

Josh Gagnon  
*tenor trombone*

Recital in partial fulfillment of the  
Doctor of Musical Arts degree, 2027  
Student of Anna Webber and Frank Carlberg

with  
Hunter McKay, tenor saxophone  
Joey Dies, tenor trombone  
George Maclaurin, piano  
Nick Isherwood, bass  
Carlo Kind, drums

Wednesday, October 23, 2024  
8:00 p.m.  
Pierce Hall

## PROGRAM

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**James Louis "J.J." Johnson**  
(1924–2001)

*Jay*

**David Raskin**  
(1912–2004)

*Laura*

**Richard Rodgers**  
(1902–1979)

*My Funny Valentine*

**James Louis "J.J." Johnson**

*Down Vernon's Alley*

**Kai Winding**  
(1922–1983)

*Don't Argue*

**James Louis "J.J." Johnson**

*Lament*

**Harry M. Woods**  
(1896–1970)

*Side By Side*

**Lillian (Lil) Hardin Armstrong**  
(1898–1971)

*Just For a Thrill*

Hunter McKay, tenor saxophone  
Joey Dies, tenor trombone  
George Maclaurin, piano  
Nick Isherwood, bass  
Carlo Kind, drums

*I would like to thank my family, friends, partner Kayla,  
Frank Carlberg, Anna Webber, Jason Palmer, and Marshall Gilkes  
for their continued support, inspiration, and guidance  
through it all.*

*Josh Gagnon is the recipient of a scholarship made possible  
by the Eugene and Adele Cohen Scholarship Fund.*

This recital celebrates trombonist James Louis “J.J.” Johnson on his centennial year. The program is a collection of pieces representing just a fraction of his titanic output as a leader, sideman, and composer. J.J.’s pioneering force in the studio laid a path for many of his contemporaries, such as Slide Hampton, Curtis Fuller, and many others. In selecting the repertoire, I have attempted to choose a variety of his compositions, notable arrangements, and several pieces from his legendary collaborations with Kai Winding.

### *Jay*

Recorded over three sessions for Blue Note Records, the 3 albums in *The Eminent Jay Jay Johnson* collection are among his most influential releases. Classic solos found on tracks like *Old Devil Moon*, *Groovin’*, and *Coffee Pot* have been transcribed by trombonists the world over. On the original ten-inch release, *Jay* was the opening number for Volume 2. This high-energy, multi-key blues features another iconic J.J. solo, and an all-star rhythm section of Wynton Kelly, Charles Mingus, and Kenny Clark.

### *Laura*

A personal favorite recording of mine, J.J.’s recording of *Laura* from the eponymous Otto Preminger film displays everything I love about J.J.’s playing. His beautiful melodic lines, singing tone, and virtuosic technique are on full display. This is the type of recording that one listens to and they remember where they were during the first listen. In my case, it was during a lesson with Kendall Moore 8 years ago. The way that Kendall’s face lit up during J.J.’s solo break let me know I was in for something special.

### *My Funny Valentine*

Until recently in my jazz education, I’ve been among the school of trombonists that largely draw inspiration from non-trombone improvisers. As a result, many of the trombonists that I heard were a result of their collaborations with other great musicians (Jimmy Nepper with Mingus, Curtis Fuller with Coltrane and Art Blakey, etc.). J.J. and Stan Getz’s recording *Stan Getz and J.J. Johnson Live at The Opera House* is an exception. This iconic recording contains arrangements of many great standards and drew me in as a study of how the trombone functions in a duet context. Their recording of *My Funny Valentine* is a loose, playful, and imaginative interpretation of the classic Rodgers and Hart show-tune.

### *Down Vernon’s Alley*

Arguably J.J.’s most important contribution to the music is as the trombonist who paved the way through the technically demanding melodies of the Bebop period in the late 1940s. His recordings with Charlie Parker for *Charlie Parker on Dial, Vol. 6* put him on the map as the leading voice on the instrument. Shortly after, he was contracted by Savoy to make a series of recordings. *Down Vernon’s Alley* is a result of

those sessions, appearing on his first album as a leader, *J. J. Johnson's Jazz Quintets*. The contrast between this tune, *Jay*, and *Lament* provides a display of J.J.'s evolving voice as a composer. Even later in his career, he explored chamber music, wind ensemble, and film scoring as a part of his compositional efforts.

