic Triangle extends beyond the categories and boundaries that usually comprise the study of jazz in colleges and universities. Listeners might encounter legendary pianist Randy Weston in one concert, acclaimed for his mastery of bebop and innovation of post bop jazz styles, for example, while the very next concert might feature German free jazz saxophone pioneer Peter Brötzmann. This kind of aesthetic range is rarely found in any one collegiate jazz studies program. Very few exceptions notwithstanding, the vast majority of such programs (in the United States and abroad) reflect only certain aspects of the musical styles that have emerged under the facile name of “jazz” since its inception in New Orleans around the beginning of the 20th century. Indeed, it may be helpful to unpack the slipperiness of “jazz,” because although we use it as a pragmatic shorthand for sound and tradition, we may nevertheless each possess slightly different meanings of the word. Put another way, English percussionist Eddie Prévost reminds us that “one musician’s dissonance is another’s jazz.”²

One might reflect on the fact, for instance, that Magic Triangle’s name was partially inspired by pianist Don Pullen’s 1979 record The Magic Triangle (on the Black Saint label), a trio recording with reedist Joseph Jarman and percussionist Don Moye (the other inspiration for the series’ name came from the fact that the first season featured trios, a kind of “magic triangle”; strict adherence to the trio format was dropped after the first season). Both Jarman and Moye were early members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, an organization founded in Chicago in the late 1960s with the express purpose of creating new opportunities for musicians that transcended narrowly defined ideas about jazz (hence the use of “creative” rather than “jazz” in the organization’s name). After all, there’s a long history of musicians who have pushed against various stylistic, economic, social, cultural and political limitations that accompany preconceived notions of what jazz should or shouldn’t be, even including the name itself. For example, it’s widely known that Duke Ellington preferred “American music” over “jazz,” Max Roach famously called jazz a “four letter word,” and our own Dr. Lateef adopted the term “autophysiopsychic music” to describe his music. Why, one might ask, would

such influential musicians so closely associated with the historical development of jazz take issue with its name? As cultural historian Robin D.G. Kelley suggests, it helps to view these musicians “as intellectuals in the world [and] not as mere vessels of timeless cultural transmission.” For some, “jazz” may be prescriptive (normative) rather than descriptive (positivistic). One might also argue that jazz education is inexorably connected to debates that have accompanied various historical moments in the development of jazz. “Hot” versus “sweet” jazz of the 1920s; these older styles versus the new big band instrumentation and the so-called “swing” style of the 1930s and 1940s; the so-called “moldy figs” (adherents to older styles of the music) versus the “moderns” (beboppers) of the 1940s and 1950s; and traditionalists versus the avant-garde and fusion pioneers of the late 1950s and 1960s—all of these historical moments produced debates within jazz that theorized tradition within the context of new performance practices, social and political imperatives, and aesthetic trajectories. Since the 1980s, these tensions between tradition and expansion have played out most publicly in debates surrounding Jazz at Lincoln Center, its artistic director Wynton Marsalis, the notion of jazz as “America’s classical music,” and the rather awkward question of whether or not jazz is “alive” or “dead.” What, you might ask, does all of this have to do with education?

These recurring debates position jazz education—institutional or independent—in a complicated relationship to the dialectic of tradition and expansion. The content of jazz education is often presented as a stable set of artistic practices, whether it be the chord-scale improvisational theory that emerged in bebop and post bop styles or the big band arranging styles of the 1940s. Yet even a cursory understanding of jazz history shows that generational shifts give rise to new, ever expanding aesthetic approaches. Because of this, I often find myself telling students that jazz is a “tradition based on innovation,” my way of trying to capture the dialectic of tradition and expansion at the core of this wonderful music. Indeed, I believe that it’s a fundamental obligation for jazz educators to develop a responsible pedagogy that takes into account the panoramic diversity of styles and constantly evolving aesthetics that embody the jazz tradition. After all, who knows when the next Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Mary Lou Williams, Duke Ellington, or Ornette Coleman might be students in our classes, or even how such innovators would appear to us in the 21st century.

