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## Featuring Guest Artist Rainbow Sign: The Music of Ron Miles

### With noon masterclasses and performances by the Matt Skellenger Group and The MSU Bands and Combos

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## It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Fifty-Eighth Annual Mile High Jazz Fest

Celebrating "Jazz, Art, and Education

in the Heart of Downtown Denver."

Featuring performances by Colorado's finest middle school and high school instrumental combos and big bands; special guests; Rainbow Sign, The Matt Skellenger Group, and the MSU Denver Big Band and Combos; and professional artists and adjudicators. Our hope is that each musician leaves here having gained a sense of inspiration and a better understanding of America's classical music: **Jazz!** 

#### **Presented by**

Flesher-Hinton Music, Metropolitan State University of Denver School of Letters, Arts, and Sciences Department of Music, and the Denver Municiple Band.

#### **Production Staff**

Ken Anderson Charla Bevan Dawn Clement Dave Simpkins Geoff Newton Andy Salas Pete Dunnewald MSU Denver JAIM Students Dear Directors and Performers,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Metropolitan State University of Denver campus for the 58th annual Mile High Jazz Festival. The Mile High Jazz Festival and Flesher Hinton Music have been central to the legacy of excellence in music education in Colorado and we are honored to be a part of that long tradition.

On Friday, we close the festival with an MSU Denver Jazz Celebrati on featuring "Rainbow Sign: The Music of Ron Miles". Rainbow Sign will be giving a noon workshop followed by a performance at 7:30pm in the King Center Recital Hall. All Festival participants are invited to attend for free.

Earlier in the week, during the noon hour, you will have a chance to enjoy a concert featuring MSU Denver combos on Wednesday and Matt Skellenger's group on Thursday, sponsored by the Denver Municipal Band.

Students will be performing in the King Center Concert Hall which we share with UCD and CCD! It is a wonderful space that has hosted many amazing performers!

We look forward to seeing you!

Sincerely, Dawn Clement Assistant Professor of Jazz and American Improvised Music (JAIM) Coordinator of the MSU JAIM area

Metropolitan State University of Denver



### **MILE HIGH JAZZ FEST MEMORIES**

The 2023 Mile High Jazz Festival continues a Colorado Jazz tradition dating back more than 50 years. The first jazz festival was first held in 1965 in Akron, Colorado, sponsored by Simmons Music of Denver, John Shaw representative and Akron High School, Don Smith-Director.



Akron Stage Band Festival 1965

In 1966, John became part of

Flesher-Hinton Music and we became the sponsor of the festival. Mel and Geraldine Flesher lovingly endorsed the festival. One year there was a major blizzard and many of the schools had a difficult time returning to the Denver area and asked us to move the festival closer. John Shaw continued as the festival manager.

In 1975 the Colorado School of Mines was the host and the festival became the Rocky Mountain Jazz Festival in cooperation with CSM, John Shannon and Kappa Kappa Psi. In 1977, the festival moved to Northglenn High School and became the Mile High Jazz Festival and the guest artist was Tonight Show drummer Ed Shaughessy. Don Burdaux host. The festival then moved to Thornton High School and Merritt Hutton Junior High and included vocal jazz ensembles for a short period of time. Ray Sheehan, Dennis Sullivan, Doug Harris and Tom Rudd were the hosts. John Thomas was named the festival manager in 1983.

Smoky Hill High School became the site in 1992, and Joe Brice the host with assistance from Larry West. In 1995, Alameda High School was the site with Ken Sawyer host. In 2000 Ralston Valley High School was under construction and Ken Sawyer was announced as the band director. After viewing the new facilities at Ralston Valley it was decided to move the festival there in 2001. Ken Sawyer continued as the host until 2014, hosting for 20 years! Ken Anderson was named the festival manager in 2006. In 2017, the festival moved to the CU-Boulder Campus and the Thompson Jazz Studies becomes the co-sponsor, John Gunther is co-director. It continued there until 2019.

2020 marked the first year that the Metropolitan State University of Denver sponsored the Festival at the King Center for the Performing Arts with hosts Dawn Clement and Charla Bevan.

The Mile High Jazz Festival would not happen without the many people named above and we thank them.

