Solos & Duos Series announces its 2nd season: Milford Graves, Sunny Murray Duo w/Sabir Mateen and Sonny Fortune/Rashied Ali Duo

The UMass Fine Arts Center’s Solos & Duos Series will bring together three giants of the percussive arts for its 2nd season, with concerts by Milford Graves (September 25) the Sunny Murray Duo featuring Sabir Mateen (October 9) and the Sonny Fortune/Rashied Ali Duo (November 20).

All concerts begin at 8:00 pm., in Bezanson Recital Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Tickets are $10 and $5 (students), and are available through the Fine Arts Center box office, 545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS.

Three men expanded the jazz drum vocabulary during the 1960s: Milford Graves, Sunny Murray and Rashied Ali. It is an honor and privilege to be able to present these three masters in one season.

A drummer of unparalleled power and creativity, Milford Graves is a living legend. Professor, herbalist, healer, Milford Graves is first and foremost one of the world's great geniuses of the drum. Rarely heard live, a concert by Milford Graves is a special event. Born in 1941, in Jamaica, New York, Milford Graves made his first recordings on the ESP label with the New York Art Quartet (with John Tchicai, Archie Shepp and Lewis Worrell), pianists Lowell Davidson and Paul Bley. Graves was a founding member of the Jazz Composer's Orchestra and has subsequently worked and recorded with a wide variety of creative musicians including Albert Ayler, Sonny Sharrock, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Don Pullen and Andrew Cyrille.

Like Baby Dodds and Kenny Clarke before him, 67-year old Sunny Murray revolutionized the role of the trap drums in jazz. His playing with Albert Ayler and Cecil Taylor opened up entirely new expressive realms for the instrument, and his influence on the last thirty-five years of improvised music cannot be overestimated. Murray was an indispensable force in the early defining moments of free-jazz working with Archie Sheep, Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry among countless others. Sabir Mateen (alto/tenor sax, bass clarinet, flute) began playing with Horace Tapscott's Pan African People's Arkestra almost three decades ago in Los Angeles, and has played all over the US and the world with Test, Raphe Malik, Alan Silva, Butch Morris, Bill Dixon and many others.

Rashied Ali, 68, is a progenitor and leading exponent of multidirectional and polytonal percussion. A student of Philly Joe Jones and an admirer of Art Blakey, the Philadelphia native cut his musical teeth with local R&B artists such as Big Maybelle, before playing with such Philly notables as Lee Morgan, Don Patterson and Jimmy Smith. After moving to New York in the early 1960s, Ali performed with Don Cherry, Pharoah Sanders, Paul Bley, Archie Shepp, Bill Dixon, Albert Ayler, and from 1965 to 1967, John Coltrane. Sonny Fortune had formative working experiences with Mongo Santamaria and McCoy Tyner, spending over two years with each. Subsequent high profile gigs with Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Elvin Jones, and Nat Adderley, and a 30-year career as a leader has solidified Fortune’s place in the pantheon.

The Solos & Duos Series is produced by Residential Arts and made possible by the: Massachusetts Cultural Council, Student Affairs Cultural Enrichment Fund, UMass Arts Council and UMass Alumni Association.