



SENIOR RECITAL SERIES | SPRING 2025

Friday, April 25th, 2025, 8:00 PM

Taplin Auditorium, Fine Hall

Samuel Gerhard '25

Jazz Piano

Senior Recital

Certificate in Jazz Studies

Featuring:

Evan Callas '27

Alessandro Troncoso '25

Thomas Verrill '25

Nikhil Kuntipuram '28

Marcello Troncoso '25

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PROGRAM

**SONNY
ROLLINS**

Sonnymoon for Two
Evan Callas, Bass
Nikhil Kuntipuram, Drums

**THOMAS
“FATS”
WALLER**
Arr. S. Gerhard

Honeysuckle Rose
Evan Callas, Bass
Nikhil Kuntipuram, Drums
Alessandro Troncoso, Alto Sax
Marcello Troncoso, Alto Sax
Thomas Verrill, Trombone

**KENNY
DORHAM**

Blue Bossa
Evan Callas, Bass
Nikhil Kuntipuram, Drums

**CAROLE
KING**
Arr. S. Gerhard

I Feel the Earth Move
Evan Callas, Bass
Nikhil Kuntipuram, Drums
Alessandro Troncoso, Bari Sax
Marcello Troncoso, Alto Sax
Thomas Verrill, Trombone

BILL EVANS

Very Early

**BILLY
STRAYHORN**

Take the A Train
Evan Callas, Bass
Nikhil Kuntipuram, Drums

The use of photographic, video, or audio equipment is strictly prohibited. Please turn off or mute electronic devices for the duration of the performance.

**SAMUEL
GERHARD**

Maybe Now
Evan Callas, Bass
Nikhil Kuntipuram, Drums
Alessandro Troncoso, Flute
Marcello Troncoso, Alto Sax
Thomas Verrill, Trombone

**OLIVER
NELSON**

The Meetin'
One for Brucie

TRADITIONAL

When the Saints Go Marching In
Evan Callas, Bass
Nikhil Kuntipuram, Drums
Alessandro Troncoso, Bari Sax
Marcello Troncoso, Alto Sax
Thomas Verrill, Trombone

**JOHANN
SEBASTIAN
BACH**

Prelude in C Major

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PROGRAM NOTES

By Samuel Gerhard

This program was curated in an attempt to capture my musical upbringing and influences. Each song was selected because it held a special significance to me, whether it be a milestone piece I learned, a family favorite, or an arrangement or composition of my own hand. I wanted to showcase my journey as a Jazz pianist, and I believe this program does just that.

Things begin quite simply with a blues. **Sonnymoon for Two** was written by Jazz giant and saxophone colossus Sonny Rollins. Rollins first recorded the tune in 1957, and almost sixty years later, it was one of the first blues heads I learned (the other being Duke Ellington's iconic "C-Jam Blues"). I vividly remember my teacher explaining the concept of the blues scale to my eager, fifth-grade self and showing how the tune's melody was formed from it. Aside from a bit of Ellington beforehand, this piece served as my formal introduction to the blues and to Jazz as a whole. Now 94, Sonny Rollins is the oldest living composer to be featured in this program. His virtuosic legacy continues to inspire new generations of Jazz musicians, like myself.

Following the blues, we move to the much more lighthearted and energetic **Honeysuckle Rose**. Written by the great stride pianist Thomas "Fats" Waller in 1929, this piece has long been a favorite of mine. It was chosen as a representative of the music from bands like Glenn Miller, Duke Ellington, and Benny Goodman that I grew up listening to from a young age. While Waller's initial conception of this piece was strictly as a stride tune, my arrangement features more of a big band swing feel. In addition to a solo piano version of the tune I learned some years ago, the arrangement's primary influence came from alto saxophonist Benny Carter's rendition off his 1962 album *Further Definitions*. Certain motifs, namely the hits in the A-section, were inspired directly from this recording.

To shake things up a bit, we move next to the iconic standard **Blue Bossa**. While most listeners know the piece from tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon's 1975 recording on his album *Biting the Apple*, "Blue Bossa" was actually penned twelve years prior by trumpeter and composer Kenny Dorham. The coupling of the harmonic minor scale with driving bossa rhythms makes this piece incredibly groovy. You may find yourself nodding along to the beat during the performance, which I highly encourage. Blue Bossa was my audition piece for high school Jazz band, so it holds a special significance in my musical career. This, along with my strong liking of the tune, has led me to include it here in the program for your enjoyment.

Shaking things up yet again, we briefly exit the realm of Jazz entirely with an arrangement of Carole King's **I Feel the Earth Move** off her 1971 album *Tapestry*. In the Fall of my Sophomore year at Princeton, I took Professor Darcy James Argue's class on arranging, composition, and harmony, and this piece became my first serious musical arrangement. While it isn't exactly Jazz, its rhythmic hits and extended slash chords borrow from the tradition to create a funky, animated tune.

