

Dennis Mackrel

Dennis Mackrel is a jazz drummer whose has recorded and/or performed with Count Basie and his Orchestra, the Dizzy Gillespie All Star Big Band, the American Jazz Orchestra, the Carla Bley Very Large Band, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, the Maria Schneider Orchestra, and many others.

He is the recipient of numerous awards including Who's Who in Music, A National Endowment for the Arts grant for composition, and Outstanding Alumni from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

In addition to being a seasoned musician, Dennis is also a highly respected composer/arranger whose works have been recorded by the United States Military Academy at West Point's Jazz Knights Big Band, the Temple University Jazz Ensemble, the University of North Texas "One O'clock" Big Band, the Columbus Jazz Orchestra and, most notably, the McCoy Tyner Big Band whose Grammy winning CDs "The Turning Point" and "Journey" included four of Dennis's arrangements.

Dennis's transition from sideman to leader continued with his frequent trips to Europe as a conductor, arranger and/or soloist for such outstanding ensembles as the Kluvers Big Band in Aarhus, Denmark, the Danish Radio Big Band in Copenhagen, Denmark and the WDR Big Band in Koln, Germany.

In 2010, he returned to the Count Basie Orchestra where he served as its leader until 2013 and in 2015, he was named chief conductor of the Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Holland.

In 2019, the orchestra was awarded the prestigious "Edison Award" for their double CD "Crossroads", Dennis toured extensively with the orchestra conducting performances in Europe, China, Russia, Indonesia, and the United States until the global pandemic of 2020.

He is an experienced jazz educator who conducts master classes, seminars, and workshops internationally. From 2002-2003, Dennis served as a guest professor at the Royal Conservatory in Aarhus, Denmark and from 2012-2013, he was the Visiting Artist in Jazz Studies at the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York.

Currently he is an assistant chair and the director of jazz studies at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College in Flushing, NY.