

Mike Holober

Pianist/Composer/Arranger

Described by *Downbeat Magazine* as “one of the finest modern composer/arrangers of our time,” Mike Holober earned a **Master’s Degree in Classical Music** from Binghamton University, where he studied with internationally acclaimed pianist **Walter Ponce**. He studied conducting under the baton of **Maestro Herbert Blomstedt**, and jazz orchestra composing and arranging with Manny Albam and Rayburn Wright at the **Eastman School of Music’s Arranger’s Workshop**. An alumnus of the **BMI Jazz Composer’s Workshop**, he later returned as **Associate Director**, teaching alongside Jim McNeely in what is widely regarded as the “finishing school” for emerging jazz composers and arrangers. He is the founder and director of **The Gotham Jazz Orchestra**, which earned a **2020 GRAMMY** nomination for its recording of “**Hiding Out**” (ZOHO, 2019) in the “**Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album**” category, and he was recently awarded the **2022 American Academy of Arts and Letters Andrew Imbrie Award in Music**, joining a very select group of jazz composers to be honored by this organization.

Amongst his other honors, Mike was named the inaugural **Stuart Z. Katz Professor in the Humanities and the Arts** at **The City College of New York** in 2017, where he is currently serving as Music Department Chair. He has enjoyed artist residencies at **MacDowell** (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2009; 2020), **The Brush Creek Foundation for the Arts** (2019), **The Ucross Foundation** (2007; 2019), and **Yaddo** (2005). An active member of the **International Society of Jazz Arrangers & Composers** (ISJAC), he is frequently a featured presenter at their conferences, alongside luminaries such as **Anat Cohen, John Clayton, Jim McNeely, and Danilo Perez**.

Mike’s debut as a jazz pianist was with legendary **baritone saxophonist Nick Brignola**, releasing two albums during his tenure: “**It’s Time**” (Reservoir Records, 1992), and “**Live at Sweet Basil: First Set**” (Reservoir Records 1992). His own quintet released two critically acclaimed albums, “**Canyon**” (Sons of Sound 2003), and “**Wish List**” (Sons of Sound 2006), both featuring Mike’s original compositions and arrangements. Recently, Mike has teamed up with legendary trumpeter **Marvin Stamm** to form “**The Marvin Stamm/Mike Holober Quartet**.” Their debut recording “**Live @ Maureen’s Jazz Cellar**” was released in June 2020 (Big Miles Records), and a duo recording is scheduled for release in Spring 2024.

Mike’s rise to prominence as a jazz orchestra composer and arranger came with the formation of **The Gotham Jazz Orchestra**, comprising an all-star cast of first-call New York City musicians. The ensemble’s first two recordings, “**Thought Trains**” (Sons of Sound, 2004), and “**Quake**” (Sons of Sound, 2009) firmly established Mike’s reputation as a jazz orchestra composer -- as one critic wrote, “**With Quake Mike Holober establishes a new benchmark for modern large ensemble jazz.**” The release of “**Mike Holober & The Gotham Jazz Orchestra: Hiding Out**” (ZOHO 2019) marked a new threshold in Mike’s trajectory as a composer. Featuring four commissioned works -- two of which are long-form multi-movement compositions – it earned a **GRAMMY** nomination, and garnered rave reviews in the jazz press. *DownBeat Magazine* proclaimed it a “**long-anticipated, epic work,**” and critics praised the composer’s “**daring compositional voice,**” “**powerful orchestral magic,**” and “**profound artistic vision,**” confirming his place in “**the front rank of the most accomplished and inventive composers in jazz,**” and “**leading the charge to shift what a big band can sound like.**”

In addition to leading his own projects, Mike has served at the helm of some of the world's most renowned large ensembles as composer, arranger, and conductor. He was Artistic Director of the **Westchester Jazz Orchestra**, and he has worked extensively overseas, writing and conducting for the **hr-Big Band** in Frankfurt, Germany, and the **WDR Big band** in Cologne, Germany – writing and conducting for international jazz superstars such as **Al Foster, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Avishai Cohen, Miquel Zenon, and Joe Lovano**. Other international projects include arrangements for a concert featuring **Eli Degibri with jazz orchestra and strings**, which was premiered at the **National Opera House in Tel Aviv** in 2014, and a tour with the **Stockholm Jazz Orchestra** as guest composer, conductor and soloist in 2000. Upcoming engagements include residencies at the **Jazzcampus** in Basel, Switzerland, and the **Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts** (in cooperation with the **hr-Big Band**). In November 2024 he will be arranging poem settings by **Omer Klein** for **vocalist Rebecca Martin** with the **hr-Big Band**, and in July 2025 he will be writing a project for the **WDR Big Band**, featuring saxophonist **Chris Potter**.

In 2017 Mike received a prestigious **Chamber Music America New Jazz Works** commission for **“Don't Let Go,”** a concert-length song-cycle that was premiered at Symphony Space (the Leonard Nimoy Thalia) in June 2018, and recorded live at Aaron Davis Hall, City College Center for the Arts in 2019 (Sunnyside Records 2022). **“Don't Let Go”** was written for Mike's jazz octet **“Balancing Act,”** whose eponymous premiere recording was released in 2015 (Palmetto). *DownBeat Magazine* described the album as **“startlingly creative”** and **“emotionally persuasive,”** and it was voted **“Best Release of 2015”** by multiple jazz critics.

Mike has often engaged in opportunities that extend beyond the boundaries of jazz. In 2005 he toured Venezuela as a **Cultural Connect Envoy for the U. S. State Department**, playing concerts of his original works for jazz quintet and orchestra with symphonies in Merida, Maracaibo, Caracas, and Valencia. He has been active as a composer in the contemporary classical idiom with commissions for various chamber works, including with members of the **New York Philharmonic**, and he is composer in residence of the **Gotham Wind Symphony**, a 45-member wind ensemble made up of classical, commercial, and jazz musicians from the NYC music world.

A member of the distinguished **Steinway Artist** roster, Mike remains active as a pianist, appearing as a sideman on over 70 recordings. A mentor to many young and emerging jazz orchestra composers, he has lately been fielding requests to serve as recording session producer for a new generation of composers that he has nurtured over the years in his various educational roles. He is a Full Professor at **The City College of New York**, where he has been teaching since 1995, and he has also been teaching composing and arranging at **The Manhattan School of Music** since 2014. From 2007 - 2015 he was **Associate Director of the BMI Jazz Composer's Workshop**, where he taught with Director Jim McNeely.

<https://www.mikeholober.com>

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