



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**Valley Jazz Network and UMass Fine Arts Center present  
"An Informance" with Jazz Legend EMERY SMITH  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2013 at 7 pm,  
Northampton Community Music School, 139 South Street, Northampton, MA**

Emery Austin Smith (piano) has been a fixture of the jazz scene in New England for many years. He had the great fortune of getting to know, play with and learn from many of the giants of the music from his formative years in New York -- Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Tadd Dameron, Thelonius Monk, Barry Harris, Max Roach -- the list goes on and on! Emery's memory for detail is legendary -- he can tell us about each time he played over his long career, who the band members were, where they lived and who their family members were, who they learned from and taught -- he is a vast repository of musical, personal, and cultural information that anyone who loves this music will relish. He is a renowned educator, and has a lot to say about the way the music is learned and transmitted.

On December 2, at 7:30 at the Northampton Community Music School, Mr. Smith will share his memories and some musical examples from his years coming up in Harlem, where, as he says, "it all happened". He will be interviewed live by Paul Combs, the author of a recent book on the important composer and performing artist and band leader Tadd Dameron. Emery and Paul (a musician himself) met recently at Alina's restaurant in Hadley (where Emery has played for over 20 years), and they instantly hit it off, sharing stories and memories. So much so that Paul said that he "wished he had interviewed Emery before completing his book." He has said that Emery could have added so much, not only about Dameron, but about the entire music scene in the 40's and 50's. Perhaps Paul will do an addendum or a new edition someday. But you won't have to wait for it -- don't miss what promises to be a most stimulating, far reaching conversation, and an altogether enchanting evening!

This concert is presented by the Valley Jazz Network as part of its mission of outreach, education, and audience development for jazz.

### **ABOUT EMERY SMITH**

Pianist Emery Austin Smith is well known in the local jazz community. He has been performing at Carmelina's (now Alina's) in Hadley, MA for over 20 years. Smith got an early start in jazz as a teenager, working the jazz clubs of Hartford, CT during the 1940s. With the emergence of new clubs along Albany Avenue (now Route 44) Smith was playing music constantly. During these early, impressionable years, Smith gained invaluable knowledge of music theory and harmony, and had the opportunity to play with a wide range of great musicians.

After relocating to New York in the late 1940s, Smith headed to Harlem to play in the countless jazz clubs there. Over the next several years, Smith worked the keys behind a host of jazz and R&B movers. Sessionman Joe Knight took Smith under his wing and began booking the young pianist for a string of jazz and R&B recording dates. When the jazz, R&B, and Rock 'n' Roll worlds collided in the 1950s, Harlem's famed Apollo Theater hired Smith as house pianist. At the Apollo, Smith played for the likes of Shirley Devine, Thelma Carpenter, Savannah Churchill, and Carmen McRae. He also performed alongside jazz titans Coleman Hawkins, Archie Shepp, and Charles Greenlee. Smith has also played at legendary venues such Birdland and the Metropole.

A valuable educator, Smith has taught courses on improvisation, arranging, and jazz history at workshops throughout the Hartford region. He also found time to record his own compositions for a series of independent releases which he regularly sells during his many gigs across the Northeast.

#### **ABOUT VALLEY JAZZ NETWORK (VJN)**

The VJN is a community outreach arm of the Fine Arts Center, focused on preserving the legacy of jazz. The VJN achieves this through its online presence (the VJN Facebook page is a virtual listing of jazz events throughout the Pioneer Valley), performances and educational programs, like listening parties and "informance" events in various venues in Amherst, Greenfield, and soon Holyoke and Springfield.

Last spring VJN hosted an "informance", Gary Smulyan and Friends, where the famed saxophonist performed and fielded questions from the audience about jazz music. VJN's listening party with vocalist Jane Monheit last December was a hit. The young performer talked about her music and attendees were able to listen to recordings of those musicians who influenced her the most.

Jazz lovers can "like" the Valley Jazz Network Facebook page where they will find all sorts of jazz-related events, workshops, lectures, etc. Membership in the Valley Jazz Network is free. For information contact Yvonne Mendez at 413-545-4161 or email her at [yvonne@admin.umass.edu](mailto:yvonne@admin.umass.edu).

**TICKETS:** There is a suggested donation of \$15 at the door. Proceeds will go to the Northampton Community Music School Scholarship Fund and to support future Valley Jazz Network programming.

#### **PHOTOS**

Hi-res photos available for download: <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/PressRoom>

#### **ABOUT THE FAC**

The Fine Arts Center, located on the UMass Amherst campus, is a presenter of music, dance, theater and the visual arts, bringing hundreds of outstanding and provocative artists to the Pioneer Valley for over 35 years.

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