

Chuck Owen is Distinguished University Professor of Jazz Studies at the University of South Florida where he also serves as the founding Director of the USF Center for Jazz Composition. A committed, passionate, and nationally respected educator for over 30 years; he is recognized these days, however, just as readily for his unique compositional voice and creative, colorful approach to arranging/orchestration. While steeped thoroughly in the jazz tradition; Owen does not hesitate to draw from a diverse array of additional influences - ranging from contemporary classical and American folk/blues to Latin styles, funk/hip-hop, and even country (and western!). The result is an evocative, thoughtful, and very frequently playful/joyous body of work.

Owen's most recent work ***River Runs, A Concerto for Jazz Guitar, Saxophone, & Orchestra*** is a 5-movement, hour-long, genre-bending composition that draws its inspiration from various American Rivers , . . . and specifically, Owen's float trips down them. Composed under the auspices of a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship, the work soars majestically through its unique blend of large-scale symphonic forces, propulsive jazz rhythms, evocative solos, and tinges of folk/roots touches (Owen at one point referencing - and thoroughly deconstructing- the folk-classic "Shenandoah"). Of *River Runs*, producer/composer Bob Belden states simply, "Jazz has never sounded better!" while bassist/composer, Rufus Reid, calls it " . . . a tour de force in contemporary orchestral composition."

Since 1995, however, Owen's primary creative outlet has been the ***Jazz Surge***. While definitely "NOT your mother's big band!" (*All About Jazz*) the 18-piece ensemble blends some of Florida's finest professional jazz musicians with "ambitious, forward-thinking compositions" (*Downbeat*). Owen founded the group; conducting, composing, and arranging all of the music on their first three CDs. With prominent guest stints from the likes of John Abercrombie, Nat Adderley, Benny Golson, and Ingrid Jensen amongst others, these recordings served to introduce the ensemble and Owen to an international audience. *JazzTimes* critic, David Franklin, included their first release on his list of the 5 best jazz CDs of 1996 while Herb Wong observed "Owen paints with intriguing hues... refreshes with lyrical lines ... (and) is suffused with some of the tastiest contemporary sounds around." (*Jazz Educators Journal*).

However, it was ***The Comet's Tail*** (2009), the *Surge*'s fourth recording which clearly captured the imagination of critics and audiences around the world. A departure from previous efforts, it celebrated the compositional output of the late jazz icon, Michael Brecker by re-envisioning his work through the eyes of various arrangers (including frequent Brecker collaborators, Gil Goldstein & Vince Mendoza) in addition to Owen himself. Joining the *Surge* were a host of special guests (Randy Brecker, Dave Liebman, Joe Lovano, Mike Mainieri, Adam Nussbaum, & Mike Stern) all of whom were frequent Brecker collaborators. A 2009 Grammy nomination, along with many "best of the year" mentions, and critical raves followed.

The *Surge* has performed at a wide range of festivals, conferences, and clubs; serving as the resident orchestra for Central Florida's *Jazz Masterworks Series* as well as the *International Jazz Composer's Symposium*. These events, produced by Owen in conjunction with the USF Center for Jazz Composition (CJC), resulted in a steady stream of performances between 2005 and 2008 with noted jazz composers such as: Bob Brookmeyer, John Clayton, Chick Corea, Dave Douglas, Slide Hampton, Bill Holman, Jim McNeely, Bob Mintzer, and Gerald Wilson along with many, many others.

In addition to his work with Surge, Owen has undertaken a fairly diverse body of commissions and projects. Collaborations with the Netherlands' Metropole Orchestra, the U.S. Army Jazz Ambassadors, Confluences, and tenor saxophonist Jack Wilkins have all resulted in significant contributions on recordings. Other performances include the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orch., the Tonight Show Orch., and the Cincinnati Symphony Pops Orch. among others. In addition to his recent Guggenheim Fellowship, Owen is the recipient of the prestigious 2000 IAJE/ASCAP commission in honor of Louis Armstrong and three Florida DCA Individual Artist Fellowships. He has over 70 published compositions for jazz ensemble and is a frequent guest artist and clinician at universities throughout the country.

Born in Norfolk, VA, Owen spent his elementary school days in Omaha, NE before his family moved to Cincinnati (which remains home for his brother, Jim, and his mother's extended family). Following a year at the College of Wooster (OH), Owen matriculated to the University of North Texas where he received a BM in Music Education (trombone concentration). There, a host of mentors and friends, along with a dozen jazz "lab" bands all hungry for new music, proved the perfect incubator for a budding composer/arranger. He went on to earn his MA in Orchestral Conducting (!) at California State University, Northridge before spending another couple of years in Los Angeles free-lancing and apprenticing with film composer, Patrick Williams, via an National Endowment for the Arts Study Grant.

In 1981 Owen moved (along with his wife and 3 month old daughter, Nicole) to Tampa to accept the first dedicated jazz faculty post at the University of South Florida. With the enviable and exhilarating opportunity to build a program from scratch - designing virtually every facet of the curriculum and degree programs - Owen immersed himself in teaching. With the arrival of Jack Wilkins on the USF faculty roughly a dozen years later, however, it was simply a matter of time before the reins of this now nationally recognized program could be handed over - freeing Owen up to refocus his energies on composing & further developing the jazz composition program at USF.

In 2004, a long held vision, the USF Center for Jazz Composition, was birthed . . . with Owen as its Director. Espousing a mission that sought to illuminate the role of the composer in jazz as well as to assist in its continuing development, the CJC launched several prominent programs: the Jazz Composers' Symposium, the International Jazz Arranging Competition, the Jazz Masterworks Series, & the Michael Brecker Tribute Project - leading to the publication of the Center's first CD with Owen as producer/arranger/conductor. Along the way, several works have been commissioned, others transcribed, and dozens have been premiered.

Owen has been honored with several awards for teaching including a "President's Award for Faculty Excellence" in 2003. Owen has served the profession as President of the International Association for Jazz Education, as "governor" for the Florida Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, and as a grants panelist for the Pulitzer Prize in Music, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Grammy Awards, the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, and numerous others. He is the author of several articles on jazz composition and for years routinely reviewed new music for the Jazz Educators Journal.