



Pianist/Composer ***Masa Ishikawa*** 's music has been performed in multiple countries including China, Japan, Italy, and the United States. As a composer, his work includes both jazz instrumental/vocal compositions, ranging from chamber (3 to 7-piece jazz combo) to large ensembles (17-piece jazz orchestra/studio jazz orchestra) His composition, *Hotaru (firefly)*, was selected as the winner of 2014 Downbeat Student Music Awards in Graduate Original Composition for Small Ensemble. As an active pianist, Ishikawa and his groups have performed at various jazz festivals/concerts in the United States. He was selected as one of the five finalists to compete for the 2016 Jacksonville Jazz Piano Competition.

As a native of Fukushima (Japan), Ishikawa wrote and premiered a multi-movement work titled *Suite for the Forgotten* in 2015. The suite is dedicated to people who are currently living in Fukushima under the uncertain health impact to the radiation exposure from The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plants meltdown in 2011. In this composition, Ishikawa employed a string quartet as well as French horn into the traditional jazz big band instrumentation. Some of his compositions have been published through UNC Jazz Press.

Ishikawa has served as a Visiting part-time Assistant Professor of Music at Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota for these past three years. Starting this fall 2019, He will begin his Visiting Assistant Professor appointment (Jazz Studies) at The University of Iowa (Iowa City)



Christopher Varga is a drummer and vibraphonist with a broad background that spans multiple genres. He has been fortunate to be able to perform and record in a wide variety of musical environments around the U.S., Europe, and Asia with numerous musicians, including Peter Bernstein, Terrence Blanchard, Steve Slagle, Dave Stryker, Mark Ferber, David Berkman, Jay McShann and Herb Geller, among others. The self-produced album, "Dancer In" (2010), features Chris's vibraphone playing as well as his original compositions.



Equally adept at the upright/electric bass, ***Eric Hitt***'s unique voice has garnered him opportunities to work with jazz artists such as Deborah Brown, Lisa Henry, and Ryan Kisor. His swinging bass lines coupled with his lyrical arco playing lend him to be a sought-after collaborator. He and legendary drummer Jeff Hamilton were described as "terrific together" on Christine Hitt's (his musical mother) 2018 release, *Magical Kite*. His musical scope also stretches across many genres as he's appeared on stage with soul band The Burroughs and folk group Them Coulee Boys.

Hitt is currently in the Dallas/Fort Worth area of Texas, where he can be found performing with Brad Leali, Quincy Davis, Davy Mooney, Andrew Griffith, Jim Riggs, and more. He has performed/recorded across the United States at places like Capitol Records, the Blue Room and Nocturne.

Hitt earned his B.M. in double bass performance from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (2017) and M.M. in jazz performance from the University of North Texas (2019), where he gained invaluable experiences/study with his mentors Hans Sturm (UNL) and Lynn Seaton (UNT) At the University of North Texas in 2018-2019 he had the privilege of being the bassist and rhythm section leader for the seven-time GRAMMY-nominated One O'Clock Lab Band and performed with Melissa Aldana, Kirk Whalum, and Kenny Werner. Hitt will begin his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at UNT in the fall of 2019.



Percussionist ***Justin G. Jones*** grew up in Santa Fe, New Mexico surrounded by Mariachi and the music of African immigrants. He came of age in California, learning the language of Latin jazz from local percussion masters.

Justin earned a degree in percussion performance with Hollywood studio veteran Kenny Watson, and studied in Los Angeles with Ray Charles's drummer Paul Kreibich. He was the co-leader of the popular local Latin group Son del Llano, and has been an integral member of many national and local groups. He has performed across the United States and in ten countries across Europe and the Pacific.