

THE AMHERST COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
PRESENTS

STEPHEN PAGE *QUARTET*

Avery Sharpe, bass
Charles Langford, saxophone
royal hartigan, percussion
Stephen Page, piano

Saturday, February 19, 2022 at 7 PM

Buckley Recital Hall

Program

PROGRAM WILL BE ANNOUNCED FROM THE STAGE

THE ARTISTS

Avery Sharp

Bassist Avery Sharpe was born in Valdosta, Georgia, and his first instrument was the piano. “I started playing when I was eight years old,” he recalls. “My mother is a piano player/choir director in the Church of God in Christ, and she gave lessons to everybody in the family—I’m the sixth of eight children—but it didn’t stick until it got to me.” He moved on to accordion and then switched to electric bass in high school, after his family had relocated to Springfield, MA.

He studied economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, while he played electric bass in gospel, funk, and rock groups. With encouragement from renowned bassist Reggie Workman, he learned acoustic bass and soon was performing with Archie Shepp and Art Blakey. In 1980, Sharpe won a spot in McCoy Tyner’s group, and worked with him for the next 20-plus years, playing hundreds of gigs worldwide and appearing on more than 20 recordings with Tyner.

Sharpe’s credits also include sideman stints and recordings with jazz greats like Dizzy Gillespie, Wynton Marsalis, Yusef Lateef, Bobby McFerrin, Pat Metheny, Billy Taylor, and many more. His first recording as a leader was the 1988 album *Unspoken Words* on Sunnyside Records. In 1994 he started his own artist record label, JKNM Records. To date he has more than 12 titles as a leader for JKNM Records.

Sharpe is equally adept at songs and longer compositional forms. In 1989, he wrote and conducted the soundtrack for the movie *An Unremarkable Life*. A decade later, his six-movement piece *America’s Promise* debuted with the Springfield Symphony

Orchestra. In the 1990s, Sharpe received a commission by the classical group Fideleo to write three extended works. In 2004, he wrote a musical portrait for the stage for Chamber Music Plus. The stage production *Raisin' Cane* has been touring since 2007, and stars actress Jasmine Guy (featured in the TV show *A Different World*) and Sharpe's Trio. In 2006, he was commissioned by the Springfield Symphony to write his *Concerto for Jazz Trio and Orchestra*, which premiered in 2007, featuring the Trio with (former *Tonight Show* Musical Director) Kevin Eubanks on acoustic guitar. Avery continued his historical connection with releases of CDs, honoring Jesse Owens' *Running Man*, Sojourner Truth's *Ain't I A Woman*, Sister Rosetta Tharpe's *Sharpe Meets Tharpe*.

Sharpe's album *400* is his latest work. This project marked the 400th year since Africans were brought to the U.S.A. shores in 1619. The recording was released in May 2019 on JKNM Records, and featured Don Braden, Duane Eubanks, Ronnie Burrage, Zaccai Curtis, Davis Whitfield, The Extended Family Choir and special guest Kevin Eubanks.

Avery Sharpe's extensive educational activities include numerous clinics and workshops at home and abroad. He has presented at the University of Massachusetts, Williams College, Berklee School of Music, Bates College, the University of Miami, and at colleges in Peru, Brazil, Australia and elsewhere.

Avery Sharpe was the Sterling Brown '22 Distinguished Visiting Artist in Residence in Music at Williams College, as well as Artist Associate in Jazz Bass and Jazz Coach at Williams College. He was also Faculty Advisor for the Williams Gospel Choir and affiliated faculty for Africana Studies.

His awards include The NAACP Martin Luther King Jr. Special Achievement Award, several National Endowment for the Arts Grants and the New England Foundation for the Arts Achievement in Jazz Award.

Charles Langford

Charles Langford has been writing music since his teenage years. This Springfield, Massachusetts jazz man does it all...tenor, alto, soprano sax, clarinet and flute. Mr. Langford attended the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and the New School for Social Research in New York City. He studied composition and teaching with Billy Harper, Donald Byrd, and Barry Harris, among

others. Prior to that, Mr. Langford studied with Archie Shepp and Yusef Lateef. Since then, Charles Langford has become one of the Boston area's top A-list players. He has played with artists ranging from The Toni Lynn Washington Blues Band to The Temptations, and Mighty Sam McClain. He's paid his dues, and put in years with Melvin Sparks, Norman Connors, Solomon Burke, and Steve Turre.

In addition to a debut album on Blue Canoe Records, *That's Wassup*, released in 2008, Mr. Langford is proud to be releasing his second album, *Powerless*. Featuring guest appearances by Jimmy Haslip (bass), Russell Ferrante (keys), Jimmy Branly (drums), Avery Sharpe (bass), Poojie Bell (drums), and many other notable musicians. With *Powerless*, Charles and his talented group take the listener on a smooth musical journey by way of deep grooves, soulful horns, and passionate textures that blend seamlessly with their superior musicianship and production.

royal hartigan

Having grown up in western Massachusetts, hartigan is on a journey that has taken him from tap dancing, piano recitals, and drum corps parades to jazz performances in New York, across the U.S., and eventually to Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Caribbean. royal hartigan has made a life's embrace of the sounds and meaning of the music of the world's peoples. Hearing his uncle Ray Hart and mother Hazel Gay-Hartigan tap dancing with jazz accompaniment, royal began tapping at age 3, and sensed the world through the sound of taps on wood floors and mats. At age 8, he started playing piano and drums, joining a drum corps at age 11, and later playing drum set. Since those early years, drumming, dance, and piano have been royal's way of understanding and expressing life and things beyond music.