I’ve relied on Magic Triangle to help students understand the breadth and expansiveness—the social and aesthetic mobility, in the words of poet and author Nathaniel Mackey—of this music. Jazz is far from “dead.” As Randy Weston’s biographer Willard Jenkins recently commented, grassroots concert producers like Glenn build “significant niches in the cultural life of their communities; there is much to be learned from these folks, lessons that might lead to similar new or renewed life for jazz in your own community.” That Glenn’s tireless work enriches our community is obvious, but there’s a more subtle underlying pragmatism to his approach. “I went back and forth for a couple of years with Michael Ehlers,” Glenn told me in a recent interview. “He was itching to get me to bring Cecil [Taylor] and he finally said, ‘Glenn, if you don’t do it, who will?’ And so I had to answer ‘nobody.’ We figured out a way to do it.”

A saxophonist, composer, and scholar, Jason Robinson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Music at Amherst College (with affiliations in Black Studies and Film & Media Studies). His teaching and research focuses on jazz, improvised music, African diasporic music, and interactive music technologies. He has performed throughout Europe, North America, and South America and appears on more than fifty recordings, including fourteen under his own name or in collaborative groups.
FEBRUARY 23
James ‘Blood’ Ulmer Odyssey Band:
Charles Burnham, Warren Benbow

MARCH 30
ICP Orchestra: Misha Mengleberg,
Han Bennick, Ab Baars, Michael Moore,
Tobias Delius, Thomas Heberer, Wolter
Wierbos, Mary Oliver, Tristan Honsinger,
Ernst Glerum

APRIL 27
Ernest Dawkins New Horizons
Ensemble: Steve Berry, Maurice Brown,
Isaiah Spencer, Darius Savage
“Music has always been and continues to be the breath of life, a primary communicator of the human spirit and human condition, the voice of past, present, and future, and a force of social expression with the power to transform minds and souls. Music makes me want to get up in the morning, makes me want to kiss my sleeping baby, and makes me a better person. Furthermore, collaboration within this art form can transcend boundaries of race, gender, age, and culture in ways that bear no comparison.

I performed with my ensemble Kinsmen in 2007 in a collaboration with the Carnatic living legend saxophonist Kadri Gopalnath. This was the last show of a 12-day tour that included the recording our wildly successful (unexpectedly so) album of the same name. The group knew that it was our last concert both of the tour and for the foreseeable future. Each band member rose to new and unparalleled heights that took my breath away. The spirit of cross-cultural and inter-generational sharing forged into a remarkable single expression. To this day, I site this concert as one of my best and most memorable ever. The stars aligned that afternoon in Amherst and I can’t imagine a setting more fitting than Magic Triangle.

Rudresh Mahanthappa”
2008

**NOVEMBER 18**
The Dakshina Ensemble featuring Kadri Gopalnath and Rudresh Mahanthappa, A. Kanyakumari, Rez Abbasi, Carlo de Rosa, Poovalur Srinivasan, royal hartigan (co-produced with the Asian Arts and Culture program at Bowker Auditorium)

**FEBRUARY 28**
Adam Rudolph’s Moving Pictures:
Graham Haynes, Steve Gorn, Ned Rothenberg, Brahim Fribgane, Kenny Wessel, Shanir Blumenkrantz, Hamid Drake (co-produced with the FAC Center Series at Bowker Auditorium)

**APRIL 1**
Omar Sosa Afreecanos Quartet: Mola Sylla, Childo Tomas, Marque Gilmore

**APRIL 17**
Frank London & Hazonos: Anthony Coleman, David Chevan, Gerald Cleaver, Jacob Mendelson
Omar Sosa Afreecanos Quartet

Tuesday April 1st
8:00 pm Bezanson Recital Hall

$12 General
$7 Students

Available at Fine Arts Center
Box Office or 1-800-999-UMAS
The last time I heard Billy Bang, I could see him over my left shoulder, sawing away, with his usual gritty persistence. A year earlier, when Glenn Siegel invited me to perform in his Magic Triangle Series I knew immediately what I wanted to do. It was a fresh idea: *Three Things To Say*, a violin trio featuring Billy Bang, Charles Burnham, and me. The title, a twist on one of Rumi’s poems, announced our tribute to the late, great Leroy Jenkins. The jangly, adventurous evening I planned was boosted and blasted forward by a longstanding friendship with both players and our many years standing on Jenkins’ ample musical shoulders.