Since it's founding, the Mile High Jazz Festival has seen its share of big name performers on stage. Past guests have included:

Ed Shaughnessy, Frank Rosolino, Jim Coffin, Don Menza, Mike Vax, Lou Marini, Cat Anderson, Free Flight, Gary Foster, Bobby Shew, DU Lamont Jazz with Lynn Baker, Phil Wilson, Buddy Baker, Bill Porter, Roger Pemberton, the US Air Force Falconaires, Ed Soph, Rich Matteson, Greg Gisbert, Jon Faddis, Bill Watrous, Butch Miles, Chris Vadala, the UNC Jazz Lab Band I with John Davis and Gene Aitken, UCD with Walter Barr, God's Trombones, the Neophonic Jazz Orchestra, "The Sax Section", the Jazz Spectrum Big Band, the University of Colorado at Boulder Jazz Ensemble I and Concert Jazz Ensemble with directors John Gunther. Brad Goode, John Davis and Paul McKee; Mitch Holder, Rocky and Lutie Lombardo, Ruthie Lombardo, Rich Chiaraluce, Ken Walker, Jill Fredericksen, Ron Wilkins, Byron Stripling, Jerry Bergonzi, Convergence, the Pete Olstad-Bob Montgomery Big Band, The Swing Brothers with Rich Chiaraluce and Jack LaForte, Conrad Herwig, The Darren Kramer Organization (DKO), Bobby Shew, Denis DiBlasio, Dan Barrett and The Queen City Jazz Band, Maria Schneider, Derrick Hodge, Joel Ross, and now, Rainbow Sign!

## **FESTIVAL AWARDS**

### **ENSEMBLE AWARDS**

To recognize all participating bands and combos, each group performing in the festival will receive a commemorative plaque presented by Flesher-Hinton Music Company.

### MHJF AWARD CERTIFICATES:

Each performing group will have its outstanding musicians recognized with an official Mile High Jazz Festival Award Certificate. These certificates will be duly authorized and signed by the awarding adjudicators and festival director.

### **INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PLAQUES:**

From the above certificate recipients, twenty-four individual award plaques will be presented to the most outstanding musicians as selected by the judges.

## Guest Artist Rainbow Sign

Brian Blade, Bill Frisell, Jason Moran, and Thomas Morgan Play the Music of Ron Miles

In March of 2022, the Music Department lost our dear colleague



Ron Miles. In his more than 30 years of teaching at MSU Denver, Ron impacted countless lives and inspired so many students to believe in themselves and to enjoy the process of learning and developing as artists and scholars.

Join us for this special celebration of his life and his music, performed by his bandmates – drummer Brian Blade, guitarist Bill Frisell, pianist Jason Moran, and bassist Thomas Morgan.

Miles introduced the all-star quintet with his widely hailed 2017 release I Am a Man, which built on his trio with Frisell and Blade featured on 2012's Quiver and 2014's Circuit Rider. With Moran and Morgan on board Miles' compressed lyricism continued to unfurl on the 2020 quintet album Rainbow Sign, his debut for the iconic Blue Note label. In adopting the name with its Biblical allusion the Rainbow Sign quartet expands a singular musical legacy. A gentle soul with a steel trap mind, a generous mentor and educator with a deep well of wisdom, Miles created a sumptuously melodic body of music that this band continues to illuminate.

#### About the Band

### **Brian Blade**

Brian Blade was born and raised in Shreveport, Louisiana. The first music he experienced was the Gospel and songs of praise at the Zion Baptist Church where his father, Brady L. Blade, Sr., has been Pastor since 1961. In elementary school, music appreciation classes were an important part of his development, and at age nine, he began playing (Brian Blade cont'd) the violin. Inspired by his older brother, Brady L. Blade, Jr., who had been the drummer at Zion Baptist Church, Brian shifted his focus to the drums throughout middle and high school.

During high school, while studying with Dorsey Summerfield, Jr., Brian began listening to the music of John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Miles



Brian Blade

Davis, Art Blakey, Thelonious Monk, Elvin Jones and Joni Mitchell. By the age of eighteen, Brian moved to New Orleans to attend Loyola University. From 1988 through 1993, Brian was able to study and play with most of the master musicians living in New Orleans, such as: John Vidacovich, Ellis Marsalis, Steve Masakowski, Bill Huntington, Mike Pellera, John Mahoney, George French, Emile Vinette, Germaine Bazzle, David Lee, Jr., Alvin Red Tyler, Tony Dagradi and Harold Battiste.

