

Mike Holober

Pianist/Composer/Arranger/Conductor/Educator

Trained as a classical pianist and conductor, Mike Holober began his apprenticeship as a jazz pianist and composer after moving to New York City in 1986. He has released 5 recordings as a leader and can be heard on over 70 recordings as a sideman. He has also served as a producer and conductor for several recordings.

Mike's projects include "Mike Holober & Balancing Act," an octet with voice, "The Gotham Jazz Orchestra," and "The Mike Holober Quintet." He also regularly performs in duo settings with artists such as trumpeter Marvin Stamm and tenor saxophonist Jason Rigby.

Mike is a 2017-18 recipient of a Chamber Music America New Jazz Works Grant for "Mike Holober & Balancing Act," whose eponymous premiere recording was released on Palmetto Records in 2015. The recording received a 4-star review from *Downbeat Magazine* and appeared on many best-of lists for 2015. *Balancing Act* features Kate McGarry, Dick Oatts, Jason Rigby, Marvin Stamm, Mark Patterson, John Hebert, and Brian Blade.

Mike's Chamber Music America commission, titled *Don't Let Go*, was premiered at Symphony Space (the Leonard Nimoy Thalia) in June 2018, and is structured as a song-cycle in the tradition of Robert Schumann, Samuel Barber, and Ralph Vaughn-Williams. *Don't Let Go* explores the nuances and complexities of the concept of hope in the context of current social, political, and environmental realities.

After a busy period of writing and arranging for some of the world's most renowned large ensembles, Mike has returned to the helm of his own stellar big band, The Gotham Jazz Orchestra (GoJO) with a new recording, titled *Hiding Out*, to be released in August 2019 on ZOHO records. The double CD will feature extended works commissioned for the Westchester Jazz Orchestra (WJO) and GoJO. These works include *Hiding Out*, commissioned for GoJO by The Philadelphia Museum of Art (funded by the Pew Foundation), *Flow*, commissioned by WJO (funded by a NYSCA Individual Artist's Grant), and *Jumble*, commissioned by The U.S. Army Jazz Knights of West Point. The recording also includes an arrangement of Jobim's *Caminhos Cruzados*, a WJO commission that was written as a feature for trumpet master Marvin Stamm. Other featured artists on *Hiding Out* include Billy Drewes, Jason Rigby, Scott Wendholt, Adam Kolker, Jon Gordon, Steve Cardenas, and Jesse Lewis.

The Gotham Jazz Orchestra's two previous recordings, *Thought Trains* (2005, Sons of Sound Records) and *Quake* (2009, Sunnyside Records) both received 4-star reviews in *Downbeat Magazine*, and were listed as one of the magazine's outstanding CDs of that year. The quintet's recordings, *Canyon* and *Wish List* (2003/2007, Sons of Sound Records) feature Tim Ries on saxophone, Brian Blade on drums, Wolfgang Muthspiel on guitar, and Scott Colley and John Patitucci on bass. Upcoming projects include *In The Wind* for piano trio with 7 winds, guitar, harmonica, and voice, and *This Rock We're On: Imaginary Letters* -- an extended work in the form of an oratorio for jazz orchestra, voice, cello, and percussion. The work celebrates explorers, conservationists, writers, and photographers whose lives have been inspired by the natural world.

Mike's work as a composer and arranger has earned him a reputation as one of the jazz scene's most respected jazz composers and arrangers. From 2007 - 2015 he was Associate Director of the BMI Jazz Composer's Workshop, where he taught with Director Jim McNeely. The brainchild of founding directors Bob Brookmeyer and Manny Albam, The BMI Jazz Composers Workshop is widely considered the finishing school for jazz orchestra writers, and the international jazz scene is heavily populated by composers who have honed their craft under the tutelage of the workshop's directors.

From 2007 – 2013 Mike served as Artistic Director/Conductor of the Westchester Jazz Orchestra (WJO), a non-profit organization that performed a regular program of newly commissioned works each concert season. During his tenure Mike commissioned over 140 new works for jazz orchestra, making the organization one of the leading producers of new jazz works. With WJO Mike wrote and conducted for Joe Lovano, Kate McGarry, Janis Siegal, John Scofield, John Patitucci, Randy Brecker, and Paquito D'Rivera. WJO's 2011 recording *Maiden Voyage Suite*, a reworking of the Herbie Hancock masterpiece, was on multiple best-of lists with *Downbeat Magazine* calling it "nearly perfect." Mike served as conductor, artistic director, and lead arranger for this project.

Mike has also worked extensively overseas. From 2011 – 2015 he was Associate Guest Conductor of the HR Big Band (Hessischer Rundfunk - Frankfurt, Germany), and he has served as guest conductor of the WDR Big Band (WestDeutsche Rundfunk - Cologne, Germany), as well as The Zagreb Jazz Orkestar, The Stockholm Jazz Orchestra, and many others.