My concert with Billy Bang and Charles Burnham was a triangle of violins that was more than magical. It was mystical. Hoping for an adventurous evening of relatively unstructured improvisations, I loosely sketched a few ideas that would guide us. We moved from abstracted sonic references to visualizations of arctic ice patterns. We confidently laid our quirky, home-made harmonies over a traditional spiritual. We were playful with each other. We each entered trance states unaccompanied by the others. We made room for moments of insights and madness. Most important, something unspoken announced that we were indeed related and were happy about that. The powerful recording I commissioned and photographs taken by my husband Michael O’Bannon attest to that joy. Billy died of cancer a few months later.

Terry Jenoure

Charles Burnham, Terry Jenoure, Billy Bang, March 26, 2009, photo: Maurice Robertson

2009

**FEBRUARY 26**
Edward ‘Kidd’ Jordan Trio: William Parker, Hamid Drake

**MARCH 26**
3 Things to Say: Terry Jenoure, Billy Bang & Charles Burnham Pay Tribute to Leroy Jenkins

**APRIL 28**
(Cancelled by US Government)
Ganelin Trio Priority: Vyacheslav Ganelin, Petras Vysniauskas, Klaus Kugel
A Panel Discussion Celebrating the Music of Violinist Leroy Jenkins

Panel Members:
Terry Jenoure
Billy Bang
Charles Burnham

Moderated by:
Jason Robinson

Wednesday, March 25, 2009 | 6:00 pm
Arms Music Center Room 7
Free and Open to the Public

413.542.2195 | www.amherst.edu/faultlines | concerts@amherst.edu
I was asked to do a series of performances with William Parker where we played in several situations with various musicians. To be able to bring creative expression to a university campus where so many different age groups could be exposed to something outside of their normal radar is a tremendous artistic and educational endeavor. With art we continue the process of trying to find some balance in the world and our day-to-day lives.  

*Hamid Drake*

The Magic Triangle series has been just that, a magical gathering of creative musicians coming from all over the world to share their music on a high level. Bringing together those with big ears and spirits, both listeners and musicians participate in what is essentially a healing ceremony. Come to the magic triangle series and have your life changed.

There was no greater joy for me than to get in the car and drive up to the University of Massachusetts where I knew I would be treated like a king and the music would be presented in a musician-friendly atmosphere.  

*William Parker*
2011

**FEBRUARY 24**

**Celestial Septet:** Rova Sax Quartet (Larry Ochs, Jon Raskin, Steve Adams, Bruce Ackley) + Nels Cline Singers (Nels Cline, Trevor Dunn, Scott Amendola) *(Bowker Auditorium)*

**MARCH 29**

**Amir ElSaffar’s Two Rivers Ensemble:** Ole Mathisen, Carlo DeRosa, Tyshawn Sorey, Tareq Abboushi, Zaafer Tawil

**APRIL 20**

**Mostly Other People Do the Killing:** Peter Evans, Jon Iragabon, Kevin Shea, Moppa Elliot
Few things in life endure without growing stale or lapsing into irrelevancy. UMass Amherst’s Magic Triangle Series has managed to avoid doing both. For a quarter century, under the curatorial hand of Glenn Siegel, Magic Triangle has remained a fresh and vital concert series, engaged with the best jazz and improvised music of its day. Improvisers from across the United States and from Europe have performed here, cementing its position as an important center for a global community of improvisers working on the cutting edge of the music. Perhaps most remarkably of all, in 25 years it has never once, not ever, compromised its artistic vision.