### ***Don't Argue***

In a similar vein, *Don't Argue* is a foray into Bebop by one of the great trombone duos of history: J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding. The two were paired together in the early fifties and began a partnership that spanned over a decade. This Kai Winding composition explores the interplay between two trombones unitizing a cascading motive that plays out over 32 bars.

### ***Lament***

One of J.J.'s, if not his most famous, compositions is *Lament*. This ballad has been recorded countless times by trombonists and non-trombonists alike and often is a musician's introduction to J.J.'s catalog. The recording made by "Jay and Kai" for Savoy is a display of the haunting, moody character that two trombones can bring to a ballad. Similar to my recollection of *Laura*, I distinctly remember playing an arrangement of *Lament* at a summer camp in high school and being blown away by the featured soloist.

### ***Side By Side***

These final two selections, recorded on *The Great Kai and J.J.* represent for me J.J.'s move away from the Bebop style playing he had been known for in the late 40s and 50s. *Side by Side* brings a bluesy, R&B sound to the Jay and Kai discography that aligned more closely with the music that was becoming more popular among listeners at that time. As a result of this more commercially driven repertoire, *Side by Side* features arranging and stylistic decisions that are fresh within the context of J.J.'s work.

### ***Just For a Thrill***

This piece is a collision of three musicians that I admire: J.J., Lil Harden Armstrong, and Ray Charles. A year before her divorce from Louis Armstrong in 1938, Lil wrote and recorded this tune. A beautiful, heartbreaking ballad that unfortunately received mixed reception on its release. Ray Charles revived this tune in 1959 for *The Genius of Ray Charles*, which resulted in its becoming a hit for the following few years. As a result, when Creed Taylor asked J.J. and Kai Winding to bring their duet project to Impulse! in 1960, this tune made it to the session.

## **Upcoming Student Recitals at NEC**

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**Sylva Goldman**, *bassoon* (BM)

Student of Suzanne Nelsen

*Friday, October 25, 2024 at 8:30 p.m., Eben Jordan*

**Maiyu Zhang**, *contemporary musical arts - guzhen, piano* (BM '24)

Student of Ran Blake, Hankus Netzky and Hui Weng

*Friday, November 1, 2024 at 8:30 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Benedict Koh**, *jazz composition* (MM)

Student of Ken Schaphorst, John Lockwood, Joe Morris, and Efstratios Minakakis

*Saturday, November 9, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Philip Rawlinson**, *viola* (BM)

Student of Melissa Reardon

*Sunday, November 10, 2024 at 12:00 noon, Burnes Hall*

**Anna Ridenour**, *flute* (BM)

Student of Paula Robison

*Sunday, November 10, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., Pierce Hall*

**Jialu Wang**, *bassoon* (BM)

Student of Richard Svoboda

*Friday, November 15, 2024 at 8:30 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Shalun Li**, *collaborative piano* (GC)

Student of Vivian Hornik Weilerstein and Cameron Stowe

*Saturday, November 16, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Patrick M'Gonigle**, *contemporary musical arts* (DMA '24)

Student of Hankus Netsky

*Monday, November 18, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall*

*Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 12:00 noon, Pierce Hall*

**Joy Chen**, *piano* (MM '24)

Student of Meng-Chieh Liu

*Friday, November 22, 2024 at 8:30 p.m., Williams Hall*

## Upcoming Student Recitals at NEC

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**Max Ignas**, *trumpet* (DMA)

Student of Steve Emery

*Friday, November 22, 2024 at 8:30 p.m., Brown Hall*

**Yi-Chen Chang**, *composition* (DMA '24)

Student of John Mallia

*Saturday, November 23, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Eben Jordan*

**Dongyang Li**, *soprano* (MM '24)

Student of MaryAnn McCormick

*Saturday, November 23, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Dong Eun Yoon**, *tenor* (MM)

Student of Carole Haber

*Saturday, November 23, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall*

**Blake Hetherington**, *soprano* (BM '24)

Student of Jane Eaglen

*Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., Williams Hall*

**Phoebe Kuan**, *clarinet* (MM)

Student of Andrew Sandwick

*Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Gustavo Barreda**, *percussion* (MM)

Student of Will Hudgins and Daniel Bauch

*Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Grace Clarke**, *French horn* (MM)

Student of Jason Snider

*Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall*

**Eli Gersch**, *percussion* (MM '24)

Student of Daniel Bauch and Will Hudgins

*Monday, November 25, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Adria Ye**, *piano* (GD '24)

Student of Wha Kyung Byun

*Monday, November 25, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall*

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