While I've more or less said the same about each tune in this program, this next piece is special to me. Bill Evans was a pianist I discovered in high school and began listening to almost unceasingly. There was something about his gentle, evocative touch that brought out the beauty of even the simplest melodies. This had a tremendous effect on me, not only in expanding my Jazz vocabulary, but also in showing me just how tender and sensitive an instrument the piano could be. To this day, I strive to incorporate these elements from Evans' playing into my own. **Very Early** was written by Evans in 1962 and first appeared on his album *Moonbeams*, released that same year. The lack of a tonal center gives the piece a very open feel, which frees it up for all sorts of improvisation. Additionally, the gentle, back-and-forth motion of the waltzing melody is easy to follow and quickly engages the listener in the tune. While Evans penned many other well-known compositions, I've chosen this particular piece because of its unique harmonic structure and my enjoyment of playing it.

Following our slow and somewhat sleepy waltz, we have another classic from the Big Band era. **Take the A Train** was written in 1939 by composer Billy Strayhorn for the Duke Ellington Orchestra, which recorded the tune two years later. Strayhorn wrote many other compositions for Ellington, including “Day Dream” and “Chelsea Bridge,” but none were quite as popular as “Take the A Train,” which would later become the orchestra’s theme song. This tune is another I learned in high school and spent many hours jamming on. I don’t want to spoil anything, but there’s a little twist in how we’re performing it tonight. I think you will enjoy it.

The next piece is unique in the sense that it is entirely my own, both in composition and arrangement. **Maybe Now** came together over several composing sessions. The melody was penned in the middle of my computer architecture class my Junior Fall, the chords were added the following Winter, and the full arrangement was just completed this past January. Stemming from my love of Bill Evans and Jazz waltzes, I wanted to create a piece in a similar vein with a simple, yet sweet melody. If you listen carefully, you can hear my inspirations from Evans throughout the song, especially in the last eight bars of the tune.

The following two pieces, which are completely written out, come from bandleader and composer Oliver Nelson. Best known for compositions like “Stolen Moments” and “Yearnin’” off his landmark 1961 album *The Blues and the Abstract Truth*, Nelson also wrote compositions for solo piano. **The Meetin’** and **One for Brucie** are just two such compositions found in a book of Nelson’s solo works that my grandfather had photocopied long ago. The tattered, manila packet was a fixture on our piano growing up, and I remember my mom playing these two selections from it quite frequently. As I started studying Jazz in middle school, I took the time to learn the two pieces myself. I’ve recently revisited them, and I find it quite fitting to include them in this program.

My grandfather was a big influence in my love of Jazz. Though I never heard him play, I was still drawn to the music from the recordings and sheet music he had collected over the years. His favorite tune was **When the Saints Go Marching In**, so what better way to commemorate the man who introduced me to Jazz than to include this piece in the program?

Last, but certainly not least, I thought it fitting to give a nod to the Classical music that has also inspired my playing. While I have studied as a Jazz pianist for most of my musical career, I began in Classical, and I am also of the sentiment that Classical music teaches a pianistic technique that greatly enhances one's virtuosity and capability (case in point, pianist Oscar Peterson). Therefore, out of respect for one of the oldest and most talented improvisers, I've chosen Johann Sebastian Bach's **Prelude in C Major** to conclude this program. Not only did I learn this piece early on in my study of the piano, but I also experimented with it when I began focusing on Jazz. Since this is, after all, a Jazz recital, I'll be performing a slightly improvised version of the piece, but one I think Mr. Bach would approve of.

ABOUT

Samuel Gerhard is a Senior majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering, with a minor in Computer Science and a certificate in Jazz Studies. In addition to music and engineering, he is an avid tinkerer and antique automobile aficionado. Following in the musical footsteps of his grandfather and mother, Gerhard began taking piano lessons at the age of 6. He studied under Rhode Island pianist Joseph Godfrey for most of his tutelage, and he is currently working with critically-acclaimed pianist and composer Sumi Tonooka. At Princeton, Gerhard served for two years as a pianist for the Jazz Vocal Ensemble (formerly Jazz Vocal Collective), and he is currently the pianist for Princeton's Small Group Z. Gerhard enjoys most any era of Jazz, from Dixieland, to swing, to hard bop. While he doesn't like to pick favorites, he would have to admit pianists Bill Evans and Oscar Peterson are major inspirations for his playing. Gerhard strives to put these different eras from Jazz in conversation with each other throughout his playing, creating a rich fabric of ideas that continue to borrow from and build upon one another. In this way, he hopes to unite the different Jazz traditions into one, interwoven form of expression.
