

**January 15th, at 8:00 PM, 2011, The Vermont Jazz Center presents:  
The Gary Smulyan Trio**

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**Who:** Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone; Ray Drummond, acoustic bass; Billy Drummond, drums

**What:** Jazz Concert performing interpretations of standards from the Great American Songbook

**Where:** The Vermont Jazz Center, 72 Cotton Mill Hill, #222, Brattleboro VT, 05301

**When:** Saturday, January 15th, 8:00 PM

**How:** Reservations on-line at [www.vtjazz.org](http://www.vtjazz.org), by phone at 802 254 9088, or tix in-person at In the Moment, 143 Main St., Brattleboro

**Mr. Lowblow, World-renowned Baritone Saxophonist Gary Smulyan to perform in a trio setting at the Vermont Jazz Center on January 15<sup>th</sup>**

Every now and again we come across a musician who seems inseparable from his or her instrument; we'd be hard-pressed to imagine Duke Ellington bowing a violin or Jimmy Hendrix pursing his lips on the French Horn. In the case of the Gary Smulyan trio, we find three world-class musicians who seem remarkably predisposed to their instruments. Take Smulyan, even though he is short of stature, it's hard to imagine him blowing anything but the largest of the common wind instruments – the baritone saxophone. Then there is the band's rhythm section, Ray and Billy Drummond, two of the busiest session musicians in New York. Although they are not brothers, they share the same last name. If one believes in destiny, this pair was put on this planet to play the bass and drums.

In a recent phone conversation, Gary was emphatic: "I didn't choose the bari, the bari chose me!" The young Smulyan began playing the alto saxophone professionally while still in High School. He had no thoughts of changing his instrument until receiving a fateful telephone call from the manager of the Woody Herman band in 1978, inviting him to play baritone sax in one of the greatest touring big bands of the time. Gary said that during his two years with Herman "the bari really became my voice," that his switch from alto to baritone "was a predestined accident." Smulyan continued: "That was a life-altering phone call. I tell my students 'you gotta be ready for everything' - you

might think you're going in one direction and then, like me, you get a call that changes your life."

Since his tenure with Woody Herman's Herd, Gary Smulyan has evolved into one of the most preeminent baritone saxophonists in the world. He has repeatedly won best baritone saxophonist in the Downbeat Critic's Poll and the Jazz Journalists Association Awards; he's also a six-time GRAMMY award winner for his work with B.B. King, Dave Holland, Joe Lovano and the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. The best measure of a jazz musician is to observe the company they keep. Smulyan has recorded as a sideman with Woody Herman, trumpeters Freddie Hubbard, Tom Harrell and Dizzy Gillespie, saxophonist Stan Getz, pianist Chick Corea, timbales king Tito Puente, and R&B/Blues and soul icons Ray Charles, B.B. King and Diana Ross. He has performed and recorded with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Joe Lovano's nonet, Dave Holland's Octet and Big Band, Joe Henderson, George Coleman, Gene Harris, John Scofield, The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, The Mingus Big Band, the Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra and many, many others.

When asked what listeners should expect to hear at the Jazz Center's concert, Gary talked more about concept than music. His performance is built upon a simple but brilliant format that uses choice standards from the great American songbook glued together by improvisational forays. "At the sound check we'll put together a suite, a set of tunes and then we'll figure out how to connect them musically. When we perform them in the concert, we'll insert interludes. For example, the bass might set up one piece, then, after we've played the tune, the bari might solo for a minute to prepare for the next. Then the drums will start a groove that leads into a new composition. They're all connected, one into another. With drum interludes, bass interludes and solo horn. We'll improvise a suite, where we could go into any one of the jazz standards we had previously agreed upon."

