

FACULTY BIOS



Matt Avery is a freelance performer, composer, arranger, and educator based in Burlington, Vermont. His education includes a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from the University of Vermont (class of 2016), as well as a Master's degree in Jazz Studies from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign (class of 2019). A native of Barre, Matt has been connected to the Vermont music scene for over twelve years, performing with local legends such as Ray Vega, Brian McCarthy, David Grippo, Kat Wright, and many more. More recently, he has taken to the high seas as a house-band trombonist for Princess Cruise Lines, performing alongside internationally-acclaimed entertainers from all over the world. However, while back at home, Matt remains active in the Burlington jazz scene performing with his own groups and several local and regional bands. Prior to his return to Princess, Matt worked as an affiliate jazz trombone instructor for the University of Vermont.



Caleb Bronz, a drummer based in Burlington, Vermont, plays and records with a wide variety of groups and artists including the Ray Vega Latin Jazz Sextet, Barika, The Myra Flynn Band, Daby Toure, Johnny A, Mighty Sam McLain and more. His professional touring experience includes many tours of Europe at festivals such as the Stockholm Jazz Festival as well as trips to Russia, Turkey, Thailand, and much of the U.S. He's currently performing regionally with several groups, recording music, and teaching drumset lessons and audio engineering classes at The University of Vermont.



Randal Pierce is a Burlington based musician who splits his time between working in VT and NYC. As a jazz musician, Randal has played for the Montreal Jazz Festival, headed mainstage shows for the Burlington Discover Jazz Festival and hosts a weekly jazz jam session at The 126 in downtown Burlington. Randal is also active as a composer, educator and music director for theaters throughout the Northeast and for the UVM Department of Theater and Dance.



Composer **Kyle Saulnier**'s work has been celebrated by *Downbeat* as "a Great American Songbook of another order." His music has been performed by the Awakening Orchestra, the Metropole Orkest, the Westerlies, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, the Louisiana Philharmonic, Saturn People's Sound Collective, and TURNmusic, among others, and he has scored for television, advertising, and independent film projects. As a performer, Kyle leads and conducts the Awakening Orchestra, and co-leads the collaborative ensembles Edna and Cleary/Gagnon/Saulnier. He performs on acoustic bass and baritone saxophone, and has premiered new works by Eve Beglarian and Erik Nielsen, and appeared with artists including Moppa Elliott, Myra Flynn, Kat Wright, Francesca Blanchard, Brian Boyes, Michael Chorney, and LOVECRAFT. Kyle is the artistic director of the Vermont Jazz Ensemble and the director of the Vermont Youth Symphony's Jazz Program. He has served as music faculty at Middlebury College, the University of Vermont, Quinnipiac University, and Northern Vermont University, and is active with the visionary Music-COMP mentoring program.



One of Vermont's most versatile and in-demand saxophonists and jazz musicians, **Jake Whitesell** teaches saxophone and performs around the state with a variety of bands including Jake Whitesell Trio, Saturn People's Sound Collective, Vermont Jazz Ensemble, Brian McCarthy Jazz Orchestra, Guagua, Kerubo, Chad Hollister Band, and The Grift. Jake has performed in concert with notable artists such as The Temptations, John Pizzarelli, Ray Vega, and Nick Cassarino, and Kat Wright. Jake toured extensively with Kat Wright from 2009 to 2021, playing at numerous venues and festivals including N.P.R. Mountain Stage and Jam Cruise, and opening for well-known bands such as The Doobie Brothers, Soulive, Grace Potter, The Original Wailers, Lake Street Dive, The Motet, The Wood Brothers, and Rubblebucket. Jake graduated in 2005 from The Crane School of Music at S.U.N.Y. Potsdam with a B.M. in Saxophone Performance.



Connor Young is a Vermont native and discovered his passion for the trumpet at age 12. Throughout high school, he regularly participated in the All-State Music Festival, receiving mentorship from esteemed educators. After graduation, he pursued formal jazz studies at McGill University, learning under distinguished faculty members. Since earning his degree in 2018, Connor has established himself in Burlington, Vermont, collaborating with prominent artists and groups around Vermont while also leading his own trio and quartet. He has recorded two albums that span from jazz to folk and was recently awarded a creation grant from the Vermont Arts Council to produce his next jazz record.