

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS



Christian McBride Band

Friday, March 25, 2005, 8 pm
Zellerbach Hall

Christian McBride Band

Geoffrey Keezer, *keyboards*
Ron Blake, *saxophone and flute*
Terreon Gully, *drums*
Christian McBride, *bass*

The concert will be determined as the musicians play, and will last approximately two hours, with a 20-minute intermission.

This performance has been made possible in part by the Friends of Cal Performances.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Christian McBride (*bass*) has become arguably the most acclaimed acoustic and electric bassist to emerge from jazz in the 1990s. While jazz lies at the root of his accomplishments, it is his passion for music in a broad sense that has made him an esteemed bassist, composer, arranger, educator and bandleader. His passion for diversity has led him to work with everyone from Chick Corea to Pat Metheny, from Kathleen Battle to D'Angelo, from Diana Krall to Bruce Hornsby, and from Quincy Jones to Sting.

McBride was born May 31, 1972 in Philadelphia. Having two working bassists in the family proved to be a major influence on him. His father, Lee Smith, played bass for local Philly Soul superstars like the Delfonics and Billy Paul, as well as Cuban conguero, Mongo Santamaria. His great uncle, Howard Cooper, played bass with members of the jazz avant-garde, including Sun Ra and Khan Jamal. Electric bass was McBride's first instrument, which he began playing at age 9. Two years later he took on the acoustic bass.

While studying classical music, his interest and love for jazz also took flight. At 13 he began causing a buzz around the local Philly jazz scene, sitting in with as many musicians as possible. At 14 he met Wynton Marsalis, who became his mentor. Upon graduating from Philadelphia's High School for the Creative and Performing Arts in 1989, he was awarded a partial scholarship to The Juilliard School. That summer, before moving to New York, McBride got his first taste of the touring life going to Europe with the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra, and also touring the US with the '80s fusion group Free Flight. McBride was already so in-demand that he never had a chance to settle into his Juilliard studies. Very quickly he joined Bobby Watson's band, Horizon. He also started working around New York at clubs such as Bradley's and the Village Gate with artists such as John Hicks, Kenny Barron, and Gary Bartz. After one year at Juilliard, McBride made a decision to leave school and tour with trumpeter Roy Hargrove's first band, electing "experience with as many musicians as possible" as the best teacher. In August 1990 he joined legendary trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's band. When Hubbard's band was on hiatus, McBride also worked in one of the hottest bands of the early '90s, The Benny Green Trio.

McBride was named *Rolling Stone's* Hot Jazz Artist of 1992. The next year he became a member of guitarist Pat Metheny's Special Quartet, which

included Billy Higgins and the then-up-and-coming Joshua Redman. While recording and touring with Redman the following year, McBride signed with Verve Records, recording his first CD as a leader, *Gettin' To It*—one of the biggest selling jazz records of 1995.

McBride also received a commission from Jazz at Lincoln Center to compose *Bluesin' In Alphabet City*, performed by Wynton Marsalis with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. He then toured and recorded in an all-star band with pianist Chick Corea. In turn, Corea was a special guest on McBride's 1996 sophomore CD, *Number Two Express*.

McBride's third Verve CD, *A Family Affair* (1998), reflected his rediscovery of music from his childhood. Produced by keyboardist and jazz-funk fusion pioneer George Duke, the album found him recording brilliant jazz arrangements of soul classics. The CD also showcased McBride's first attempts as a lyricist on two songs. Later in 1998, the Portland (Maine) Arts Society and the National Endowment for the Arts commissioned McBride to write *The Movement, Revisited*, his dramatic portrait of the civil rights struggle of the 1960s for quartet and 30-piece gospel choir.

In 2000 McBride released his fourth and one of his most successful CDs. *SCI-FI* was produced by McBride and was in many ways a perfect blending of the diverse ideas hinted at in his two previous CDs.

In 2001, McBride took on two projects that brought him even greater popularity. *The Philadelphia Experiment* was an instant success with the college "jam band" crowd. Later that year, Sting invited McBride to join his new band.

In addition to his musical achievements, McBride has participated in former President Clinton's town hall meeting on "Racism in the Performing Arts." McBride was also part of Stanford University's panel on "Black Performing Arts in Mainstream America."

