



Slide Hampton (second from left) instructs McGill University students

Slide Hampton Returns to McGill University for Celebratory Residency

Montreal's McGill University was the first school to develop a graduate jazz program in Canada, and a "Year Of Jazz" celebration at McGill's Schulich School of Music contributed some sterling moments to its legacy. Led by Gordon Foote, director of the university's jazz orchestra, the series hosted several prominent musicians—including Jim McNeely, Terri Lyne Carrington and Joe Lovano—with whom students studied or performed in concerts open to the public. Trombone icon Slide Hampton returned to McGill for the first time in three years, as an artist-in-residence a few months shy of his 80th birthday.

Clinics included a mega-master class for 30 trombone players, which included both students and established musicians, followed by the orchestra's performance of Hampton's arrangements and originals.

"We'd planned on bringing Slide back after his visit in 2008," said Joe Sullivan, head of McGill's jazz studies program. "It had been a wonderful experience for the students, and Slide was impressed with the sound and quality of the band. The emphasis of this second visit was on mentorship. The concert was our way of paying tribute."

Hampton nodded and clapped approvingly as the orchestra breezed through the music with grace and energy. Trombonist Alex Truelove shined on Hampton's arrangement of Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight." Trumpet player Andy King delivered a poignant solo on Freddie Hubbard's "Lament For Booker," as did fellow trumpeter Dominic Rossi on the Henry Mancini-Johnny Mercer

classic "The Days Of Wine And Roses." Rossi's passionate solo was preceded by a captivating unison line shared by bassist Mike De Masi, baritone saxophonist Andrew Morrill and bass trombonist Felix Del Tredici.

"We got the chart last week," Foote told the audience after roaring applause. "That's the dedication of these students." Next came Eddie Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance," which was laced with a funk groove. Hampton's "Gullah Suite"—a tribute to Buddy Johnson and Dizzy Gillespie in three movements—had the orchestra swinging hard, especially during the last movement.

Foote addressed Hampton from the stage, noting that his residency was "a real honor, a pleasure and an inspiration." The entire room was on its feet, cheering and applauding, acknowledging the magnitude of his influence. Trombonist Taylor Donaldson offered his arrangement of "The Song Is You" as an encore.

The following day, the orchestra recorded the music in studio, including the previously unreleased Hampton compositions "Gullah Suite" and "Mandela," which is part of his four-song series entitled "A Tribute to African-American Greatness."

"The performance and compositional skills were all on a very high level," Hampton said. "The teachers and kids are so serious about what they're doing. You don't always find musicians who are so respectful of the music and of themselves. They have been very good to work with. The way they played—I couldn't be anything but happy." —Sharonne Cohen