

Loyola University New Orleans School of Music
Presents

Jazz Underground:
Astral Project

Thursday, February 21, 2019, 7:30 p.m.
Nunemaker Auditorium

LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY
NEW ORLEANS  PRESENTS 

Astral Project

For more than thirty years, Astral Project has delighted audiences around the world with its unique brand of cutting edge improvisation and near telepathic interplay over deep New Orleans' grooves.

In 1978, Tony Dagradi gathered together the brightest, most energetic young players in the Crescent City and started out on a path that would help shape the modern jazz scene for years to come. A devoted student of Eastern philosophy, Dagradi coined the band name as a reflection of the group's quest for a higher plane of experience. As everyone who has seen the band in concert knows, each performance finds these men reaching for the stars.

Over the years the personnel has remained remarkably constant. Master drummer John Vidacovich continues to direct the rhythmic ebb and flow of the music as only he can. A brilliant soloist and highly sensitive accompanist, he plays with a command of dynamics, distinctive melodic accents and effervescent swing. On bass, James Singleton is a conduit of pure energy. His solid rhythmic concept and harmonic sense are the foundation of this innovative group's improvisational strength. Steve Masakowski has long been regarded as one of the most awe-inspiring guitarists and composers in contemporary music. His technique on the unique seven string instrument which he designed has influenced a generation of guitarists. Performing on tenor and soprano saxophones, Tony Dagradi brings an emotional urgency to each solo. His huge tone and soaring lines speak of the entire tradition of jazz and constantly push the energy of the band forward.

"ECM-style grace with New Orleans humidity" - Rolling Stone

"One of the most distinctive and cohesive groups in jazz" - Down Beat

"A co-op band comprised of world class improvisers and composers... Astral Project has been New Orleans' best kept secret for more than 20 years." - Jazz Times

"The city's premier modern jazz ensemble." - New Orleans Times Picayune

"Astral Project is the finest modern jazz ensemble in New Orleans, and undoubtedly one of the most unique groups period." - Offbeat, New Orleans Music

"New Orleans' greatest contemporary jazz band...a lean tough, rhythmically unyielding approach to improvisation." - Chicago Tribune

About the Artists

Leading Astral Project is **Tony Dagradi** performing on both tenor and soprano saxophones. With his stunning technique and singular tone, he brings emotional urgency to each solo. For over three decades he has made his home in New Orleans, performing on tenor and soprano sax with many of the Crescent City's most celebrated artists, including Ellis Marsalis, Allen Toussaint, James Booker, The Meters, Dr. John, James Black, Johnny Adams and Gatemouth Brown. An accomplished classical performer as well, he's often called upon to augment the woodwind section of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. His performing past

also includes five years as a member of the internationally acclaimed Carla Bley band and appearances with Bobby McFerrin, Mose Allison and Nat Adderly. He also spent five years as featured soloist with the Carla Bley Band, during which time he toured Europe, Japan and North America. Since 1990 Dagradi has been a Professor of Saxophone and Jazz Studies at Loyola University in New Orleans where he maintains a large saxophone studio, teaches classes in improvisation, and directs various ensembles.

Steve Masakowski has long been regarded as one of the most awe-inspiring guitarists and composers in contemporary music. He plays unique seven-string guitars of his own design that are hand-made by New Orleans luthier Sal Giardina. Steve is a major voice whose extraordinary musicality has been welcomed in concert with such jazz greats as Woody Shaw, Carl Fontana, Dave Liebman, Jimmy Smith, Sam Rivers and, most recently, Dianne Reeves, Bennie Wallace and Rick Margitza. Among the awards and honors that he has garnered are two National Endowment For The Arts fellowships, several grants from The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation and one from the Louisiana Division of The Arts. Steve's own recordings include: "What It Was" (Blue Note), "Direct AXEcess" (Blue Note), "Mars" (Nebula), "Friends" (Nebula), "For Joe" (Compass) and Moon and Sand. His dynamic solo work can also be heard on recordings by Reeves, Mose Allison, Alvin "Red" Tyler and Margitza.

James Singleton is a conduit of pure energy who, to a large degree, defines the sound of Astral Project. His solid rhythmic concept and harmonic sense are the foundation of this innovative group's improvisational strength. James has performed in concert with such modern jazz musicians as John Abercrombie, John Scofield, Art Baron, Ellis Marsalis, Earl Turbinton and Eddie Harris. He has appeared with swing and traditional greats Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Lionel Hampton, Arnette Cobb and Banu Gibson. His extensive recording credits include work with Chet Baker, Alvin "Red" Tyler, James Booker, Charlie Rich and Zachary Richard. James produced the Astral Project album "Elevado". He is also leader of the experimental group 3 Now 4, which has released a self-titled debut and the new "Book of Spells" (G.E.S.).

In his very personal approach to percussion, master drummer **John Vidacovich** combines elements of New Orleans' traditional rhythms with free techniques and mainstream sensibilities. He is at once a brilliant soloist and a highly sensitive accompanist with the ability to detect and quickly enhance even the most subtle change of direction. His command of dynamics, distinctive melodic accents and effervescent swing have brought him international recognition as the quintessential modern New Orleans drummer. His unique style and conviction has led to performances with jazz masters Joe Henderson, Donald Byrd, Kenny Baron, Eddie Harris, Nat Adderley, Joe Williams, Ray Anderson and Bennie Wallace, plus work with such Southern legends as Professor Longhair, James Booker and Mose Allison. Most recently, John has toured with the young guitarist Charlie Hunter. John's albums as a leader include "Banks Street" and "Mystery Street" (both Chebasco), and his new solo album, "Vidacovich."

Upcoming Events

Guest Artist: Dr. Tian Tian, piano

Friday, Feb. 22, 7:30 p.m. | Nunemaker Auditorium

Free admission

Graduate Recital: James Resch, bass-baritone

Saturday, Feb. 23, 3:00 p.m. | Nunemaker Auditorium

Free admission

Junior Recital: Diego Rios, flute

Saturday, Feb. 23, 7:30 p.m. | Roussel Hall

Free admission

Mostly Mondays: Music Therapy in the NICU

Monday, Feb. 25, 7:00 p.m. | Nunemaker Auditorium

Free admission

For Allen: A Concert to Honor Allen Nisbet

Saturday, Mar. 9, 3:00 p.m. | Roussel Hall

Free admission

Senior Recital: David Murray, baritone

Saturday, Mar. 9, 7:30 p.m. | Nunemaker Auditorium

Free admission

Graduate Recital: Frank Convit, baritone

Sunday, Mar. 10, 7:30 p.m. | Roussel Hall

Free admission

49th Annual Loyola Jazz Festival with Scott Wendholt

Mar. 15 & 16 | Roussel Hall

American Songbook

Sunday, Mar. 17, 3:00 p.m. | Roussel Hall

Ticket required

For more information, visit presents.loyno.edu or call (504) 865-2074.