After graduating *cum laude* from St. Michael's College (VT) in Philosophy, royal served two years in the U.S. Peace Corps in the Philippines, where he experienced firsthand the strength and connectedness – to the earth, to the community, to values that are antithetical to western materialism – of Indigenous culture and the global cost of 'first-world' neocolonial domination and exploitation of people and the earth.

Returning to the U.S., royal studied at UMass Amherst, learning from and playing in ensembles with Frederick Tillis, Max Roach, Horace Clarence Boyer, Reggie Workman, and Archie Shepp, discovering the heritage of African American history and music,

from African origins through plantation music, hollers, the blues, gospel, ragtime, jazz, and many other styles. His immersion in world music performance and learning at Wesleyan University (CT) led to MA and PhD degrees, studying with Edward Blackwell, William Barron, Bill Lowe, and master artists from West Africa, Indonesia, India, China, and Native America.

Since 1991, royal's playing and research have expanded on numerous trips to Ghana, the Philippines, China, Japan, Korea, and other countries, and across the United States, assisted by many awards for global performance, research, and teaching. These include a Korean Foundation Fellowship (2001), a New School University (NY) Dean's Resident Master Artist Award (2005-06), a J. William Fulbright Lecture/Research Award for the Philippines (2006) and Ghana, West Africa (2014-15), an Asian Cultural Council Research Grant for the Philippines (2009), Healey and Whiting Awards to the Philippines (2010), and his current status as a J. William Fulbright Senior Scholar.

Over this same time period, royal formed *blood drum spirit*, a revolutionary ensemble whose repertoire includes original compositions by its members and unique arrangements of works by Ellington, Parker, Monk, Coltrane, Debussy, and other contributors to the vast spectrum from jazz and contemporary music. Their music incorporates Indigenous elements from West Africa, South India, Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Turkey, and Native America, as well as African American clapping plays, camp meeting shouts, and New Orleans rhythms.

royal has produced an award-winning film, *We Are One*, directed by Sara Pettinella, from his *blood drum spirit* 2015 and 2017 tours of Ghana, sponsored by the U.S. State Department. Its theme is the historical, musical, and personal connections between African music and jazz, and by extension, the world's peoples.

royal has brought new personal concepts to drum set and jazz ensemble, including time cycles, West African rhythms and structures, coordinated independence, layers of time, timbral shading, and tonal motion, among others. His playing style and approach to improvisation, compositions and arrangements, and his collaborations with global artists have broken new ground in African American jazz, world music extensions, and experimental music.

Stephen Page

Stephen Page's musical journey started with drums and trumpet before he dedicated himself to the piano at age seventeen. It was then that he began the quest that would define his life: a search for the totality that is jazz—a balance of musical discipline, self-discovery, the intensity and risk of improvised creation in the moment, and the innovative genius of the legendary artists who defined the genre.

After completing his jazz studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Page continued studying with jazz luminaries Billy Taylor, Yusef Lateef, and Kenny Werner. In 1999 Page found his oracle, the renowned music educator Charlie Banacos, and for ten years was blessed to receive teachings that Banacos designed uniquely for him. Privately, Page cultivated his sound by dissecting and analyzing the work of the greats who influenced him – Bill Evans, Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett, McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock, Bud Powell, and Oscar Peterson among others, deconstructing and assimilating to create his own dynamic voice.

The legendary vocalist Sheila Jordan, whom Page has accompanied for over a decade, has this to say about him: “Stephen Page is a great accompanist aside from being an all-around fantastic musician.”

Although Page creates innovative improvisations, the melodic core of the song still resonates with the listener. The great saxophonist Archie Shepp, with whom Page has jammed on many occasions, has said, “Apart from a brilliant talent, Stephen Page possesses two qualities essential to a performing artist: patience and originality.” Long-time McCoy Tyner bassist Avery Sharpe notes “Stephen Page is in a class by himself, his piano playing is sensitive and extraordinary. Whether playing solo, with a singer, or with an ensemble, his touch and listening abilities are fantastic. He interprets jazz standards in a new and meaningful way, and has impeccable interpretation on originals. When he has worked with me, it has been a pleasure.” Page has played throughout the eastern seaboard with a variety of musical combinations, from solo work to big bands. He teaches at Amherst College, Deerfield Academy, and The Williston Northampton School, as well as in his private studio. Page continues to distill his life's work into original compositions.

Amherst College Music Department Upcoming Events

March 2022

- 3** **Jazz@Friedmann Room.** Keefe. 9:30 PM.
- 5** **Amherst Symphony Orchestra Concert: “Drama & Dance: Sibelius & Beethoven”.** Buckley Recital Hall. 8 PM.
- 9** **M@A, the CHI, and Amherst Cinema Co-present: Heartbeat Opera’s “Breathing Free, a visual album” Screening and Talkback.** Amherst Cinema. 4:30 PM. \$
- 10** **Jazz@Friedmann Room.** Keefe Campus Center. 9:30 PM.
- 24** **M@A, Bombyx, and Valley Jazz Shares Co-present: “Upper West Side Love Story, A Song Cycle by Freddie Bryant”** Bombyx Center for Arts and Equity, Florence, MA. Tickets at www.bombyx.live. 7 PM \$
- 25** **M@A Presents: Stewart Goodyear, Piano.** Buckley Recital Hall. 8 PM. FREE. General seating.
- 26** **M@A Goodyear piano masterclass.** Buckley Recital Hall. 10 AM.
- 31** **Jazz@ Friedmann Room.** Keefe. 9:30 PM.

All events are free and held in Buckley Recital Hall unless otherwise noted.
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