

JUDGES

GWYN REYNOLDS



Gwyn Reynolds was drawn to the saxophone in his formative years and fell in love with the playing of Dexter Gordon, whom he has transcribed extensively. Areas of musical interest include the improvisations of trumpeter Roy Hargrove and the composition of Oliver Nelson and Dave Holland. He is a regular performer at Jazz and Blues festivals throughout the country and has composed for numerous projects, including the Symposium Jazz Orchestra and the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra.

He is a founding member of the band 'Sumo' which has just released its second album 'Shiko'; ten original compositions featuring the quartet plus six guest players/composers.

Over the last eighteen years at Ara, Gwyn has taught a number of subjects, including specialist ensembles, improvisation and major study (saxophone). His main teaching subject is jazz composition/arranging, which has developed into a vibrant exciting alternative course of study on the jazz pathway. He is currently programme leader of Ara Musical Arts.

Gwyn has studied at a number of institutions throughout the country, including Auckland University, Wellington Polytechnic (now Massey University) [Dip Exec, Jazz], Victoria University [B Mus Comp] and Canterbury University [BMus Hons], as well as a two-year music scholarship in Bremen, Germany. He is currently on academic sabbatical studying a Master of Arts.

MITCHELL THOMAS



Mitchell Thomas is a freelance drummer, percussionist and teacher based in Christchurch, NZ. Specializing in jazz performance, he has gained a Bachelor of Music Arts (Jazz Performance - Drum Set) from ARA Music Arts.

During his study Mitchell became heavily involved in the music community in Christchurch, playing a range of different settings and styles.

A regular member of the hard-hitting Symposium Big Band, he is also involved with other local jazz projects such as *The Kate Taylor Quartet*, *The Darren Pickering Quartet*, *Heather Webb Trio/Quartet*, *Georgie Clifford Music* and has worked with local legends, Tom Rainey, Cameron Pearce, Ali Harper, Reuben Derrick and Michael Story.

A big fan of musical theatre, Mitchell has played in musicals for Showbiz, The Court Theatre, NASDA and small-scale theatre and high school projects. His Showbiz credits include: *Wicked*. Court Theatre credits include: *End of the Rainbow*, and *Blood Brothers*. NASDA credits include: *Footloose*, *Cabaret*, and *Pippin*. Other credits include: *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story*, *Anything Goes*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *The Threepenny Opera*.

He has gained a wealth of experience playing in pop music groups, routinely playing into the early hours with one of Christchurch's finest party bands *OFF THE CHARTS*, as well as having performed extensively with Motown covers band *Eskimotown* for four years.

With a passion to continue learning, Mitchell is now studying world music and taking percussion lessons with Doug Brush (Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, ARA Music Arts). He is currently a member of the Christchurch Afro-Cuban ensemble - a group playing various Afro-Cuban music styles on a range of percussion instruments.

As a leader, Mitchell runs *The Loniou*s - a group solely dedicated to performing the music of the great jazz pianist Thelonious Monk.

CHRIS WETHEY



Chris Wethey is a bassist from Christchurch. Since graduating from ARA Music Arts, he has performed extensively around New Zealand and abroad. He has played in numerous settings: jazz festivals, on cruise ships, with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, tours around the country and musical theatre work with the Court Theatre, Showbiz and Free Theatre.

He also has a keen interest in music production and is releasing an EP later this year.

BRAD KANG



Guitarist Brad Kang has moved back home to Christchurch after a spell in the United States earning his Bachelor of Music in jazz guitar at the prestigious University of North Texas.

The 2015 magna cum laude graduate was an active part of the jazz scene in Denton, Texas and the larger Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex as well as being a part of the world-renowned One O'Clock Lab Band. Their album 'Lab 2015', which Kang was a part of as a composer and player, received a Grammy nomination for one of the tracks 'Neil'.

He is a currently part of the faculty at The Ara Institute of Canterbury in Christchurch. Kang has played in jazz festivals in Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch and Queenstown

as well as the United States and Amsterdam. He was awarded the Best of Fest People's Choice Award at the Wellington Jazz Festival in 2017.

Brad has recently released his debut EP "Farewell For Now", a culmination of his five years spent in Denton, Texas. The all-originals release features the brightest young musicians of the Dallas-Fort Worth jazz scene in Alex Fraile (Alto Saxophone), Mark Hartsuch (Tenor Saxophone), Greg Santa-Croce (Piano), Mike Luzecky (Bass) and Matt Young (Drums).

He has performed with household names in the international jazz scene such as Bobby McFerrin, Arturo Sandoval, Doc Severinson, Mike LeDonne, Wycliffe Gordon, Mike Clark and Adam Larson.

Brad has been featured on albums by Nolan Byrd, Perrin Grace, Sergio Pamies, AMP Trio, Sky Window, One O'Clock Lab Band and the Two O'Clock Lab Band.

KATE TAYLOR



DipJazz.BMus.Post Grad Dip Events Management.

Kate has sung almost every style and genre of music there is. Her passion for jazz was fueled at Ara Music Arts completing a Diploma in Jazz and Bachelor of Music (Canterbury University). During this time Kate had the pleasure of singing backing vocals for local talent LA Mitchell, a highlight of which was being the opening act for international sensation Stevie Wonder.

Kate's musical talents took her to Sydney where she completed a year at NIDA, a most prestigious music/theatre school in Australia. Here she worked with Tyran Parke and Robert Bertram, two well renowned stage and theatre performers. Kate's theatre credits include Showbiz Christchurch, The Court Theatre, Variety Theatre Ashburton and independent theatre company 'Magnitude' where she has performed in a variety of lead roles and ensembles.

Another highlight of Kate's career was her sell out show at the International Jazz and Blues festival in Christchurch in 2010 where she performed the perfected big band works of her Grandfather Doug Kelly. In 2015 Kate revived Doug's work alongside the Garden City Big band celebrating the music of both her Granddad, and esteemed jazz pianist Doug Caldwell. Kate now co-runs and is the front woman for New Zealand's All Girl Big Band

In May of 2016 Kate had the honour of organizing and performing in the Ara Music arts 25th anniversary celebration held at the Theatre Royal as a part of the Cavell Leitch Jazz and Blues festival. She also sold out her own headline act celebrating the music of Stevie Wonder at the transitional Cathedral.

Kate joined Ara Music arts in 2013 as the vocal program leader for Jazz and contemporary music. She is so pleased to be a part of such a brilliant establishment, where she found her own voice many years ago.

SCOTT TAITOKO



Known as a talented and accomplished trombonist in a wide variety of genres, Scott's reputation has made him the player of choice for numerous ensembles around New Zealand and overseas. He has worked as musical director, arranger and trombonist on board cruise ships and has played many festival and concert engagements throughout New Zealand and the South Pacific. Scott is currently Associate Principal Trombone for the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and performs regularly with iconic New Zealand band Salmonella Dub. He is also a tutor on the Music Arts programme at Ara Institute of Canterbury.