Gary sometimes plays melodies that we don't quite recognize over chord progressions of familiar jazz standards. There is a tradition in the bebop style that incorporates newly written melodies over the chords of familiar songs. Coleman Hawkins, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Lennie Tristano and Charlie Parker were all masters at creating what are now called "contrafacts" in jazz education circles. One of the thematic elements of Gary's own recordings has been the presentation and popularization of little-known contrafacts. He loves the idea that these "hidden treasures" exist out there in the bebop canon and has made it part of his life's work to discover and record them. A commonly used jazz standard for this technique is "I Got Rhythm" by George Gershwin. Literally hundreds of contrafacts have been written over the chord changes of that piece, the most familiar is probably the "Flintstone's Theme." Most jazz musicians know that Charlie Parker's "Anthropology" is a contrafact of "I Got Rhythm." But Gary takes this much further. His recordings serve as an archive of lesser-known contrafacts. Listeners have to decipher clever puzzles before discovering, for example, that Tadd Dameron's "Jahbero" is really based on Jerome Kern's "All the Things You Are."

The drummer for the jazz center concert on January 15<sup>th</sup> is Billy Drummond, who played on Smulyan's original recording that features contrafacts called Hidden Treasures. Both he and his brother, bassist Ray Drummond have a long history with Gary Smulyan. It's a known fact that in jazz circles, sibling-based rhythm sections tend to have a sense of chemistry that appears telepathic. Together, Billy and Ray formed their own trio with pianist Renee Rosnes but combined, the two have served as the rhythm section of many others, including the late, great pianist Hank Jones. Drummer Billy Drummond has been called "One of the hippest band leaders now at work" by Downbeat magazine. He was a touring and recording member of Horace Silver, J.J. Johnson and Sonny Rollins' working groups. Since then, many of the world's greatest jazz artists have called upon him to tour and/or record with them, including Eddie Gomez, Joe Henderson, J.J. Johnson, Nat Adderley, Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Lovano, Buster Williams, Lee Konitz, James Moody, Tony Malaby, Andrew Hill, Freddie Hubbard, Marty Ehrlich, Charles Tolliver, Sheila Jordan, Toots Thielemans, Jon Faddis, Walt Weiskopf, Charles Tolliver, Javon Jackson, Hank Jones, Vincent Herring, Chris Potter, David Hazeltine, Joe Locke, Eddie Henderson, Larry Willis, and Archie Shepp.

The bassist of the trio is Ray Drummond. Gary Smulyan says "Ray is one of my favorite bassists because he can go in any direction – he can play standards or take it "out." Plus I love his sound, it's so deep and round. Ray can do anything!" While attending College in California, Ray worked with Bobby Hutcherson. He then moved to New York City where he quickly became a first call bassist, landing gigs with artists including Betty Carter, The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, Wynton Marsalis, Woody Shaw, Hank Jones, Jon Faddis, Milt Jackson, Johnny Griffin, Kenny Barron, Pharoah Sanders, and George Coleman. Additionally, he has been documented on over 300 recordings with artists including Art Framer, David Murray, Houston Person, Stan Getz, Kenny Burrell, Kevin Mahogany, Toots Thielemans, Benny Golson, and Ray Bryant. Drummond has also led his own groups for the past 29 years.

Gary Smulyan is a force of nature. Come check out why he's credited with being the best on his instrument by so many people in the know. As he says, this concert will be an "evening of really interesting music, I'm really looking forward to it." Thanks to sponsor, William Schutt of Matcor Inc. for his generosity! Mr. Schutt is one of the Vermont Jazz Center's angels. He assists us greatly by subsidizing two concerts each season. Tickets are \$20 general admission, \$15 for students with valid ID. To purchase using a credit card, visit the VJC website at [www.vtjazz.org](http://www.vtjazz.org) and order using their secure server. Tickets can also be purchased at In the Moment in downtown Brattleboro, or can be reserved by calling the VJC ticket-line at (802) 254 9088. A surcharge of \$1 per ticket will be added to all tickets purchased with a credit card, online, or by phone. This concert is handicap accessible, please call to discuss arrangements to facilitate your enjoyment of this concert: (802) 254 9088.