

T H E S C H O O L O F M U S I C , T H E A T R E , A N D D A N C E

PETER SOMMER, SAXOPHONE | MATT SMILEY, BASS | DRU HELLER, DRUMS

VIRTUOSO SERIES CONCERT:

THE
PETER
SOMMER
JAZZ TRIO

SEPTEMBER 15, 2025 • 7:30 P.M.
ORGAN RECITAL HALL



COLORADO STATE
UNIVERSITY

SEASON SPONSOR:



SOMMER RECITAL PROGRAM
SEPTEMBER 15, 2025 – ORGAN RECITAL HALL

PETER SOMMER, TENOR SAXOPHONE
MATT SMILEY, BASS
DRU HELLER, DRUMS

Program:

Milestones by John Lewis

I Don't Wanna Be Kissed (By Anyone But You) by Harold Spina and John Elliott

The Best Thing For You (Would Be Me) by Irving Berlin

Fungii Mama by Blue Mitchell

Mirror, Mirror by Chick Corea

Isfahan by Billy Strayhorn

A Night in Tunisia by Dizzy Gillespie

BIOGRAPHIES

Saxophonist **PETER SOMMER** has contributed his energetic and graceful playing and creative spirit to a wide variety of musical projects ranging from mainstream bebop to classic and contemporary concert music to avant-garde improvisations at venues across the nation and around the world.

Peter has released six albums as a leader. His latest release, *Soulful Songs and Spirits* (2022), features his working septet of Front Range jazz masters playing original arrangements and compositions inspired by legends of the art form. Previous releases include *Sioux County* (2006) on Tapestry Records, featuring his original compositions in duo with jazz piano legend Art Lande, *Crossroads* (2008) on Capri Records, featuring a two-tenor frontline with the great NYC saxophonist Rich Perry, and *Tremolo Canteen* (2010) and *Narrando Historias* (2015) on Dazzle Recordings.

Sommer is also active as a concert saxophonist, performing recitals of newly commissioned pieces and masterworks both regionally and abroad. Recent performances include John Mackey's *Soprano Saxophone Concerto* and David Biedenbender's "Dreams in Dusk" with the Colorado State University Symphonic Band. He was also a member of the consortium to commission a new soprano saxophone concerto from William Bolcom, which he premiered in Fall 2016 with the CSU Wind Symphony, and a new sonata from James M. David, premiered in Fall 2019.

Peter has performed with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Colorado Symphony Orchestra and the Colorado Music Festival Orchestra, the Fort Collins Symphony, and the Cheyenne Symphony. He has been a featured jazz soloist at North American Saxophone Alliance Regional and Biennial Conferences. He has also performed at IAJE International Conferences in Anaheim and Toronto, Canada, at the Jeju International Wind Ensemble Festival in South Korea, and has performed at World Saxophone Congresses in Valencia, Spain, Bangkok, Thailand, St. Andrews, Scotland and Strasbourg, France.

Peter Sommer is Professor of Saxophone and Jazz Studies at Colorado State University in Ft. Collins and is a D'Addario Woodwinds Artist, performing exclusively on Select Jazz and Reserve Reeds on all his instruments.

Bassist, composer, and educator **MATT SMILEY** navigates his broad sonic world with imagination, openness, and artistic vision. Matt merges his deep roots in the jazz bass tradition with modern explorations of sound, texture, and improvisation from the world of contemporary composition, making him a favorite and frequent collaborator of creative musicians across a variety of musical genres.

As a performer, Matt has toured nationally and internationally, appearing on stages, festival performances, and university residencies in the United States, Costa Rica, and the Netherlands. He has performed with bandleaders and composers including David Murray, Terrell Stafford, Christian Wolff, Greg Osby, and Sam Newsome. Matt leads frequent workshops and lessons on free improvisation, jazz bass, and composition, working with educational partners including Denver School of the Arts, the Gift of Jazz, and Casper College.

Improvisation and collaboration are the common threads across Matt's recorded albums as a bandleader. His discography includes Endgame Trio's *Apocalypse Scorpion*, an explosive improvisatory duo with guitarist Alex Nauman; *Seafoam Blue*, a collection of original folk songs with violinist and vocalist Aimee Niemann; and *Free Range* with Art Deco, a jazz quintet blending free and straight ahead approaches. His release *Crankbait* includes a collection of original chamber pieces and features musicians Josh Reed, Briana Harris, Ben Parrish, and Michael D'Angelo. His most recent album *Binnen Buiten* features David Pope on tenor saxophone with drummers Dru Heller and Ron Coulter.

Matt was born in Staunton, Virginia, where his earliest experiences with creative music were inspired by the area's vibrant jam band scene. He received a bachelor's degree in music industry with a jazz studies minor from James Madison University. Matt moved to Colorado to attend graduate school at the University of Northern Colorado, where he graduated with a master's degree in jazz studies. He recently completed a doctorate at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and teaches adjunct at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

DRU HELLER is an expressive, authentic, and joyful drummer, composer, and bandleader. His passionate playing and love for music has opened opportunities for him to perform and teach all over the country.

Known for his dynamic and interactive playing, his career spans over two decades. He has toured and recorded with some of the greatest musicians in jazz, including Don Byron, John Ellis, Ron Miles, Art Lande and Greg Osby. He was a featured performer on Don Byron's original score for the *American Masters* (PBS) documentary of *Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes Feeling Heart*. His own quartets have received accolades and garnered attention from

jazz enthusiasts worldwide, and he is a first-call drummer for the bandstands in the greater Denver area.

Dru is an engaged and empathetic teacher. He made his home in Denver, Colorado after he received a Master of Music degree from the University of Colorado. He has served as an artist-in-residence at multiple schools and festivals, and he is a music faculty member at Metropolitan State University of Denver, the University of Colorado- Denver, and the Lamont School of Music at the University of Denver. He is able to reach students of all ages and ability levels and maintains his own private studio.

On and off the bandstand, Dru is an active listener. His vibrant spirit can be felt and heard through the flick of his sticks or the wit and charm of his conversations.

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