For McBride, jazz education has always been a prime concern. He conducts workshops and clinics at universities all over the country, and in 2000 was named artistic director of the Jazz Aspen Snowmass Summer Program. In 2001 he was named artistic director of the University of Richmond's summer jazz program as well as of the Dave Brubeck Institute at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Ron Blake (*saxophone and flute*) has been an integral part of the New York jazz scene for the past ten years. Since his first solo release in 2000, he has worked on several recordings as leader and co-leader, including his Hammond B-3 session *Lest We Forget*, featuring Joey DeFrancesco and Greg Hutchinson, produced by Christian McBride.

A member of the Christian McBride Band since 2000, Blake also joined Yerba Buena, which IBE voted Best New Alternative Latin Band in 2002. In addition to performances and workshops worldwide, Blake also joined the Jazz Studies faculty at Michigan State University's School of Music in 2001.

Born in the Virgin Islands, Blake began his musical life as a guitarist at the age of 8. Two years later, after listening to his father's jazz recordings, he began playing alto saxophone. Throughout high school in the Virgin Islands and at Interlochen Arts Academy, and during his studies at Northwestern University, Blake studied primarily classical saxophone. He received the Presidential Award for outstanding artistic and academic achievement in his senior year at Northwestern. As a member of the Evanston Saxophone Quartet (baritone sax), under the direction of James Bishop, he won first place at the Coleman Chamber Music Competition. Blake's dreams of a life in jazz began to take shape in the summer of 1987 when he was at home teaching in summer music programs. At the 1st VI Jazz Festival he met and performed with Dizzy Gillespie, Bobby Hutcherson, Gary Bartz and Jimmy Hamilton.

Upon graduating from Northwestern in 1986, Blake began playing around Chicago with such artists as Von Freeman, Wilbur Campbell and Willie Pickens. During that period he worked in the Chicago Jazz Orchestra, performing with such artists as Nancy Wilson, Louis Bellson and Clark Terry. In the fall of 1990 Blake relocated to Tampa, Florida, after being appointed assistant professor of jazz studies at the University of South Florida. He made subsequent trips to New York City, sitting in with the Branford Marsalis trio at the Village Vanguard, as well as Mulgrew Miller and Kenny Kirkland's bands. Moving to New York in 1992, Blake joined the Roy Hargrove Quintet. He also worked with the Art Farmer Quintet, Roy Haynes Group, and briefly with the World Saxophone Quartet (soprano sax). He has performed at most major jazz festivals worldwide. Blake has made more than forty recordings, including records

with jazz masters such as Art Farmer and Benny Golson. In 1998 he released his Caribbean Jazz project, *21st Century*, alongside drummer and fellow Virgin Islander Dion Parson on their own label, Tahmun Records. In 2000 Tahmun released *Up Front & Personal* with the tenor saxophonist on his debut release as a leader.

Geoffrey Keezer (*keyboards*) was born November 20, 1970 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where both his parents taught music. He began studying piano at age 3. After attending the Berklee College of Music in Boston for one year, Keezer moved to New York City in 1989 to join Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Since then he has worked with virtually all the living legends of jazz, including three years on the road as pianist with the Ray Brown Trio. Keezer has appeared on numerous recordings as a sideman and has released eight albums as a leader. The latest is an innovative solo piano CD entitled *Zero One* (Dreyfus/GMN). In 1998 *Turn Up the Quiet* (Sony) featured Grammy-nominated vocalist Diana Krall along with Joshua Redman and Christian McBride. Keezer performed Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in 1992 with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, conducted by John Mauceri. He has also collaborated closely with Barbara Hendricks, a classical artist who devotes time to jazz, on tours in Japan and Europe. He currently records and performs as a member of the Christian McBride Band. His composing commissions include *Palm Reader* for the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, Concerto for Orchestra and Piano, *listen look* for the Saint Joseph Ballet, and *Variables*, a set of variations for piano and string quartet written for the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego.

Terreon Gully (*drums*) is a native of East St. Louis, Illinois, and began his musical career performing drumset at an early age in church. Gully joined the Lincoln Senior High School Jazz Ensemble under the leadership of Director Ron Carter. He next attended the University of Houston where Marvin Sparks, Director of Percussion Studies, was his mentor. In 1996 Gully graduated with a BA in music performance. Presently based in New York City, Gully performs in a variety of musical settings with jazz legends and the hottest hip-hop icons. He has performed, toured and recorded with artists such as Christian McBride, Abbey Lincoln, Diane Reeves, Marc Cary, Jackie Terrason, Stephon Harris, and many others.