



# Hall of Fame Inductee

Name: CHRISTOPHER MERZ

Instrument: Saxophone/Educator

Year Inducted: 2023

Although he may not call Des Moines home, saxophonist Chris Merz has had a tremendous impact on many area musicians who attended the University of Northern Iowa where he served as director of jazz studies since 2002. Many of those students performed in the award-winning UNI Jazz Band One under Chris' direction. The band traveled to South Africa, Thailand and Cuba and recorded 18 albums featuring many original compositions and arrangements by students and faculty members.

The 2016 recipient of the John L. Baker Faculty Development award, Chris was inducted into the Iowa Jazz Educators' Hall of Fame in 2015, is a past president of Jazz Educators of Iowa (JEI) and the founder and director of the UNI Combo Camp. Many of the students who attend the CJC First Sunday of the month jam sessions have benefitted greatly from their experiences at that camp. Chris has also made the drive to Des Moines to share his passion and skill with students attending those jam sessions.

As a saxophonist, Chris' recording credits include Steve McCraven, Darius Brubeck, Bob Washut, John Rapson and Jon Snell, as well as his own projects — Counterculture, the Michael Conrad/Christopher Merz Duo (MC/CM), The X-tet, and Equilateral. His current projects include The Iowa Jazz Composers' Orchestra, The Bob Washut Emeritet, Steve Grismore's Big Fun, Christopher's Very Happy. Band, and Shorter Stories. Many of those groups have made appearances in Des Moines. Chris also keeps busy with his own compositions which are published through ejazzlines and UNC Jazz Press.



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