

# The Jazz Surge

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***THE COMET'S TAIL: PERFORMING THE COMPOSITIONS OF MICHAEL BRECKER*** is the fourth CD released by this ground-breaking big band based in Central Florida. Described alternatively as inventive, colorful, playful, provocative, and swinging; the Surge's three previous CDs have caught the imagination of fans and critics alike. JazzTimes journalist, David Franklin, included the band's first release in his "5 best CDs of 1996" while critics from other noted jazz publications have consistently offered up glowing reviews. With guest appearances from such jazz luminaries as the late Nat Adderley, Benny Golson, John Abercrombie, Ingrid Jensen, Tim Hagans, and others, their CDs have consistently charted on national jazz radio and have appeared on playlists throughout the world – from the Far East to South America and Europe.

Three appearances before enthusiastic crowds at IAJE Conferences: Atlanta (1996) – performing works from their 1<sup>st</sup> CD; New York (2001) – premiering Chuck's ASCAP/IAJE commissioned work; & New York (2004) – performing works from "Here We Are" with Ingrid Jensen and Rob Thomas) cemented their reputation for thrilling, energetic performances.

The band was founded in 1995 by its Director, Chuck Owen, who initially conceived of a jazz repertory ensemble that might serve a region well beyond its Tampa base. He, therefore, adopted the "South Eastern Repertory Jazz Ensemble" or SERJE as its initial name. After the first few rehearsals, however, Chuck was so enamored with the personnel and thrilled with their interpretation of his music that he decided to claim it almost exclusively for himself. SERJE became Surge and for over 10 years the band performed virtually no music other than that of Chuck's.

In 2004, another venture of Chuck Owen's was launched - the USF Center for Jazz Composition. With the Center's ambitious and broad-ranging programming, the need for a resident jazz orchestra was quickly apparent . . .and immediately fell to the Jazz Surge. So, in April 2005, the CJC debuted its Jazz Masterworks series. For the next 3 ½ years the Surge performed over 35 concert, introducing audiences throughout Central Florida to classic jazz repertory while backing a continual stream of renowned guest jazz composers/artists. Included in this group were luminaries such as: Karrin Allyson, Randy Brecker, Chick Corea, Nneena Freelon, Slide Hampton, Bob Mintzer, and Gerald Wilson. During this same time, the CJC twice hosted the International Jazz Composers' Symposium – bringing jazz composers from all over the country (and beyond) to Tampa for 3 days of lectures, workshops, concerts, and new music sessions. Once again, the Surge served as official ensemble-in-residence reading the compositions of over two dozen composers by day, while presenting the music of several of the featured guest artists – Bob Brookmeyer, Bill Holman, & Jim McNeely - in concert at night. But the largest project the Surge has undertaken in conjunction with the CJC has been the Michael Brecker Tribute project which has, ultimately, resulted in their fourth CD.

Backgrounds of the remarkable personnel of the Surge are as varied as their talents – the only commonality being their dedication to their craft and a list of personal performance credits a mile long! Most work as free-lance musicians. Six, however, are tenured or tenure-track professors (at 4 different Universities), one works for a prominent music manufacturer, and one is employed as an engineer! Like many great bands, the ensemble's make-up has been incredibly stable over its 14+ years - with 7 of today's band members appearing on its first CD (as well as every one since) and only one position having changed more than once during that time.