Magic Triangle launched in 1990, three years after Wynton Marsalis co-founded a jazz program at Lincoln Center, capping a conservative counter-revolution in jazz that has dominated the mass media and popular imagination since the 1990s. It would be wrong to say that Magic Triangle was a direct rejoinder or reaction to Lincoln Center, but the historical co-incidence is significant, since Magic Triangle espouses a markedly different point of view on the jazz tradition. Lincoln Center’s narrower construction of jazz has much to recommend it, but it deliberately, and sometimes distainfully, excluded avant-garde jazz since the 1960s, music which Magic Triangle embraces. For decades, the series has served as a kind of loyal opposition, making the case for a broader definition of what constitutes jazz.

Magic Triangle values the same virtues of instrumental virtuosity, rhythmic swing, and melody ballyhooed by the conservatives, but also realizes that those virtues didn’t atrophy and die at the hands of the avant-garde, but were transformed and grew. It’s important to note that Magic Triangle defines the state of the art not by excluding artists, but by including as wide a range as possible and seeking to understand what role they might play in the ongoing drama of the music. The tidy Lincoln Center version of jazz may be more convenient for marketers, primary school music educators, and some listeners, but Magic Triangle gets far closer to the vast, lively, messy, fractious, and beautiful truth of one of America’s great contributions to the arts.

The range of performers in the Magic Triangle’s 25 seasons gives a clear indication of the wide-awake and generous ears that guide the series. As a jazz writer for nearly 30 years, I can safely say that every important development in jazz over the past 60 or so years has been represented in the series. Elders and youngsters in the hard bop to post bop continuum such as Randy Weston, Clifford Jordan, Andrew Hill, Von Freeman, Alvin Batiste, Charles Tolliver, Renee Rosnes and Ricky Ford, have all graced UMass concert halls. Early figures in the New York avant-garde, including Andrew Cyrille, Frank Lowe, and Cecil Taylor, have appeared as well.

The series has done an especially thorough job exploring the contributions of Chicago’s Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), whose members are collectively responsible for some of the most significant
developments in post-Coltrane creative music. Every generation of the organization has been represented in the series, from founders such as Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, and Lester Bowie, to current leaders such as Kahil el Zabar, Nicole Mitchell, and Ernest Dawkins.

The big band, an iconic jazz ensemble if there ever was one, has also made an appearance on the Magic Triangle roster. The swing-era big bands of the 1930s, of course, were the greatest contribution of jazz to American popular music. None of the big bands that appeared as part of Magic Triangle would fill a floor with jitterbuggers, but they did all provide different takes on large-scale jazz composition and improvisation. From the conducted improvisations of Alan Silva’s Celestial Communications Orchestra to the varied compositional strategies of William Parker’s Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra to the powerful blend of jazz, blues, and gospel of Reggie Workman’s African American Legacy Project, the series showcased the expanding musical vocabularies and multiplicity of approaches to the improvising large ensemble.

Ever since Jelly Roll Morton infused the Spanish tinge of Cuban rhythms into jazz, the music has continued to renew itself with elements imported from other cultures. It’s a tradition that reached a peak of sophistication and diversity in the past two decades, and Magic Triangle kept its finger on this global pulse with artists such as Amir ElSaffar, who draws on Iraqi music; Miya Masaoka a koto player who improvises to Thelonious Monk tunes; Michelle Rosewoman and New Yoruba, with their own updated Latin jazz; and Hasidic New Wave, which expands upon the klezmer tradition.

Magic Triangle has not just legitimized the avant-garde’s place in an African American musical tradition, it has also recognized it as the seed from which a global phenomenon grew. Around the world, there is now improvised music that is quite distinct from American jazz, but which could never have existed without its example and inspiration. Magic Triangle presented some of the most provocative of these musicians over the years, including the Dutch Instant Composer’s Pool Orchestra, German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, and British saxophonist Evan Parker.

There were other performers, of course—many of them didn’t fit into any neat category but made personal and original music. There were also one-off super groups, post-modernists, hip-hop fusionists, and many more. All delighted the senses and provided ample food for thought. Each band held an important place in the work-in-progress known as jazz.

