

Saturday, November 21, 2009, 8pm  
Wheeler Auditorium

## Taylor Eigsti, *piano* Julian Lage, *guitar*



*Mr. Eigsti and Mr. Lage's program will be announced from the stage.*

*Cal Performances' 2009–2010 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

Since taking up the piano at age four, **Taylor Eigsti** has been in the spotlight, attracting attention not only because of his unusually young age but also through the maturity he has displayed through his playing. Although the label “child prodigy” has been inescapable throughout his career, critics have been quick to concede that Mr. Eigsti’s musical stylings transcend his years. He began his stage career at age eight opening for his friend and piano mentor, David Benoit, and at age 12, Mr. Eigsti shared the stage with Diane Schuur and also opened for Diana Krall and Al Jarreau. At age 13, Mr. Eigsti sat in with legendary jazz pianist Dave Brubeck, who proclaimed, “Taylor is the most amazing talent I’ve come across. Remember him.” The Menlo Park native spent much of his adolescence juggling school and working with scores of renowned jazz and classical artists, including Bobby Hutcherson, Red Holloway, Kevin Mahogany, Frederica von Stade and Sylvia McNair. At age 15, while still in high school, Mr. Eigsti joined the teaching staff at the renowned Stanford Jazz Workshop. At around that time, he recorded his first album, *Tay’s Groove*, featuring Bay Area bassist Seward McCain and drummer Dan Brubeck.

Mr. Eigsti’s virtuosic interpretation of jazz and his integration of contemporary elements of funk, hip-hop and swing into his playing and compositions have garnered critical acclaim. Following his debut and three subsequent releases, Mr. Eigsti’s 2003 Bop City Records album *Resonance* received rave reviews with band members John Shifflett on bass and Jason Lewis on drums. Mr. Eigsti won still more exposure and esteem with his 2006 debut on Concord Records, *Lucky to Be Me*. The album, which features Julian Lage as a guest performer, incorporates the progressive jazz sounds of the 21st century with roots of traditional jazz. Featuring such top-tiered support players as Christian McBride, Lewis Nash, James Genus and Billy Kilson, *Lucky to Be Me* earned two Grammy Award nominations, one for Best Instrumental Jazz Solo and another for Best Instrumental Composition, and solidified Mr. Eigsti’s standing in the music world. The CD spent 23 weeks on the National Jazz Radio Airplay charts, peaking at No. 7. It ended the year in the top 15 most-played jazz albums on radio.

With his new CD, *Let It Come to You*, the 23-year-old pianist, composer and bandleader has taken another step forward as a significant new voice in the jazz world. Mr. Eigsti calls *Let It Come to You* “the record that I’ve always wanted to make,” and it reveals him as an adventurous artist who, while steeped in jazz tradition, is also committed to advancing it. As he writes in the CD’s liner notes, his compositions “provide a glimpse of the new type of music that I am currently gravitating toward and convey the emotional concepts behind their inspiration.” The CD features the pianist’s working band—Mr. Lage on guitar, Reuben Rogers on bass and Eric Harland on drums—with special guests Joshua Redman on tenor saxophone and Edmar Castaneda on Colombian harp.

On *Let It Come to You*, Mr. Eigsti experiments with different instrumentations (including flute and saxophones) as well as recording multiple layers of his piano playing. “I always liked the concept of a rock band where there was a rhythm and a lead guitarist,” he says. “That’s what I set out to do with the piano, especially on ‘Let It Come to You,’ to create overdubbed background textures. I call it rhythm piano, with feel, funk, rock, R&B and classical elements in the mix.”

Several of the tunes are studio first takes: Mr. Eigsti puts a new Afro-Cuban spin on Juan Tizol and Duke Ellington’s “Caravan,” with Mr. Lage performing a prelude on guitar with a whammy pedal and Mr. Eigsti playing a cadenza. Mr. Eigsti and Mr. Lage share a duet on Antonio Carlos Jobim’s “Portrait in Black and White,” which the pianist says was approached “with an air of mystery in mind.” Another first take is Pat Metheny’s “Timeline,” dedicated to the late Michael Brecker. Joshua Redman guests, taking two solos and trading at the end with Mr. Eigsti.

The pianist has been featured on the covers of both *Jazziz* and *Keyboard* magazines, in addition to being recognized in the *Down Beat* Critics’ Poll for two years running. Mr. Eigsti has also been featured on Marian McPartland’s NPR *Piano Jazz* series twice, once in the studio and again at the 2005 Tanglewood Jazz Festival.

This is Mr. Eigsti’s second concert at Wheeler Auditorium; he made his Cal Performances debut

here in October 2007. In addition, he participated in the Cal Performances-sponsored San Francisco Fashion Week events in August 2007, appearing as model and musician. Mr. Eigsti recently relocated to New York.

Santa Rosa native **Julian Lage** began playing guitar at age five and soon discovered jazz. Three years later, he was the subject of the Academy Award-nominated documentary, *Jules at Eight*. By age 11, he was playing with sufficient skill to be chosen to perform on the nationally televised Grammy Awards telecast, where he was spotted by vibraphone great Gary Burton. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Burton asked Mr. Lage to join him in performances, and a collaboration developed. In 2003, he performed on Mr. Burton's *Generations* CD; they recorded another CD in 2005 entitled *Next Generation*. Mr. Lage has performed many times at the San Francisco, Monterey and Newport jazz festivals, and he currently tours with his own group. In 2005, he and Taylor Eigsti toured Brazil and appeared at the Ouro Preto Festival.

At age 21, the Boston-based Mr. Lage has released his debut album, *Sounding Point*, on EmArcy Records. The music ranges from through-composed works and improvisations in duo and trio settings to solo excursions and a finale capped by a masterful rendering of Miles Davis's "All Blues." The CD has received universally enthusiastic reviews.

"I've been in a position where I could have recorded an album when I was younger, but was never in a rush because I wanted to allow these compositions to grow and evolve in their own time," says Mr. Lage. "And within the past four years, I have felt the music really take shape in the way I

had always imagined. I feel grateful that there were no pressures on me to make a record until I felt it was time."

*Sounding Point* finds Mr. Lage leading his working band—comprising guitar, saxophone, cello, bass, drums—and joined by special guests Mr. Eigsti, Béla Fleck and mandolinist Chris Thile of Nickel Creek and Punch Brothers fame.

"The point of this record was to express the underlying movement within the music," says Mr. Lage, who, though he may be a virtuoso, never resorts to flashy technique on his acoustic and electric guitars. "I have an affinity for the guitar, and I've committed myself to being a student of the instrument. I have always been drawn to a technique that allows the music to take on a visual shape as well as a wide emotional spectrum."

Three songs feature Mr. Lage in a trio setting with Mr. Fleck and Mr. Thile. Mr. Lage met the banjoist through mandolin maestro David Grisman, with whom he played when he was 10 years old. "Béla is one of those lifelong musical practitioners and has an incredible musical mind," says Mr. Lage, who used to play backstage with Mr. Fleck for hours on end whenever the banjoist came to San Francisco. "And Chris is so great. I wanted the three of us to play together so we could find our collective musical voice and come up with an acoustic music sound that elaborated upon our improvisations."

Mr. Eigsti joins Mr. Lage on the playful "Tour One," a collaborative composition from their repertoire. *Sounding Point* closes with "All Blues," a duet with Mr. Eigsti, which is often the duo's "encore" piece: "Taylor and I both grew up playing the blues, and this song represents a side of our musical background that is very close to our hearts."