In 1997, Brian Blade formed The Fellowship Band with pianist Jon Cowherd. The band members are bassist Christopher Thomas, saxophonists Myron Walden and Melvin Butler. The Fellowship Band has released five recordings, beginning with their debut in 1998, Perceptual in 2000, Season of Changes in 2008, Landmarks in 2014 and Body And Shadow in 2017.

While continuing to work with The Fellowship Band, Blade has been a member of the Wayne Shorter quartet since 2000. He has recorded with Daniel Lanois, Joni Mitchell, Kenny Garrett, Joshua Redman, Ellis Marsalis, Chick Corea, Marianne Faithfull, Norah Jones, Emmylou Harris and Bob Dylan.

#### Bill Frisell

Bill Frisell's career as a guitarist and composer has spanned more than 40 years and many celebrated recordings, whose catalog has been cited by Downbeat as "the best recorded output of the decade".

His latest recording released this November 11 is FOUR, on Blue Note, a quartet album with Gregory Tardy (clarinet; bass clarinet & tenor

sax); Gerald Clayton (piano) & Johnathan Blake (drums). "Bill Frisell moves closer to a coolly thematic contemporary jazz... This new quartet is improvisationally looser in its ensemble conversations... and also builds compelling grooves out of gospelly moods.... irresistable." – John Fordham; Jazzwise

In March 2022, a biography on Frisell, entitled Beautiful Dreamer – The Guitarist Who Changed The Sound of American Music, written by Philip Watson was published by Faber and released in the UK, Europe,

South, Central America & Asia. Through unprecedented access, and interviews with his close family, friends and collaborators, Philip Watson tells the story of the innovative and influential guitarist and composer.

Recognized as one of America's 21 most vital and productive performing artists, Frisell was named an inaugural Doris Duke Artist in 2012. He is also a recipient of grants from United States Artists and Meet the Composer, among



Bill Frisell

others. From 2013 – 2015, Bill was Resident Artistic Director for Jazz at Lincoln Center for their Roots of Americana series, and in 2016, he was a beneficiary of the first FreshGrass Composition commission to preserve and support innovative grassroots music. Upon San Francisco Jazz opening their doors in 2013, he served as one of their Resident Artistic Directors. Bill is also the subject of a documentary film by director Emma Franz, entitled Bill Frisell: A Portrait, which examines his creative process in depth. He has also received an honorary doctorate from the Berklee College of Music.

#### Jason Moran

Jazz pianist, composer, and performance artist Jason Moran was born in Houston, TX in 1975 and earned a degree from the Manhattan School of Music, where he studied with Jaki Byard. He was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2010 and is the Artistic Director for Jazz at The Kennedy Center. Moran currently teaches at the New England Conservatory.

### (Jason Moran cont'd)

Deeply invested in reassessing and complicating the relationship between music and language, Moran's extensive efforts in composition, improvisation, and performance are all geared towards challenging the

status quo while respecting the accomplishments of his predecessors. His activity stretches beyond the many recordings and performances with masters of the form including Charles Lloyd, Bill Frisell, and the late Sam Rivers, and his work with his trio The Bandwagon (with drummer Nasheet Waits and bassist Tarus Mateen) has resulted in a profound discography for Blue Note Records. The scope of Moran's partnerships and music-making with venerated and



Jason Moran

iconic visual artists is extensive. He has collaborated with such major figures as Adrian Piper, Joan Jonas, Glenn Ligon, Stan Douglas, Adam Pendleton, Lorna Simpson, and Kara Walker; commissioning institutions of Moran's work include the Walker Art Center, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Dia Art Foundation, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Harlem Stage, and Jazz at Lincoln Center.

### Thomas Morgan

Thomas Morgan is a double bass player with a unique approach to the instrument and an exceptional musical understanding. He has played on more than a hundred recordings and toured all over the world as a member of bands led by Bill Frisell, Jakob Bro, Craig Taborn, Masabumi Kikuchi, Jim Black, Dan Weiss, Paul Motian, John Abercrombie, Dave Binney, Steve Coleman, and Tomasz Stanko, among many others. It is Thomas Morgan's extraordinary way of being in the



Thomas Morgan

moment in music and putting his own signature on it that has made him one of the most in demand jazz bassists on the international scene.

