

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19 at 7:30PM
BOWKER AUDITORIUM**

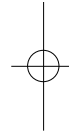
SEAN JONES

trumpet

ORRIN EVANS, PIANO

LUQUES CURTIS, BASS

OBED CAVALIER, DRUMS



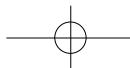
Program will be announced from the stage

Part of the Ninth Annual Billy Taylor Jazz Residency

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SEAN JONES ROOTS

Trumpeter Sean Jones embodies the 21st century jazz musician, an experimental, supremely talented type whose vision and sensibility encourages inclusion rather than separation. "Jazz embraces everything," Jones says. "I'm not nearly arrogant enough to try and define it as one thing or one style. Jazz has always from its very beginning linked cultures, generations, and races. To pigeonhole it and say it can only do one thing to me does a disservice to it."

Jones' previous releases as well as his forthcoming new Mack Avenue CD **Roots** (release date: September 12) exemplify that attitude of experimentation and diversity. He can swing or glide through an arrangement.....play the blues or switch into a funk and soul mode. He's thoroughly versed in standards, but is also increasingly concentrating on writing his own work. He's comfortable in an acoustic or electric context, and enjoys working with vocalists as much as small combos or large orchestras. In short, Sean Jones simply loves music, yet prefers to consider himself a jazz player, albeit one without idiomatic restrictions.

His latest date **Roots** renews Jones' love for the sound that initially hooked him as a youngster: gospel music. "I grew up in church and was a singer," Jones remembers. "I was in the choir and really didn't know what I wanted to play other than I didn't want it to be a saxophone because it seemed that's what everyone else was playing. The drums were attractive, but my mother said she wasn't having any of that. Then a teacher gave me two Miles Davis albums, *Tutu* and *Kind of Blue*. That was it for me, right there in the fifth grade. Believe it or not, I never really gravitated toward pop music. It was jazz, as well as gospel and maybe an occasional oldie. But it was something about the horn that hooked me immediately."

Now in his late 20's, Jones has developed into one of the finest, most expressive and technically commanding players on his instrument of choice, as immediately witnessed by the striking, gorgeous playing on the opening two cuts "Children's Hymn" and "Roots." The former includes a lean, impressive statement and melodic treatment of "Jesus Loves Me," while the latter has both expressive unison sections and bright, distinctive solos. Jones' facility was shaped by his studies in high school with classical trumpeter Esotto Pellegrini. His time with Pellegrini so affected him he eventually got his undergraduate degree in classical trumpet. He's currently a professor of Jazz studies at Duquesne.

Jones also studied with professor Bill Fielder, whose previous students included Wynton Marsalis. Marsalis recently selected him to be lead trumpeter in the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and he's proven on gigs with the orchestra, plus appearances on a pair of new Mack Avenue anthologies that he's a formidable soloist, inspiring bandleader, reliable ensemble contributor and dynamic force on the bandstand. While his playing has grown richer, stronger and more striking, Jones's current studies and emphasis remain on tightening his compositional skills.

"I wouldn't necessarily call myself a composer, but instead a musician who also writes compositions," Jones says in discussing his writing skills. "Writing tunes started for me as a need to express myself in a way that I couldn't do in an improvisation. I remember the first song that I wrote was for my father on the eve of his death. It was designed to say some things about how I felt about him and what a big part of my life he'd been, and now every time that I play it, it expresses certain feelings that are more lasting than anything that you could say in a solo. "It's more a thing about creating melodies and tunes that

are based on some personal experience, whether it's falling in love, seeing something strange on television, or any other emotion or action that will trigger an idea and from there I'll construct a song."

Though he doesn't confine himself to doing repertory or standards, Jones has comprehensive knowledge of and a great love for jazz history. That's most evident in the people he cites as his main influences and the reasons he gives behind each selection. "Clifford Brown was special. There's a certain type of joy he has that always comes out in his playing. That's one of my main goals in my own music—to get people to hear how much joy I feel playing this music. Plus there was such humanity in his playing. Woody Shaw was so innovative, especially in his harmonizing. Freddie Hubbard has so much energy, while Miles Davis had that very vocal sound. I also very much admired him as a leader."

With **Roots**, Sean Jones continues on his path of exploring distinct and varied grooves, moods, and themes. On his rendition of the Ellington tune "Come Sunday" as well as "Lift Every Voice," a tune considered the "Black National Anthem," he's more laid-back and reflective rather than assertive and attacking. Still, the prime thing for Jones as a player, composer or leader is never repeating himself, nor becoming content and detached in his approach.

"Living in today's times, there's just no way I can personally just settle for or try to stick to doing one thing repeatedly," Jones says in assessing his current musical motivation. "I want to create records that have variety so listeners don't get too comfortable or complacent."

That versatility is evident when he shifts into a fusion mode for "Conversations." The song retains the CD's overall mood of reverence and worship, but also dis-

plays more rhythmic push and intensity. However, it's on the cuts "El Soul" and "Puddin' Time" that things really shift thematically. Here Jones and company start expanding the grooves, particularly on "Puddin' Time" that mixes a bluesy sensibility with some fiery upper-register playing.

Jones returns to more stately, scriptural territory on the final three numbers, particularly "John 3:16" and "I Need Thee." On both tunes, he carefully shapes, develops and ultimately extends the piece's intensity, with "I Need Thee" closing the proceedings with a dramatic flourish.

An ambitious as well as relentless type, Sean Jones has several professional goals for the near future. These range from cutting a vocal work that pairs him with several new and emerging singers to recording a Latin CD and doing a session with a full string orchestra. "There's still a lot of ideas out there that I want to do musically," Jones acknowledges. "There's a lot of music in my head and for me, when you say jazz, you're talking about a universe that is limitless."

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