

# Jazz Legacies

Venerable music still kicking

**A** relic of another time with little relevance to today. Museum music. Niche market. Laments about jazz today sound similar to the wailing over classical music's future. It's true that America's greatest contribution to music no longer occupies the popular mainstream as it did before the rise of rock. But like any durable art — or life — form, jazz continues to evolve, despite the recent (and not necessarily misguided) attempts to institutionalize it in temples such as Lincoln Center and schools, which have produced frozen-in-amber ossification in some quarters but also preserved and strengthened a crucial national musical foundation. Several upcoming shows provide a snapshot of the state of a venerable art finding its balance between institutionalization and continued innovation. On Feb. 6, one of the finest purveyors of mainstream jazz's enduring legacy, **Kenny Barron**, comes to the Shedd for a solo concert. After paying his dues in the bands of legends Dizzy Gillespie and Stan Getz, the lyrical pianist-composer founded Sphere, an all-star group that transcended its origins as a Thelonious Monk tribute band. He went on to a solid solo career in the 1980s and '90s, finding a productive balance between Monk and that other giant of postbop jazz piano, Bill Evans. Among straight-ahead jazz pianists, Barron ranks near the top of that generation's, between the living grandmasters (Hank Jones, Tommy Flanagan) and today's younger neo-traditionalists (Fred Hersch, Brad Mehldau), and no fan of mainstream jazz should miss this concert.



**Kenny Barron**

Of all the tributaries flowing from that stream, probably the most popular — much as it pains me to admit it — is so-called “smooth jazz.” Often decried as the Muzak of the jazz world, it attracts plenty of casual fans of easy listening instrumental music. But as with any such superficial pigeonhole, even smooth jazz has some solid musicians who transcend the category, and a couple of them come to the Shedd Feb. 9. Pianist **Dan Siegel** and guitarist **Richard Smith** both went to South Eugene High, and Siegel also attended the UO music school. They'll be accompanied by former Crusaders and Air Supply bassist **Larry Antonino**.

Another jazz stream merges with funk and rock influences, and that's where you'll find **Mike Dillon's Go-Go Jungle**. The Houston-born vibes man has played with everyone from Ani DiFranco to Sex Mob to Critters Buggin. His solo debut has enough freakouts to attract any Zappa fan but plenty of soul jazz mixed in. The band plays the WOW Hall Feb. 6. Brooklyn's **Zs** (sax, drums, guitar, keys) take improvisational music even farther out, and they're probably better categorized as experimental rock, with pronounced stop-start Zappa/John Zorn influences. They're at DIVA Feb. 7. Any genre that can hold musicians as disparate as these still has plenty of life left in it.

A downtown benefit show at the Fenario

Gallery Feb. 3 supports the Dharmalaya Center with music of **Brian Cutean**, **Guerilla Tribal with DJ Layla**, **Lady Ra**, New York's **Dr. Israel** and San Francisco's **DJ Amar** as well as dance performances by **Tribalation!**, **Amy Peccia**, **Sabine** and Sacramento's **Unmata**. Another important community institution, the Kutsinhira Center, is sponsoring a CD release party for their dazzling marimba band **Hokoyo**, with proceeds from CD sales benefiting its Zimbabwean Community Development project, which supports orphaned girls in Zimbabwe. This world music and dance party for a good cause happens at Cozmic Pizza on Feb. 2. And on Feb. 7, Cozmic brings Portland cellist **Adam Hurst** for a solo show featuring his haunting, dream-like compositions. Hurst's mesmerizing, Middle Eastern and Indian influenced music is so atmospheric it's no wonder it's found its way onto film soundtracks.

When one of today's leading composers, John Harbison, wanted to write a piano trio that evoked the romantic tradition of Schubert's E flat piano trio without duplicating its sonorities, he chose the **Amelia Trio**, a group of young players who named their group after one of their members' guinea pig, which was in turned named for the famed femme flying pioneer. The group plays that piece, “Short Stories,” at the UO's Beall Hall on Feb. 11, along with Rachmaninoff's second trio and one of Debussy's early triumphs, the piano trio in G that he wrote at age 18 and that already shows signs of his revolutionary break from Romantic tradition. Also at the UO, faculty harpist **Laura Zaerr** joins the **University Symphony** on Feb. 4 for Germaine Tailleferre's Concertino for Harp and Orchestra and Mozart's ever-dramatic penultimate symphony. And on Feb. 13, the **UO Chamber Choir** and **Schubert Chamber Orchestra** play a splendid program of music by Stravinsky, Debussy and contemporary composers Stephen Paulus and Veljo Tormis. Finally, on Feb. 11 at Portland's Reed College, the most important chamber ensemble in the world, the **Kronos Quartet**, plays delicious music of two of the leading composers of our time, Osvaldo Golijov and John Adams, along with new works based on Inuit, Indian and Iraqi music. Like jazz, the classical tradition still has room for innovation if the musicians and audiences are open minded enough. **ew**

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