

# JAZZSCENE

## School



## Is



## In Session

### The New Faces of Jazz Education in Portland

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## Feature Story

### School Is In Session

The Two New Faces of Jazz Education in Portland

By Ryan Meagher

There has been an invasion of talent to the greater Portland area jazz scene in recent years. The scene was already rife with high-flying musicians, energetic radio hosts, skillful jazz columnists/journalists, and more; then a wave of folks came in and added to an already vibrant scene. Soon after the immigration, it seemed there was almost an immediate downturn in the local jazz ecology. There was a rash of jazz venue closures that caused many to have attitudes as dark as the stormy winter months our fair city experiences. But the bleeding was stopped, and some of those closed venues have even begun producing jazz events again.

Despite the lull, the influx has not stopped. More and more people are moving to Portland every day. This includes jazz musicians and their ilk. Two of the more recent transplants to the scene are the victors of some of the most hotly contested battles in all of jazz academia. Mt. Hood Community College's (MHCC) posting for a Director of Jazz last year received roughly three hundred qualified applicants from across the entire nation. The University of Portland's (UP) posting for a similar position that concluded a few months ago had less applicants (because the requirement of a doctorate limited the field), but also attracted a fiercely competitive pool of applicants.

I was able to sit down with the recent appointees to talk about who they are, where they have been, and where they plan to go. There were some similarities, some differences, and some surprises. I felt it was important for the readers of Jazzscene to get to know these guys, because: One – they are artists themselves and you are bound to run into them at gigs around town in the near future. Two – they will be ushering in the new generation of Portland jazz musicians for years to come.

The first thing to know about both of these recently transplanted educators is that they are from the East Coast. Joseph Jefferson, the new Assistant Professor of Music (Jazz Emphasis) at UP, is originally from Jarratt, Virginia. Jarratt is a small, rural community in northern Virginia near Norfolk. He did not get into jazz seriously until his undergraduate studies at Norfolk State (an historically black university). At Norfolk State he connected with many experienced members of the Navy band (though he has never been enlisted in military service). With the mentorship of these Navy band members he was guided



*Above: Joseph Jefferson*

*Below: Dan Davey*





into graduate studies at the Shenandoah Conservatory in Winchester, Virginia. When talking about his experience there he says, "It's really when the floodgates opened up. Because all of the teachers were in the Army Blues or the Airmen of Note. So those were the guys."

He propelled his development and connections at Shenandoah Conservatory into a teaching position at Tidewater Community College back in Virginia Beach (just outside Norfolk). After teaching and gigging some with commercial bands as a sideman he began to think seriously about his career trajectory. He arrived at the decision to attend West Virginia University to get his doctorate. Because Jefferson is a trombone player, one of the main reasons behind his decision was to study with a specific teacher. "That was probably one of the best decisions I have ever made... studying with Keith Jackson, a guy who is both classical and jazz. He's a commercial player. And I was like, 'Yea! That's Right On!'" So he attained his doctoral degree and lands a full-time teaching gig at Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario, Oregon. After two short years helping develop that program he applied for and won the UP position.

Dan Davey's career track is a little different, though he also hails from the Right Coast. Davey is in his third term as the full-time Director of Jazz at MHCC. He is a multi-instrumentalist (trumpet, piano, and pipe organ) that did his undergrad in Music Education at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Berklee was a stone's throw from his hometown of Easton, and it was a better fit for him than the other programs to which he applied. One of the other colleges asked him, "Who are you listening to?"

Davey reflects, "I told them, 'Keith Jarrett, Brad Mehldau, Chick Corea...' They kind of looked at each other and said, 'I think we have a guy here who can teach you that kind of stuff...' At Berklee I knew that I was going to have twenty-five piano players to choose from." While studying at Berklee he was also gigging regularly in jazz and commercial bands and maintaining a job as the musical director of a Catholic church. That job actually paid his tuition while he was at Berklee. Soon after wrapping up his undergraduate studies he began teaching high school (while maintaining the gigging and church musical director). He had obtained his Master of Music degree from the American Band College (ABC) in southern Oregon during the summer months. Davey really relished his

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*I am glad to have these new additions in our scene. They are extremely smart, likeable, and I know that the students respect them.*

studies at ABC. “It was a great program. I have no regrets about it at all! Plus, it’s where I met my wife.”

