

Bassist Ray Brown's Spirit Lives

The legendary bassist Ray Brown has been gone now for more than a decade, but his music and influence are very much alive. **The Ray Brown Tribute Trio** is made up of three of Ray Brown's closest colleagues who are coming to Whitefish and Bigfork October 9th and 10th to perform and honor their mentor, colleague and friend.

Larry Fuller was Ray Brown's last piano player. Jeff Hamilton (drums) performed and recorded with Ray in The L.A. 4, was in The Ray Brown Trio from 1988 to 1995 and was with him in The Legendary Oscar Peterson Trio. And Grammy winner John Clayton (bass) is Ray Brown's most prominent protégé, inherited his bass and loves him like a father.

This will possibly be the best jazz trio you've ever heard. They'll pay tribute to Ray Brown with the high level of their musicianship, deep respect they have for the master, a great music program, and fascinating stories of Ray Brown's career. "This trio is the best of the best!" --Glen Mitchell, LA Jazz Scene

Ray Brown was featured on more than 2,000 recordings. He played with Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and others who invented bebop in the 1940's. He was a long standing member of the Oscar Peterson Trio and was part of the original lineup of the Modern Jazz Quartet. He accompanied singers from Frank Sinatra to Linda Ronstadt. He not only accompanied Ella Fitzgerald, he was married to her from 1947 to 1952. After their divorce he continued on as Ella Fitzgerald's musical director.

His "almost Zen-like approach to playing his instrument produced throbbing, aching music that could hush the house." --Nate Guidry, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Grammy award winning bassist John Clayton began studying with bass legend Ray Brown at the age of 16. By the time Clayton was 19, he had become the bassist on Henry Mancini's television series, The Mancini Generation. He went on to tour with the Monty Alexander Trio and the Count Basie Orchestra. In 1977, John and brother Jeff Clayton on saxophone formed The Clayton Brothers Quintet. He later formed the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra with Jeff Hamilton and his brother Jeff.

He was artistic director of the Jazz for the Los Angeles Philharmonic program at the Hollywood Bowl. He currently serves as Artistic Director for the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, Jazz Port Townsend Summer Workshop and Vail Jazz Party. John Clayton teaches at the California Thornton School of Music. He's composed and/or arranged for The Count Basie Orchestra, Diana Krall, Carmen McRae, Nancy Wilson, Joe Williams, Quincy Jones, Natalie Cole and The Tonight Show Band. John Clayton arranged "The Star Spangled Banner" for Whitney Houston's 1990 Super Bowl performance and he played bass on Paul McCartney's CD "Kisses on the Bottom."

Ray Brown said of his last pianist Larry Fuller. "He brings a vitality. He swings hard and I like that!" Oscar Peterson and Ray Brown inspire Larry Fuller's philosophy: play every note with conviction, honor the bandstand and treat the music as sacred. Larry Fuller's break came in the mid-80's when singer Ernestine Anderson performed in Toledo, Ohio. Larry had been studying her arrangements, so he was ready when she asked him to accompany her. By their third night together she was announcing to the audience that Larry was her new piano player.

In the early 1990's, at a West Los Angeles club called the Loa, Mr. Hamilton, who was known for this work with Ray Brown and Monty Alexander among others, joined them on drums. "We were immediately hand in glove. I heard all his influences, and I just giggled on the bandstand at his vast knowledge." --Larry Fuller.

A couple of years later, in 1994, Mr. Fuller left Ms. Anderson to join the new Jeff Hamilton Trio. The experience gradually emboldened him to produce his own CD. Mr Hamilton agreed to play drums, and made an offer that thrilled Mr. Fuller: "You just get your wallet out, and I'll get Ray Brown for you," Mr. Hamilton said.

In April 2000, Ray Brown asked Larry Fuller to become his pianist. Larry had to transcribe more than 100 arrangements and then master them because Mr. Brown, who was old-fashioned in his demand for polished presentations, did not allow charts on the bandstand.

After Ray Brown's passing, Larry Fuller became John Pizzarelli's pianist and stayed with his band for seven years. Pizzarelli said, "Larry has a reverence for the music that I find refreshing,"

Jeff Hamilton is known for his melodic solos, which is a rare description for a drummer. In his review of The Ray Brown Trio in the Denver Post, Jeff Bradley stated that Jeff "brought the crowd to its feet with his amazing hand-drumming, soft and understated yet as riveting and rewarding as any drum solo you've heard."

Jeff Hamilton joined Lionel Hampton's Band until 1975 when he and John Clayton became members of Monty Alexander's Trio.

Hamilton attained a childhood goal in 1977 when he joined Woody Herman and the Thundering Herd, with whom he made several recordings. In 1978, he was offered the position vacated by Shelly Manne in The L.A. 4 with Ray Brown, Bud Shank and Laurindo Almeida. From 1983 to 1987, Jeff performed with Ella Fitzgerald, the Count Basie Orchestra, Rosemary Clooney and Monty Alexander. Jeff began his association with the Ray Brown Trio in 1988 and left in 1995 to concentrate on his own trio.

In addition to many recordings with Ray Brown, Jeff has been on nearly 200 recordings with artists such as Natalie Cole, Diana Krall, Barbara Streisand, Mel Torme, John Pizzarelli, George Shearing, Clark Terry, Keely Smith, Herb Ellis and Mark Murphy. He also appeared in Natalie Cole's Great Performances PBS special, *Unforgettable* and an Oscar Peterson documentary, *Life in the Key of Oscar*.

Join us October 9th and 10th as The Ray Brown Tribute Trio honors the legacy of Ray Brown and American Jazz.