## **Guest Artist**

### Matt Skellenger Group

Subspace Transmission is dedicated to our bandmate, mentor, and friend Ron Miles. It will be released on March 8, 2023. One year after Ron's passing. This 12-track album features 2 of Ron's compositions, and his incredible playing is also featured on 2 tracks. The artwork for the album was done by Ron's son Honor Miles.



The Matt Skellenger Group

Ron Miles, We Love and Thank You. - Matt

This one-of-a-kind group from Denver performs the original music of Matt Skellenger. The group's instrumentation is a unique mixture of acoustic instruments that are centuries old (Tabla, Ghatam, Cajon, Trumpet, Trombone, Drums, Conch Shell), with modern electric instruments and effects (Electric Bass, Pedal Steel Guitar, Effects Pedals). The music blends jazz, world, funk, rock, and fusion influences to create a sound unlike anything you have heard.

Born and raised in Denver, CO., Matt has been composing, performing, recording, and teaching in Colorado for 30 years. Matt earned a B.A. in Music from Metro State University in 2002 where he studied with the great Ron Miles. Ron was an original member of the Skellenger group from 2006-2014, and he is featured on the group's first 3 albums. Matt has also studied with world renowned bassist and educator Victor Wooten. In addition to leading his own group, Skellenger performs solo and in the Grown Ass Man Band. He has also been a music teacher at Swallow Hill since 2008.

Matt Skellenger – Electric Bass Adam Bartczak – Trombone, Conch Shell Dave Miller – Drums, Ghatam Matt Reid – Trumpet, Cornet, Flugelhorn, Effects Andy Skellenger-- Cajon, Tabla, Udu Glenn Taylor – Pedal Steel Guitar

## **Guest Artist**

### **MSU Denver Combos and Big Band**

Wednesday's concert will feature MSU Denver Jazz and American Improvised Music Combos and Big Band led by Shane Endsley, Dave Devine, Patrick McDevitt, Mark Harris, and Dawn Clement. MSU Denver Combos and Big Band will also be featured on our Kalamath Series, every 1st and 3rd Wednesday, 6pm at our 800 Kalamath location.

# Wednesday and Thursday Masterclasses are brought to you by the Denver Municipal Band



The Denver City Band was formed in 1861 to bring culture to a mining town. More than 160 years later, we're still here, but today we're known as the Denver Municipal Band. We're also still bringing music to the Denver-area community. In fact, today, our mission is to bring music to Denver-area residents (from Westminster to Highlands Ranch) for free in parks near them. We also help Denver-area youth develop a passion for music and refine their musical talents.

### denvermunicipleband.org



## **Distinguished Panel of Judges**

### Anisha Rush

Born and raised in Colorado Springs, CO, saxophonist, composer and educator Anisha Rush began playing the saxophone at the age of 10 and immediately developed an interest in improvisation-based black American music (BAM). Anisha went on to study music and psychology, earning a BM in Jazz Studies from the Thompson Jazz Studies Program and a BA in Psychology from the University of Colorado at Boulder. In 2015, Anisha received a grant from the Boulder County Arts Alliance through Pathways to Jazz allowing her to record her debut album. Pursuit released in October of 2016.



Anisha actively performs as bandleader of the Anisha Rush Quartet. As a sidewoman, she has played alongside Ron Miles, Dawn Clement, Shane Endsley, Art Lande, Greg Gisbert, Annie Booth, and more.

Anisha Rush is also a well-respected jazz educator. For several years, she was the adjunct professor of jazz saxophone at Metropolitan State University - Denver. She has also taught at the University of Colorado at Boulder as well as the Colorado Conservatory for the Jazz Arts. In 2022, she was selected to join the mentor fellowship at Stanford's Jazz Workshop as well.

#### anishajrush.com

### **Steve Christopher**

Steve Christopher has been a music educator since 1967 and retired as the Director of Jazz Studies and Director of Bands at Fairview High School in Boulder, Colorado. He also served as Instrumental Music Coordinator for Boulder Valley Schools. His marching, symphonic and jazz bands at Fairview consistently received superior ratings at contests and festivals, and he increased the Fairview High School curriculum to four jazz bands and eight jazz combos.

Steve had a huge impact upon his students and several have gone on to become professional musicians and educators. Mr. C's many



accomplishments include being chosen as Colorado Jazz Educator of the Year in 1991. He has been the guest director for the Colorado Bandmasters' Association Small School All State Jazz Band and is a noted judge and clinician. He has directed the Mile High Jazz Festival All-Star Band, and the Colorado Jazz Workshop Wednesday Night Band. Steve is currently on the faculty of the Center for Musical Arts (Colorado Music Festival & Center for Musical Arts). In charge of Jazz Studies at the CMA, Steve directs the CMA Jazz Ensemble, three jazz combos, and teaches Jazz Improvisation.