A rather fortuitous call came during this time. He was feeling very burnt out from his busy lifestyle and a small, local Catholic college offered him some teaching work that helped launch him into post-secondary teaching. He eventually became the Director of Music and Liturgy at Stonehill College (coincidentally, the sister college of UP) which helped him focus his work in one area.

Davey was instrumental in developing the very small program at Stonehill and even wrote the college’s fight song! But there was some tension with a disgruntled colleague. The environment became very toxic and Davey began looking for a way out. When the MHCC job opened up he saw it as the perfect opportunity to get away from that rough academic setting and return to his wife’s home state. He had already made a lot of connections in the Pacific Northwest through his graduate studies, through his wife (who is also a music educator here in the Portland area), and through some other professional endeavors. He threw his hat in the ring, and after an extremely competitive search, MHCC landed on Davey as their guy.

The two things that I found most interesting that Jefferson and Davey have in common are their connection to the church and their affinity for Tower of Power. We have already seen how Davey has been connected to religion and music, but it should also be noted that Jefferson’s mother was the choir director at the church in which he grew up. Additionally, his doctoral research revolved around the gospel group, United House of Prayer for All People. Davey was the Hammond organ player in a Tower of Power cover band in college, and Jefferson cites TOP as one of his main non-jazz influences.

Lastly, I would be remiss without mentioning the Dave Barduhn thread that runs between them. Both of these educators are essentially filling the shoes of a Pacific Northwest jazz maven. Though Davey is new to town he is well-aware of the legacy that Barduhn left at MHCC. After Barduhn left MHCC he took a temporary position at UP to help bolster their jazz program. Jefferson will be replacing him, of course, but he has had a chance to rub elbows with Barduhn a few times.

As someone who is invested heavily in jazz education in the region, I am glad to have these new additions in our scene. They are extremely smart, likeable, and I know that the students respect them. Though neither has had a purely professional profile like many faculty members

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at other area institutions of higher learning, it is clear to me that both Davey and Jefferson more than “get around” on their horns. I leave you with their own words on where they see their programs and themselves fitting into our scene:

**T**his new position at the University of Portland will afford me the opportunity to share my talents, experiences and gifts with UP’s bright and talented music students. My overarching goal is to expand the jazz department at UP by presenting high quality instruction, innovative ideas and creating new performance opportunities for the jazz ensembles. In addition, I am excited about hosting guest artists and clinicians, which will help generate excitement as well as desire for knowledge in the field of jazz education.

Building on the lineage of the jazz program, I look forward to collaborating with the stellar faculty at UP seeking ways to make UP a top choice for student musicians seeking a comprehensive music education. As an academic, this position will provide me with the platform to introduce my energetic style of teaching, while implementing new teaching modalities, which will encourage student success. As an artist, I will strive to maintain a balanced playing schedule both locally and nationally to serve as an example that performance and constant growth is necessary as a musician an educator.

Additionally, I will diligently strive to establish relationships with music departments at local middle schools, high schools, and other colleges and universities throughout the United States. I am optimistic that these encounters will provide collaborative performance/clinician exchanges with these institutions. It is my hope that these connections help increase enrollment efforts for music students at UP. I am extremely thankful and humbled for this opportunity and I am eager to build relationships, perform and advocate for the arts in the Portland area.

**Joseph Jefferson, Assistant Professor of Music (Jazz Emphasis), University of Portland**

**T**here is a rich history of jazz at Mt. Hood and I am dedicated to restoring and cultivating an environment of success and high musical performance. I expect our students to receive an education that prepares them for the music industry. I want the faculty and the institution to serve as a resource, influence, and performance hub for students, directors and educators, as well as members of the community through classes, workshops, concerts and events. I want to create a culture on campus that inspires creativity, arts appreciation, and a desire for further education and skill development. I personally want to positively contribute to the jazz and live performance scene in the greater Portland area and share my pun-filled humor across the state.

**Dan Davey, Director of Jazz, Mt. Hood Community College**

