



MICHAEL KARAS/Herald News

Mulgrew Miller, the new director of William Paterson University's jazz studies program, plays piano for students, accompanied by alumnus Eric Alexander on tenor saxophone.

## Jazz

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Musicians have many influences as they hone and polish their sound, and Miller is no different, having been affected by pianists McCoy Tyner and Oscar Peterson. But it was his early Mississippi Delta experience with pianist Abbie "Boogaloo" Ames, who played in the tradition of Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson — which was "a throwback to a bygone era."

"I met Boogaloo when I was teenager," Miller said. "He took me under his wing and nurtured me. I learned the advantages of having a large repertoire because he knew all the tunes."

Last week, students received a delicious dose of Miller's superb artistry in a duo format as he performed with saxophonist Eric Alexander, a William Paterson alumnus and Milestone recording artist, during a lunchtime concert at the Shea Center for the Performing Arts.

Miller and Alexander engaged in a musical repartee that spanned the spectrum from the jazz waltz "Dis Here" to George Gershwin's classic "Embraceable You," winning enthusiastic applause from the young audience of about 300.

"I like the music and Mulgrew Miller's style. I listen to him in the practice room," said Andrew Miller, 20, of Willingboro, a sophomore who plays trumpet. "I have had a taste of that style in some sessions with (legendary trumpeter) Clark Terry."

Dimitri Mikelis, 29, a graduate student from Greece, said he had followed Miller's career from afar, but this was the first chance to see him up close and personal.

"I like his style and his chops," said Mikelis, who plays piano. "I am a foreign student, so this is a great opportunity for me."

Many William Paterson students said the arrival of Miller was a high note for the jazz studies program. Miller follows such stalwarts as trumpeter Thad Jones, bassist Rufus Reid and pianist James Williams, who all have headed the program since its inception in 1973.

Over the years, the program has garnered national recognition; it features a creative emphasis on the small group unit — improvisation in the true jazz tradition.

"There is a perception out there

that young people think of jazz as old folks' music," Miller said. "But I am optimistic about our young players. The scene, it is not as healthy, but given the talent coming up, it can only help the music."

Noted musicologist Arnold Jay Smith, an adjunct professor of jazz history at New Jersey City University, said Miller was an excellent choice to lead WPU's jazz studies program.

"I hate to make comparisons," Smith said, "but the bottom line is he certainly can play and have profound impact on young musicians."

The 1960s is considered a high-octane decade for jazz with such young lions as Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Lee Morgan, Tony Williams, Freddie Hubbard, Ron Carter, Bobby Hutcherson and McCoy Tyner, among others who placed an indelible creative stamp on their music — still a significant influence four decades later.

"You could say the '60s was a period where the music reached its most sophisticated point and innovation was at a high," Miller said. "I think we will see another period with that level of creativity because the talent is out there, but America is not allowing it to develop."

After cutting his piano teeth with Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, the Mercer Ellington Orchestra, Betty Carter, and drummer Tony Williams, Miller developed an edgy, straight-ahead style reminiscent of Tyner and Bud Powell. But make no mistake: The sound is pure Mulgrew Miller.

In recalling his three years with Blakey, Miller said the drum master delivered lessons to his young protégés by performance.

"Art taught by the sheer force of his musical personality," said Miller, who lives in Bethlehem, Pa. "Just by example he showed us how to be bandleaders and how to socially deal with different musicians, because not everyone performs the same."

That is the impression Miller wants to leave with William Paterson students, giving them the creative juice to propel them to the next level. It's an ingredient that was not lost on Andrew Miller, the aspiring trumpet player, who noted, "I want jazz to prosper because the music is in my hands."

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## New jazz collection is perfect for Valentine's Day

By DONALD V. ADDERTON  
Herald News

### PLAYS FOR LOVERS

[www.concordmusicgroup.com](http://www.concordmusicgroup.com)

At a time when Cupid, love, roses, confections and candlelight dinners create delicious moments, St. Valentine's Day gets an added groove with the mellow tones of

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some of the greats in jazz. The "Plays for Lovers" series (Concord) on eight individual CDs features the likes of Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Dave Brubeck, Chet Baker, Stan Getz and Bill Evans, along with legendary singers Tony Bennett and Sarah Vaughan.

This treasure trove of music is the perfect tonic for the lady loves and Dashing Dads at this most romantic time of the year. What could be a better mixture than music and romance?

Even for the casual jazz listener, these discs are simply superb, capturing these artists during some of their greatest performances. The music travels the musical spectrum with style and panache. The artists swing from the very first note like Vaughan's mellow interpretation of Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" and "Prelude to a Kiss."

Although Bennett didn't leave his heart in San Francisco on this record date, he does send chills up the spine on "My Foolish Heart," "You Don't Know What Love Is" and "I Could Write a Book."

Now if vocalists are not your particular groove, then the "Prince of Darkness," Miles Davis, and the moot of his trumpet should strike a sensuous chord with "My Funny Valentine," "Nature Boy" and Thelonious Monk's classic "Round Midnight." Davis is in fine form here as he is joined by Charles Mingus, Red Garland, Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Paul Chambers, John Coltrane, Horace Silver and others.

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood musicians of his time, Baker could not only command the trumpet but also was an accomplished singer. On this album, Baker demonstrates a mellow vocal tone on "My Heart Stood Still" and "I'm Old Fashioned," and he blends seamlessly into standards like "Stairway to the Stars" and "Moonlight in Vermont."

The original concept for "Plays for Lovers" was conceived in 1965 by Bob Weinstock. It was produced by Nick Phillips and contains previously released material taken from sessions on Riverside, Pablo, Improve/Concord, Fantasy and Prestige record labels.

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