

Cal Performances Presents

Wednesday, March 28, 2007, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Pat Metheny & Brad Mehldau with Larry Grenadier & Jeff Ballard



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About the Artists

Pat Metheny (*guitar*) was born in Kansas City on August 12, 1954, into a musical family. Starting on trumpet at the age of 8, Metheny switched to guitar at age 12. By age 15, he was working regularly with the best jazz musicians in Kansas City, receiving valuable on-the-bandstand experience at an unusually young age. Metheny first burst onto the international jazz scene in 1974. Over the course of his three-year stint with vibraphone great Gary Burton, the young Missouri native already displayed his soon-to-become trademarked playing style, which blended the loose and flexible articulation characteristic of horn players with an advanced rhythmic and harmonic sensibility—a way of playing and improvising that was modern in conception but grounded deeply in the jazz tradition of melody, swing and the blues. With the release of his first album, *Bright Size Life* (1975), he reinvented the traditional “jazz guitar” sound for a new generation of players. Throughout his career, Pat Metheny has continued to redefine the genre by utilizing new technology and constantly working to evolve the improvisational and sonic potential of his instrument.

Metheny’s versatility is almost nearly without peer on any instrument. Over the years, he has performed with artists as diverse as Steve Reich, Ornette Coleman, Herbie Hancock, Jim Hall, Milton Nascimento and David Bowie. He has been part of a writing team with keyboardist Lyle Mays for more than 20 years—an association that has been compared to the Lennon & McCartney and Ellington & Strayhorn partnerships by critics and listeners alike. Metheny’s body of work includes compositions for solo guitar, small ensembles, electric and acoustic instruments, large orchestras and ballet pieces, with settings ranging from modern jazz to rock to classical.

As well as being an accomplished musician, Metheny has also participated in the academic arena as a music educator. At 18, he was the youngest teacher ever at the University of Miami. At 19, he became the youngest teacher ever at the Berklee College of Music, where he

also received an honorary doctorate more than 20 years later (1996). He has also taught music workshops all over the world, from the Dutch Royal Conservatory to the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz to clinics in Asia and South America. He has also been a true musical pioneer in the realm of electronic music, and was one of the very first jazz musicians to treat the synthesizer as a serious musical instrument. Years before the invention of MIDI technology, Metheny was using the Synclavier as a composing tool. He also been instrumental in the development of several new kinds of guitars, such as the soprano acoustic guitar, the 42-string Pikasso guitar, the Ibanez PM-100 jazz guitar and a variety of other custom instruments.

It is one thing to attain popularity as a musician, but it is another to receive the kind of acclaim Metheny has garnered from critics and his peers. Over the years, Metheny has won countless polls as “Best Jazz Guitarist” and awards, including three gold records for *(Still Life) Talking*, *Letter from Home* and *Secret Story*. He has also won 14 Grammy Awards spread out over a variety of different categories, including Best Rock Instrumental, Best Contemporary Jazz Recording, Best Jazz Instrumental Solo and Best Instrumental Composition. The Pat Metheny Group won an unprecedented seven consecutive Grammys for seven consecutive albums. Metheny has spent most of his life on tour, averaging between 120 and 240 shows a year since 1974. At the time of this writing, he continues to be one of the brightest stars of the jazz community, dedicating time to both his own projects and those of emerging artists and established veterans alike, helping them to reach their audience as well as realizing their own artistic visions.

Brad Mehldau (*piano*), born August 23, 1970, has recorded and performed extensively since the early 1990s. He has worked primarily with the same trio since 1995, featuring bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy. Between 1996 and 2000, they released an impressive se-

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ries of five records on the Warner Brothers label, entitled *The Art of the Trio*, and in 2004 released the album *Anything Goes*. In 2005, drummer Jeff Ballard joined Mehldau's trio. During the Warner Brothers period, Mehldau also released a solo piano recording entitled *Elegiac Cycle*, and a record entitled *Places* that included both solo piano and trio compositions. The latter two recordings might be called "concept" albums. They are made up exclusively of original material and have central themes that hover over the compositions. Outside of the piano solo or trio format, Mehldau collaborated with the innovative film composer, musician and producer Jon Brion on *Largo* (released in 2002), classical soprano Renée Fleming (originally commissioned by Carnegie Hall to compose and perform songs for voice and piano) on *Love Sublime* (Nonesuch, 2006) and, most recently, with jazz guitarist Pat Metheny (2006) on the acclaimed *Metheny Mehldau* (Nonesuch, 2006).