The Magic Triangle is unique among jazz and improvised music series in U.S. higher education.
A brief (and admittedly non-scientific) survey of college and university concert series, from Ivy League schools to other public institutions of higher education (and excluding music conservatories with jazz programs), did not turn up any other remotely comparable, sustained effort to stay abreast of the music in this way. It seems only right that UMass Amherst, which can list innovative artists such as the late Yusef Lateef, the late Max Roach, and Archie Shepp among its faculty, should continue to lend its institutional authority to legitimizing this great art form.

Certainly the musicians themselves understand its value, and not just as a welcoming home for their music. They also understand its practical value to a music that is culturally and economically marginalized, treated with indifference by mass media, and at the mercy of short-lived clubs, lofts, and concert series. The stability and consistency offered by Magic Triangle counts for a lot under these circumstances.

I know from first-hand experience just how critical a role Magic Triangle plays. For 10 years (It’s hard to live up to the 25 year example of the inexhaustible Glenn Siegel), I presented jazz and improvised music concerts in Boston under the auspices of the Boston Creative Music Alliance. Time and again, I saw that the Magic Triangle “anchor gig” at UMass meant the difference between a group being able to play in Boston or not, between a band being able to travel from Chicago or New Orleans or London or Amsterdam, or not.

Sometimes it only takes one person to make it possible for the music to happen. Glenn has played that role in New England for a long, long time. UMass Amherst should be proud of the Magic Triangle, cherish it, and never take its importance to the global improvised music community for granted.

Ed Hazell is a jazz journalist and record producer, who took a detour into concert promotion for a decade. Over the past 30 years, his writing has appeared in Point of Departure, Jazziz, Signal to Noise, Coda, Boston Phoenix, and many other publications. He is co-author of Jazz: From Its Origin to the Present, and a contributor to the New Grove Dictionary of Jazz and Steve Lacy: Conversations. He wishes he could make the trip from Boston to Amherst more often for Magic Triangle concerts.
John Bracey and the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies co-sponsored this event to coincide with Magic Triangle’s presentation of Craig Harris’ Souls Within The Veil, produced in February, 2013.

from left: Dean Johnson, Frank Lacy, Ray Anderson, Eric McPherson, February 23, 2012, photo: Maurice Robertson

2012

**FEBRUARY 23**  
Two Trombone Trios: Frank ‘Ku-umba’ Lacy, Kevin Ray, Andrew Drury/Ray Anderson, Dean Johnson, Eric McPherson

**MARCH 29**  
Shakers ‘n Bakers: Jeff Lederer, Mary LaRose, Miles Griffith, Jamie Saft, Chris Lightcap, Allison Miller (Unitarian Society of Northampton/Florence)

**APRIL 26**  
Steve Coleman and Five Elements: Jonathan Finlayson, Miles Okazaki, Damion Reid
The unique nature of “Shakers n’ Bakers” brought the group to many interesting performance venues over the years, ranging from grungy rock clubs in Brooklyn to many of the Sacred Historical sites of the Shakers themselves. Because the usual concert space at UMass was not available, Glenn moved our show to the Unitarian Society in Northampton, a change that I now regard as pure providence. This historic space carries its own deep history of connection to progressive and Utopian Christian thinking of the 19th century.

As I entered my personal realm of ecstatic saxophone squealing upon the gentle featherbed of Saft’s harpsichord, I couldn’t help but feel a special thrill knowing that I was doing so on the same pulpit that the great Sojourner Truth once preached from. Later in the performance, we invited some of the creative spirits of the greater Northampton community to join us on stage in very spontaneous readings of Shaker poetry that were filled with zeal, vim and vigor! A special night indeed.

Jeff Lederer

Allison Miller, March 29, 2012, photo: Maurice Robertson
2014

**FEBRUARY 20**
Jason Robinson’s Janus Ensemble:
Oscar Noreiga, Marty Ehrlich, Bill Lowe, Michael Dessen, Liberty Ellman, Devin Hoff, George Schuller, Ches Smith

**MARCH 13**
Joe Lovano, Mark Helias, Tom Giampietro: A Tribute to Ed Blackwell
(*Bowker Auditorium*)

**APRIL 17**
Marty Ehrlich Large Ensemble:

Hamid Drake, April 15, 2010,
photo: Parthasarathi Valluri