

SFJAZZ High School All-Stars Alumn Michael Blasky Receives 2018 SFJAZZ Hut Foundation Alumni Commission Award

(San Francisco, CA, January 4, 2018) – SFJAZZ announces High School All-Stars alumnus and tenor saxophonist Michael Blasky received the 2018 SFJAZZ Hut Foundation Alumni Commission Award. Blasky's composition "Saint Rose" won the commission along with a \$1,000 award. On May 20, 2018, the High School All-Stars Big Band will perform the composition at SFJAZZ Center.

SFJAZZ invites former High School All-Stars to submit original works to be evaluated by the SFJAZZ Education department based upon creativity, musical maturity, and a command of composition within the jazz orchestra idiom. This award is designed to maintain engagement with High School All-Star program alumni in a way that fosters their own creativity and artistry. SFJAZZ strives to support those who have come through the institution internally as students and contributors. This commission not only recognizes and rewards our awardee for their artistic contribution, but it also creates a dialogue between previous and current program participants. As well as being valuable to the awardee, this is valuable to current High School All-Stars as an educational and inspirational experience.

Originally from Marin County in Northern California, Blasky graduated from Marin Academy in 2013 and went on to study jazz at USC's Thornton School of Music. There he studied composition with Vince Mendoza, Russ Ferrante, Bob Mintzer, and Jason Goldman. Since earning his degree, Blasky has spent time touring with the group Slow Hollows.

"Between the High School All-Stars program and the ongoing concert series, SFJAZZ has served as an integral source of education and inspiration for me and a huge number of my peers. This commission is a process that simultaneously fosters and represents the communities we have here in the Bay Area, be they musical or otherwise; I'm honored to be able to dive back into this rich musical well in such a capacity, and I look forward to working with the current All-Stars band" says Blasky.

"SFJAZZ Education is so excited to be able to commission original works," says SFJAZZ Ensembles Manager Erin Putnam. "For the All-Stars' talent to come full circle like this, wherein alumni are having the chance to provide not only original material to the current students, but also that inspiration, is so rewarding."

Formed in 2001 and Directed by esteemed educator and performer Paul Contos, the SFJAZZ High School All-Stars Big Band is comprised of 22 of the finest young Bay Area jazz musicians, selected annually by competitive audition. The ensemble has appeared at the San Francisco Jazz Festival, SFJAZZ Spring Season, Jazz at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington Competition, Monterey Next Generation Jazz Festival, the Jazz Education Network Conference, and at concerts in top professional jazz clubs, festivals, museums, and community arts centers throughout California. Ensemble members enjoy regular workshops, master classes, and mentoring sessions with leading artists, such as members of the SFJAZZ Collective, Esperanza Spalding, and Vijay Iyer.

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