Media Release

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Mace Francis Orchestra lifts off as WAAPA Ensemble in Residence

Original compositions from an outstanding new CD of big band jazz by Perth’s own Mace Francis Orchestra will be showcased live on stage at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in early June.

Lift Off!, on Thursday June 4 at 7.30pm, marks the first concert by the Mace Francis Orchestra as WAAPA’s Ensemble in Residence. Performed in the Academy’s Music Auditorium, it will feature new works from the band’s latest CD, Neverever… Well, Maybe Someday.

Neverever… Well, Maybe Someday is the band’s fourth CD, and was recorded at The Sound Lounge in Sydney during a national tour in July 2008. The album’s nine tracks are all original compositions: four from Francis, three by saxophonist by Dan Thorne, and two by trombonist Tilman Robinson.

Now Perth jazz fans will get the opportunity to hear these compositions live on stage in Lift Off!

“This being our first gig as WAAPA’s Ensemble in Residence, we really want to show the energy and intensity of the band in full flight,” says Francis.

All of MFO’s musicians are noted solo performers. In particular, Lift Off! will feature outstanding performances from guitarist Tim Jago, a finalist in the National Guitar Awards at the 2007 Wangaratta Festival of Jazz, and trumpeter Callum G’Froerer, who is only the second-ever Australian winner of the international award, the Clifford Brown/Stan Getz Fellowship.

It is this level of talent that has thrust MFO – with its dynamic originality, traditional ‘big band’ brass sound and high energy, entertaining performances – into the forefront of the national jazz scene.

“Their musicianship is flawless, with some impossibly seasoned mature playing… innovative, dynamic, exploiting the power and versatility of the collective… Enchanting, unforgettable, moving music!” – Lloyd Bradford Syke, Australian Stage

“Mace Francis deserves recognition as a big band leader with his own vision and his own sound.” – Bill Donaldson, Cadence Magazine (USA)

“Incredibly deep and layered compositions that never ignore the 11th Commandment: “Thou shalt GROOVE!” – Jim Pugh (Trombonist for Steely Dan, Chick Corea, Frank Sinatra, Woody Herman)

Performance Information: Lift Off! – Mace Francis Orchestra

Thursday 4 June at 7.30pm.
Music Auditorium, WAAPA, Edith Cowan University, 2 Bradford St, Mt Lawley.
Tickets are $20 full/$15 concession. Bookings through WAAPA Box Office on 9370 6636.

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Mace Francis - Biography
Composer/conductor Mace Francis graduated from WAAPA in 2004 with a Bachelor in Music – Jazz (First Class Honours). That same year he was the recipient of the APRA Professional Development Award, allowing him to travel to Vienna to study composition with Ed Partyka and Bob Brookmeyer, and was awarded first place in Scrivere in Jazz, an international, open-aged composition award hosted by the Orchestra Jazz della Sardegna in Italy.

Francis formed the Mace Francis Orchestra (MFO) late in 2004 with 13 of Perth’s finest emerging young musicians and composers to experiment with composition in the style of the great modern big bands of Bob Brookmeyer, Thad Jones, Bill Holman and Maria Schneider.

MFO soon developed an individual and original sound through residencies at the Brisbane Hotel and the Swan Basement; special projects such as The Unpopular Songbook commissioned by the Perth Jazz Society; collaboration with Aboriginal group Djiva commissioned by Artrage; and performances with international artists Jim Pugh and Jon Gordon. The band has also released four CDs and been twice nominated for WAMI Jazz Group of the Year.

In May 2005 Francis was guest composer and conductor with the Bennetts Lane Big Band in Melbourne which resulted in a concert at the Bennetts Lane Jazz Club. 2005 also marked the inaugural year of a collaborative project called Chinese Whispers, involving eight WA composers collaborating on a new body of music. Now in its fourth year, Chinese Whispers has grown to feature 10 national and international composers, and has been invited to be part of the very prestigious American website – Artistshare, home of composers Maria Schneider and Bob Brookmeyer.

Francis is currently Lecturer in Jazz Composition at WAAPA and Artistic Director of the WA Youth Jazz Orchestra.

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