

FSU Winds helps in 'Unfolding' art of jazz, science

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Richard Clary, Florida State University Professor of Music and Senior Band Conductor and Director of Wind Ensemble Studies, first heard Wayne Shorter's new jazz composition, "The Unfolding" at the Kennedy Center this past fall.

Saxophonist, composer, and National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master, Shorter conceived the lyrical and mostly improvisational work to represent the scientific interpretations of the Big Bang theory's "unfolding of the space-time continuum." Clary was thrilled that Opening Nights Performing Arts co-commissioned the work, and that he and the FSU Chamber Winds would share the stage with the famous jazz quartet.

The first time Clary encountered Shorter's music was as a freshman playing in Arizona State University's graduate jazz combo. He recalls the harmonically rich arrangements by one of the greatest living jazz composers to be the hardest pieces the group had to play. As a trombone player in the university music program, Clary was exposed to both studio and live experiences — playing everywhere from a country western band to cover bands for Chicago; Blood, Sweat, and Tears; and Earth, Wind and Fire.

Prior to college, he was part of his high school jazz ensemble which was "a disorienting and exciting experience" to hear and play music that he had only come into contact with on television. In middle school, he felt invigorated by jazz music after seeing Ray Charles and his orchestra in sixth grade, but truly felt his first connection with music in elementary school when he saw the middle school band perform, with "the concussion of the bass drum" on his chest giving him "a heart massage."

"I'm the product of very good public school music experiences," says Clary. "In the process of being in comprehensive band programs in high school and undergrad, trombones are found in every musical environment. Aside from playing in symphony orchestras, you're also playing in shows or jazz bands."

It was his college band conductor and mentor, Dr. Richard E. Strange that set him on a different path entirely. He demonstrated to Clary that the position of college band conductor could be "dignified, elegant, and artistic," setting him off on his own career working as a band director for public schools in the Phoenix area. While completing



If you go

What: Opening Nights presents the Wayne Shorter Quartet

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 13

Where: Ruby Diamond Concert Hall, 222 South Copeland St.

Cost: \$65 Gold Circle, \$55/ \$45 Sections A and B, \$15 Students

Online: openingnights.fsu.edu

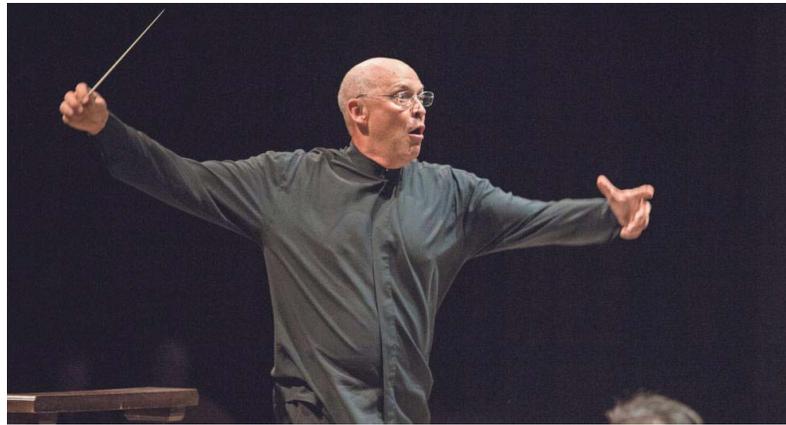
course work for a doctoral degree at the University of Washington, he worked with another mentor, Peter Erös, a Hungarian trained conductor who encouraged him to apply for collegiate positions.

At Florida State since 2003, Clary works mostly with graduate and doctoral students. He tries to impart a style of conducting that challenges these advanced players and measures them by pre-professional standards, thus facilitating their commitment to the process of playing and how to best express themselves as artists. He also tries to drive home the importance of professionalism and leaving good lasting impressions in order to move forward in the industry.

"I think most of the students would tell you I'm pretty high magnitude," said Clary. "I expect a lot from them because I have a very good sense of their individual and collective potential. Dr. Strange used to tell us that the only difference between an amateur musician and a professional musician is the amateur thinks it's OK to sound bad sometimes. This is what I'm trying to pay forward to these young, talented people, but I try to make them laugh every time I can because that's just the way I am."

Throughout his career, he's had the pleasure of leading groups like the University of Kentucky's Wind Ensemble and the FSU Wind Orchestra to two national college band conventions. Recently, Clary was proud to conduct the FSU Wind Orchestra on a live recording of John Mackey's piece, "Turning" which was used as the score for an Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater piece.

Creatively, he carefully selects works from the canon, whether they be brand new or as revered as Mozart, that will give his graduate students a better idea of what music is involved in the repertoire. He likens his role conducting for jazz to simultaneously being a cruise director and organizational manager, sometimes leading open sections for improvised



Richard Clary directs the College of Music University Wind Orchestra concert.

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solos or cueing background sounds.

In preparation for the Opening Nights performance with the Wayne Shorter Quartet, he is giving his students a range of rehearsal experiences with the loosely written score so that they know how to play it in the punchy style that it's written in, or romantic sound he heard it played as in Washington, D.C.

"I like being involved with the players in what amounts to artistic problem solving," explains Clary. "We'll get three chances to rehearse with the quartet so it's kind of a high wire act. You can be in a rehearsal and encounter a part in a composition that doesn't seem to work for one reason or another. I always consider that part detective work and part experimenting in the sandbox to see if I can find a way to better represent the piece."

Ultimately, Clary hopes to translate the essence of what he saw and felt at the Kennedy Center into Ruby Dia-

mond Hall with his selected 10 players from the Chamber Winds, and feels fortunate for the opportunity to conduct such a high-caliber, brand-new jazz work that shares a tour bill with venues like the Monterey Jazz Festival and the Jazztopad Festival in Poland. Clary also recognizes this to be a great opportunity for the FSU Chamber Winds to no longer be Tallahassee's best-kept secret.

"The people that play in my groups might be some of the hardest working folks in the College of Music," says Clary. "I want to do the best job that I can for these wonderful people who have invested time, money, and energy into a life in the arts and not really understand what that's going to look like. I admire their courage. My highest calling is to inspire them by what they're doing and give them as many tools as I possibly can to help them have access to the musical environments that they covet in their dreams."