His first record for Nonesuch, *Brad Mehldau Live in Tokyo*, was released in September 2004. The label released its first album from the Brad Mehldau Trio (the first with Jeff Ballard on drums)—*Day Is Done*—in September 2005.

Mehldau is first and foremost an improviser, and he greatly cherishes the surprise and wonder that can occur from a spontaneous, directly expressed musical idea. But he also has a deep fascination for the formal architecture of music that informs everything he plays. In his most inspired playing, the actual structure of his musical thought serves as an expressive device. As he plays, he listens to how ideas unwind and the order in which they reveal themselves. Each tune has a strongly felt narrative arc, whether it expresses itself in a beginning and an end, or as something left intentionally open-ended. The two sides of Mehldau's personality—the improviser and the formalist—play off of each other, and the effect is often something like controlled chaos.

Mehldau has performed around the world at a steady pace since the mid-1990s, with his trio and as a solo pianist. His performances convey a

wide range of expression, and he favors juxtaposing extremes. Often, the intellectual rigor and density of information in the abstraction of one tune is followed by a stripped-down, emotional directness in the next. Over the years, he has attracted a sizeable following, which has grown to expect a singular, intense experience in his performances.

In addition to his trio and solo projects, Mehldau has worked with a number of great jazz musicians, including a rewarding gig with saxophonist Joshua Redman's band; recordings and concerts with Charlie Haden and Lee Konitz; and recording as a sideman with the likes of Wayne Shorter, John Scofield and Charles Lloyd. For more than a decade, he has collaborated with several musicians whom he respects greatly, including guitarists Peter Bernstein and Kurt Rosenwinkel and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner. Mehldau also has played on a number of recordings outside of the jazz idiom, including Willie Nelson's *Teatro* and singer-songwriter Joe Henry's *Scar*. His music has appeared in several movies, including Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* and Wim Wender's *Million Dollar Hotel*. He also composed an original soundtrack for the French film, *Ma femme est une actrice*.

In March 2007, Mehldau will debut the piano concerto, *The Brady Bunch Variations for Piano and Orchestra*, at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris with Orchestre National d'Île-de-France.

Larry Grenadier (*bass*) was born in 1966 in San Francisco, California, and began playing bass when he was 11. As a teenager in the Bay Area, Larry played with Joe Henderson, Stan Getz and Bobby Hutcherson, among many others. He graduated from Stanford University in 1989 with a BA in English literature. After relocating to Boston in 1990, he toured the United States and Europe as a member of Gary Burton's band. He moved to New York the following year, and has since performed with Betty Carter, Joshua Redman, Danilo Perez, David Sanchez, Tom Harrell, Joe Henderson, John Scofield, Pat Metheny, Paul Motian, Charles Lloyd and Brad

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Mehldau, as well as recorded dozens of records. Larry is also a member of the collective trio, Fly, along with Jeff Ballard and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner. The group's first recording for Savoy was released in January 2004.

Jeff Ballard (*drums*) was born on September 17, 1963, in Southern California, grew up in Santa Cruz, and began playing drums at age 14. He toured with Ray Charles from 1988 until 1990, when he settled in New York. Since then, Ballard has performed and/or recorded with Lou Donaldson, Chick Corea, Buddy Montgomery, Mike Stern, Danilo Perez and Kurt Rosenwinkel, to name a few. In addition to his work with the Brad Mehldau Trio, Ballard co-leads Fly, a collectively led trio with Larry Grenadier and Mark Turner, and continues to

perform occasionally with Chick Corea, Joshua Redman, Kurt Rosenwinkel and others.

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