

Chuck Owen

A committed, passionate, and nationally respected jazz educator for over 35 years; Chuck Owen is recognized equally and throughout the jazz industry for his unique compositional voice. Thoughtful, creative, evocative, and intensely personal . . . his compositions and arrangements are steeped in the jazz tradition but draw liberally and often playfully from a diverse array of additional influences that include contemporary classical, American folk/roots music, Latin, funk, hip-hop. . . even country!

The recipient of a 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship and five individual GRAMMY nominations, Owen has written for or had his compositions performed by the: Netherlands' Metropole Orch., Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orch., Tonight Show Orchestra, Brussels Jazz Orch., Aarhus Jazz Orch. (Denmark), Scottish National Jazz Orch., Cincinnati Symphony, US Army Jazz Ambassadors and numerous others.

Since founding it in 1995, Owen's primary creative outlet has been the 19-piece **Jazz Surge**. Owen has served as conductor, primary composer/arranger, and producer of all of its six highly-feted CDs – including **River Runs** (2013), a stunning 5 movement genre-bending work Rufus Reid described as, “. . . .a tour de force of contemporary orchestral composition” and **The Comet's Tail** (2009), critically acclaimed as “riotous and joyous” (JazzTimes), “muscular” (Downbeat), and “deserving of universal attention” (All Music Guide). Both recordings garnered Grammy nominations with Chuck individually honored in 2014 with Grammy nominations for both *Best Instrumental Composition & Best Instrumental Arrangement*.

If the Jazz Surge had somehow managed to stay under the radar following those critical successes, **Whispers On the Wind**, the ensemble's 2017 release, blew the roof off of that! Recognized with 4 Grammy Nominations, the CD was also named #1 Big Band Album in the 39th Annual Jazz Station Awards amongst many other end of year honors and accolades: “a masterpiece” (Sounds of Timeless Jazz), “creative, poetic, . . . wildly personal” (Buffalo News), and “. . . an impossibly winsome combination of slow burn and spontaneous combustion” (Medium.com).

Expanding on the band's long-simmering American folk/roots leanings, **Whispers** was conceived as a suite of 7 pieces linked by a somewhat ethereal vision and examination of the American tradition: its values, landmarks, folklore, heroes, and myths. Associating quotes from authors Stephen King, Larry McMurtry, and Cormac McCarthy; Owen's music displays a clear affinity for the local color, wry sense of humor, unique personalities, strong sense of place, and disarmingly unsentimental honesty for which these authors are noted.

Enlisting the evocative violin of **Sara Caswell**, the luminescent harmonica of **Gregoire Maret**, and an array of acoustic guitars deftly played by **Corey Christiansen**; Owen has created a sound that is drenched in atmosphere – at times buoyant, playful, and triumphant - at others, melancholy and mysterious; but always coming straight out of the American heartland. **Randy Brecker**, who last appeared with the Surge on ***A Comet's Tail***, returns with a blistering solo on ***Into the Blue*** as well as a rollicking turn on ***Gunslingers***.

Owen presently holds the honorific title of “Distinguished University Professor” at the University of South Florida and continues as Director of the USF Jazz Ensemble. He is the past recipient of the USF *President’s Award for Faculty Excellence* as well as both the *Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award* and *Outstanding Research Award*.

Presently serving as President of ISJAC (International Society of Jazz Arrangers & Composers), an organization he was instrumental in founding, Owen formerly served as President of the International Association for Jazz Education, as a “governor” for the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, and as a panelist (Chair) for the Pulitzer Prize in Music, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Grammy Awards, and numerous regional arts associations.