Projects with the HR Big Band include writing and conducting for Kurt Rosenwinkel, Billy Cobham, Jane Monheit, Terje Rypdal, Dr. Lonnie Smith,

Miguel Zenon, and a suite based on the works of Frank Zappa entitled *Jazz From Hel*, which was performed at the Frankfurt Jazz Festival in 2015. With the WDR Big Band he has written and conducted projects for Avishai Cohen/Eli Degibri and for legendary drummer Al Foster. He has also written works for WDR with Joshua Redman, and miscellaneous other works for the band.

Mike has also recently written a project for tenor saxophonist Eli Degibri with jazz orchestra and strings which was produced at the Israeli Opera House in Tel Aviv and is due for release as a DVD. Other recent writing projects include a work for the Stockholm Jazz Orchestra recording *Today*, arrangements for the RTV Big Band in Slovenia, and multiple arrangements for pianist Fred Hersch.

Additionally Mike's arrangements and compositions have been performed and/or recorded by UMO (Helsinki, Finland), RTV Big Band (Ljubljana, Slovenia), The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, Zagreb JazzOrkestar, The Airmen Of Note, The Army Blues, The US Army Jazz Knights, Prism Saxophone Quartet, New York Saxophone Quartet, American Saxophone Quartet, The Catskill Symphony Orchestra, The Schenectady Symphony Orchestra, The Minnesota Jazz Orchestra, and many New York City based small jazz groups. His works are also programmed regularly world-wide by student groups at The Eastman School of Music, The Manhattan School of Music Jazz, Innsbruck Music Conservatory (Austria), The University of Michigan, University of Northern Colorado, The University of Colorado, The University of Toronto, Indiana University, Ball State University, The University of Vermont, Bowling Green State University, James Madison University, Lawrence University, Kunstuniversität Graz (KUG, Graz, Austria), MIT, and independent student groups such as Jazz Band Classic (NY Youth Symphony), and The Saarland Youth Jazz Orchestra (Germany), among many others.

Mike can be heard as a sideman on over 70 recordings. He has recorded and performed with The Tim Ries Rolling Stones Project, Nick Brignola, Jason Rigby, Dave Pietro, The NewYorkestra, Pete McGuinness, Charles Pillow, The Tony Kadleck Jazz Orchestra, and alongside fellow sidemen such as John Abercrombie, Tim Hagans, Randy Brecker, Peter Erskine, and others. Mike is also called on regularly both as producer and conductor for various recording projects. Additionally he has performed with artists such as Tim Ries, John Patitucci, Marvin Stamm, Ben Kono, Rufus Reid, Cameron Brown, Andrew Sterman, J. P. Jofre, Scott Wendholt, Mark Patterson, Scott Reeves, and with jazz orchestras led by John Fedchock, Scott Reeves, Alan Ferber, Tony Kadleck, Asuka Kakitani, Anita Brown,

Javier Arau, and Andrew Rathbun, in addition to The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and the Stockholm Jazz Orchestra.

In 2005 Mike toured Venezuela as a Cultural Connect Envoy for the U. S. State Department, playing concerts of his original works for jazz quintet and orchestra with symphonies in Merida, Maracaibo, Caracas, and Valencia. He has been active as a composer in the contemporary classical idiom with commissions for various chamber works and he is currently composer in residence of the Gotham Wind Symphony (2004-present). GWS is a 45-member wind ensemble made up of classical, commercial, and jazz musicians from the NYC music world. Mike has written a commissioned work for each of their four recordings, also serving as pianist.

A Full Professor at The City College of NY (1995-present), Mike directs jazz ensembles and teaches courses in jazz composition and arranging, and a rhythm section seminar. At City College he was recently endowed as the inaugural *Stuart Z. Katz Professor of Humanities and the Arts* (2017-2018).

Mike is a member of the distinguished Steinway Artists roster. He is a five-time MacDowell Fellow, Ucross Foundation Fellow, and Corporation of Yaddo Guest. In November 2019 he will be in residence at the Brush Creek Center for the Arts. He also teaches composing and arranging at The Manhattan School of Music, and has taught for the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. He has enjoyed residencies at Universities throughout the U.S. and Europe including Indiana University of Toronto, University of Michigan, Kunstuniversität Graz, and many others.

Much of Mike's music is inspired by the natural world and by champions of that world. An avid outdoorsman, he has hiked and climbed many of the major ranges in the United States and Europe. He belongs to many environmental organizations and has twice been employed as a trip leader, taking clients hiking and skiing in the northeast or canoeing and backpacking in the north woods of the Midwest. When he is not at his beloved 1909 Steinway model 'C' he can be found somewhere on the trail.