

MONDAY, JULY 29, 7:30 p.m.

Campbell Recital Hall



Dann Zinn, saxophone

Taylor Eigsti, piano

John Shifflett, bass

Alan Hall, drums

## Dann Zinn 4

Though Dann Zinn has never been on the Stanford Jazz Workshop faculty or even performed at the festival before, the tenor saxophonist is one of the organization's secret weapons. A powerful improviser who has honed a lyrically charged group concept, Zinn is also a pervasively influential educator. Over the years he's played an essential role in the development of some of the region's most celebrated young musicians, including Dayna Stephens, Hitomi Oba, Pat Carroll, Remy Le Boeuf, and Jesse Scheinin. It's a safe bet that any given Workshop session includes several of his students (to say nothing of long-time faculty members like Stephens).

For his Festival debut, Zinn is celebrating the release of his album *Grace's Song*, a stellar quartet project focusing on his soaring compositions (an extended interpretation of Sting's "King of Pain" and a ravishing version of Hoagy Carmichael's timeless standard "Stardust" are the CD's only two ringers). He's joined tonight by the same prodigious cast that's featured on the album, with bassist

John Shifflett, drummer Alan Hall, and pianist Taylor Eigsti, who Zinn met when they were both on faculty at the Brubeck Institute.

"We've been strongly connected over the years through Dayna Stephens," Zinn notes. "We're different generations but musically it doesn't matter. Taylor's all over the world these days and he wasn't able to make earlier album release concerts, so I'm very excited we're working together again. He has his own way of doing things. Stylistically my music touches on all kinds of influences, and in the studio his playing was just clean and clear and effortless. It just comes pouring out of him, pure music with no stylistic agenda."

On and off the bandstand, Zinn offers his students a powerful example as an artist who has pursued a highly personal approach shaped by his synthesis of seemingly polar influences. For many years he tried to model his sound on Norwegian tenor saxophonist Jan Garbarek, who plays unadorned, folk-like themes with cool, blue-flame intensity. Best known for

his popular work on ECM, Garbarek recorded albums such as *Belonging* and *My Song* as part of pianist Keith Jarrett's great 1970s European quartet.

Zinn spent many years honing an approach combining Garbarek's crystalline sound with a handful of East Bay grease, a la Tower of Power's former tenor saxophonist Lenny Pickett. He's still adept at writing lustrous melodic lines, but *Grace's Song* takes his music in a more straight ahead direction, albeit with numerous surprising twists along the way.

In many ways Zinn's search for information as a young musician shaped not just his wide-ranging sound but also his pedagogic sensibility. He took saxophone lessons as a teenager, but Zinn did some of his most intensive studying in the audience at the North Beach club Keystone Korner in the 1970s, soaking up sets by tenor sax titan Dexter Gordon, trumpeter Woody Shaw, and altoist Phil Woods.

"That's how you learn," Zinn says. "Later on I took a few lessons with most of the great players in the

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Recording, videography, and photography is prohibited.



area: Joe Henderson, Mel Martin, Larry Schneider. It was cool, but in many cases they weren't teachers. I remember asking Schneider, how do you do this? 'I don't know.' Well, how do you do this? 'I don't know.' Really, you can't tell me?"

The Hayward native makes a point of not pushing any particular style on his students. Instead, he coaches them on musical fundamentals while trying to instill a love of practicing. He didn't aspire to a career as an educator, but Zinn has found working with young musicians almost as gratifying as pursuing his own music.


"I never wanted to be a teacher," Zinn says. "And then of course you need money, and then it snowballed. I started getting really good students and they started sending more really good students and now I couldn't

imagine not teaching. They're great people and great musicians, and they're so young and not boxed into things. It's much more rewarding than I could have ever imagined."

While he's on faculty at Cal State East Bay, U.C. Berkeley, and the Jazzschool, Zinn works most of his magic one on one at his home studio. Many of his students are talented musicians who are destined to make a living in another field, but he specializes in helping highly gifted high schoolers reach their potential, which often means scoring a full scholarship to a top institution like Boston's Berklee College of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, or the University of Southern California.

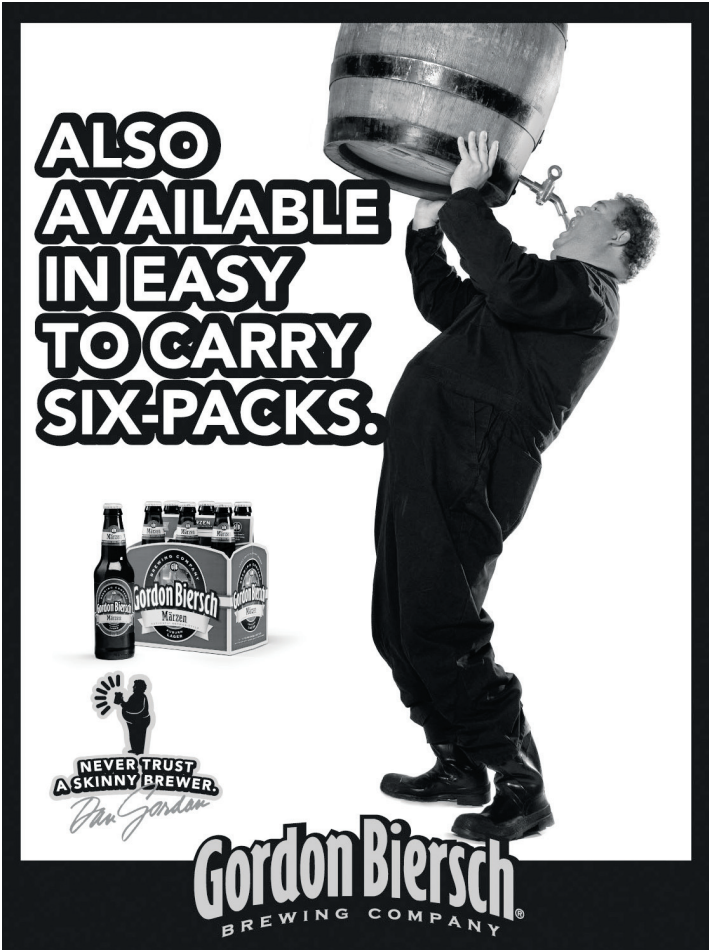
Santa Cruz-raised tenor saxophonist Jesse Scheinin, a Workshop alumnus, attended Berklee on a full scholarship

and is honing a highly personal sound he describes as "Sigur Ros meets Wayne Shorter." Scheinin heard about Zinn from another brilliant Santa Cruz saxophonist, former Workshop faculty member Remy Le Boeuf, whose full scholarship to the Manhattan School of Music paved the way for his emergence as an important new voice on the New York scene.

"I had heard about Dann from all of my friends in the SFJAZZ High School All-Star Band who told me I absolutely had to study with him," Le Boeuf wrote in an e-mail. "I remember after our first lesson he gave me hours of things to practice. Dann was always very Zen in our lessons; he only said what was necessary and most of his comments were made as questions that I had to answer for myself." 

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