

## OSU Jazz Orchestra featuring Michael Dease

**Solid Gold** (Self-Released)

**Michael Dease** – trombone

**Jacob Eyer** – trombone

**Kyle Hunt** – trombone

**Paul Bussert** – trombone

**Dorien Tate** – bass trombone

**Charlie Chadwell** – alto saxophone, flute

**Marcos Alvarez** – alto saxophone, flute (2, 4, 6, 8)

**Ashley Krogstad** – alto saxophone (1, 3, 5, 7)

**Sydney Pointer** – tenor saxophone, clarinet

**Eric Stults** – tenor saxophone, clarinet

**Matthew Floeter** – baritone saxophone (1-3, 5, 7, 8)

**Hayden Anderson** – baritone saxophone, bass clarinet (4, 6)

**Ryan Hatcher** – trumpet (1-4, 6)

**Matt Herron** – trumpet (5, 7, 8)

**Kevin Kamau** – trumpet

**Tyler Murray** – trumpet

**Noah Mennenga** – trumpet

**Bradley Spears** – guitar (6)

**Dylan Shadoan** – piano

**Mickey Webster** – bass

**Matt Durkee** – drums

While this is the first commercially-released album from the OSU Jazz Orchestra, it's clear that this isn't the band's first rodeo. Over the course of eight tracks, these budding musicians demonstrate firm grounding in all manners of music, moving smoothly from streamlined swing to odd-metered straight-eighth tunes to Brazilian music and beyond. If you're looking for a solid sense of what the jazz students at Oklahoma State University can handle, look no further than *Solid Gold*.

With trombone heavy-hitter Michael Dease in the picture as the featured guest artist, it's no surprise that his music features prominently on this album. More than half the tunes come from Dease's pen, and each is chock full of promise and possibilities. OSU Director of Jazz Studies Tommy Poole's arrangement of "You Dig?" kicks off the album with some metric sleight of hand before moving into a bluesy zone, Todd Bashore's take on "Solid Gold" opens with muted and flute-enhanced allure



before settling into a solidly straight alignment, and Steven Feifke's interpretation of "Decisions" moves comfortably with a casual bearing. That opening triptych serves several purposes, introducing the ensemble and some of the fine soloists within it, showcasing Dease's playing and composing, and raising awareness of the arranging skills of some fine writers whose work often goes unnoticed or unrecognized. Jason Hainsworth's arrangements of two other Dease originals – the sly and jaunty "Gorgeous Gwen" and the riff-driven "Good And Terrible" – round out the list of songs plucked from the trombonist's corpus.

The three remaining tracks on the playlist pull from vastly different sources. Poole's "Out Front" uses infectious lines in fifteen and four to serve as foundational material, his sweeping arrangement of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Discussão" is pure Brazilian beauty, and his spirited stab at "After You've Gone" serves as the perfect send-off while further diversifying the portfolio. Dease brings his standard blend of smarts and killer chops to bear as a soloist on seven of these eight tunes, band members like alto saxophonist Charlie Chadwell and tenor saxophonist Sydney Pointer make waves and put themselves on the map when they step out front, and the OSU Jazz Orchestra ably demonstrates its might and musicality in a multitude of environments across *Solid Gold*. (Dan Bilawsky)

## John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble

**All Can Work** (New Amsterdam)

**John Hollenbeck** - drums

**Theo Bleckmann** – voice

**Ben Kono, Jeremy Viner, Tony**

**Malaby, Dan Willis, Anna Webber,**

**Bohdan Hilash** – saxes/woodwinds

**Tony Kadleck, Jon Owens, Dave**

**Ballou, Matt Holman** – trumpets

**Mark Patterson, Mike**

**Christianson, Jacob Garchik, Alan**

**Ferber, Jeff Nelson** – trombones

**Matt Mitchell** – keyboards

**Chris Tordini** – acoustic & electric bass

**Patricia Brennan** – vibes, marimba, glockenspiel

**J.C. Sanford** – conductor

Duke Ellington – a composer and bandleader of some renown, for younger readers – would sometimes refer



to himself as "a pencil cat." The Duke was a prolific composer, and while he was a pianist, the orchestra was his "instrument," frequently writing to/for the individual strengths of his musicians. John Hollenbeck, drummer for the Claudia Quintet, is also such a writer in that his Large Ensemble is his richly varied, protean palette. Ellington, and his right-hand man Billy Strayhorn, is an inspiration for Hollenbeck as is valve trombonist/composer Bob Brookmeyer, and this writer wouldn't be surprised if Carla Bley and Frank Zappa were as well. Hollenbeck is of the recent generation(s) of jazz musicians for whom rock is not a dirty word, eagerly embracing non-jazz music(s) for tunes and stimulus.

"Heyoke" is structured like a minimalist composition by Phillip Glass or Steve Reich – there is cyclic repetition of a melodic fragment, but the language is jazz. The phrasing is bop-like, the trombone brays in a slightly burlesque manner (not unlike an Ellington 'bone man, in fact, and lilting swing is present, Theo Bleckmann's singing wordlessly along with the horns.) Then the melodic phrases get a bit longer and overlap – while it might read "cerebral" it has a wistful, at times nostalgic tinge, the trumpet and 'bone playing some bitterly-sweetly yearning passages. "The Model," originally by Kraftwerk, a very influential German minimalist/electronic rock combo, is transformed into a cinematic-sounding urban panorama with rich, slightly brassy ensemble playing, carrying echoes of Quincy Jones (well, 1960s Q), Benny Carter, and Oliver Nelson. (Note to younger readers: Once upon a time, jazz composers frequently composed music for TV shows and movies. When watching reruns of "Mission: Impossible" and "The Six Million Dollar Man," pay attention to the closing credits.) Also cinematic is "Elf," a Billy Strayhorn number from the fabulous Ellington album *Far East Suite* – it's a sultry, twisty, percolating bit of exotica (discrete, subtle African and south Asian resonances) given savor from Tony Malaby's sleek, serpentine soprano sax soloing.

If your definition of "big band jazz" is the hard-swinging styles of Count Basie and Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, you might be disappointed (though aspects of old-school big bands are present). If you lean to Ellington at his most adventurous, the cool quirkiness of Zappa and Steely Dan, twentieth/21<sup>st</sup> century classical, and the so-called post-rock of Tortoise and Swans, or simply put, creative instrumental music with heart that has jazz as its core, run – don't walk – to *All Can Work*. (Mark Keresman)