As a trumpeter, Mr. Christopher has performed with many well-known artists during his career and continues to play as a freelance musician. In recognition of Steve Christopher's outstanding contributions and dedication to advancing music education, he was inducted into the Colorado Music Educators Hall of Fame in January 2010. In August 2013, he was named the Pacesetter for Arts and Entertainment by the Boulder Daily Camera.

#### www.mrcjazz.com

### **Dave Wiske**

A Colorado Native, Dave has been playing trombone in the Denver area for the past 30+ years. He has performed with artists such as Natalie Cole, Linda Ronstadt, Frankie Valli, Rita Moreno, Marvin Hamlish, Jim Neighbors, The Temptations, The Four Tops, and the ghost bands of Woody Herman, Tommy Dorsey, Nelson Riddle, and Benny Goodman. He received both his bachelor's and master's



degrees in music education from the University of Northern Colorado and spent time pursuing a doctoral degree in trombone performance at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Dave recently retired after a 30 year career teaching music in the Thornton, Colorado area, having spent time at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

### **Mark Harris**

Mark Harris is a dedicated and exploratory educator and performer. He has been a first call show player, playing in bands backing artists including Billy Eckstein, Joe Williams, Cab Calloway, Bob Hope, Natalie Cole, the Temptations; performed with Roger Waters (of Pink Floyd), Fred Frith, Chris Cutler, and Matt Wilson. His more recent performance focus is with original music bands Hamster Theatre, Thinking Plague, improv group Random Axe, and classical chamber ensembles Metro Wind Consort (where he replaces the french horn of a woodwind quintet with alto saxophone), the Lamont



Sax Quartet, and improvisational ensembles of all kinds.

As an avid improviser, he received a certification in Soundpainting in 2013, and enjoys sharing soundpainting and improvisation generally with Denver area high school and middle school students.

Mark is Associate Professor of Studio Saxophone at MSU, and teaches Woodwind Techniques, Improvisation, chamber ensembles and jazz combos.

### Shane Endsley

DownBeat magazine named him as one of the "Top 25" trumpeters of his generation and he was cited as a Rising Star in the 2013 Critics Poll. A truly modern and dynamic musician, he can be found on recordings with innovative jazz instrumentalists like Steve Coleman, Mark Guiliana, Donny McCaslin, and Ben Allison as well as appearances with folk, rock, and pop icons like Ani DiFranco, Pearl Jam, and Shakira. Shane is a founding member of the Grammy nominated group Kneebody. They have released ten recordings and have been playing premier festivals, concert halls, and clubs for over a decade.

Shane has made two solo albums, one of which was voted in the LA Times' Top Ten of the Year. He is also an accomplished drummer



and can be found on recordings with trumpeter Ralph Alessi.

Shane is a lecturer in the MSU Denver Jazz and American Improvised Music (JAIM) program.



6:00 PM · 800 KALAMATH, DENVER · \$10 SUGGESTED DONATION

## Mile High Jazz Fest Schedule Wednesday, February 8th

Judges - Steve Christopher, Dave Wiske, Mark Harris, Anisha Rush, Shane Endsley

- 8:50 Pueblo East HS Jazz Band
- 9:15 Heritage HS Jazz II
- 9:40 Castle View HS Jazz Ensemble
- 10:05 Pueblo County HS Jazz Band
- 10:30 Bear Creek HS Jazz I
- 10:55 Heritage HS Jazz I
- 11:20 Rock Canyon HS Jazz Band

### Noon Concert MSU Big Band and Combos

- 1:30 Grandview HS Jazz Ensemble I 5A Ke
- 1:55 Standley Lake HS Gator Blues
- 2:20 Gateway HS Jazz Band
- 2:45 North HS Jazz Combo
- 3:10 Legacy HS Jazz Ensemble
- 3:35 North HS Jazz Ensemble
- 4:00 Standley Lake HS Signature
- 4:25 Lewis Palmer HS

- 3A Christopher Herron
- 4A Garen Cuthrell
- 5A Mark Cellar
- 3A Josh Muller
- 4A Tammy Ahmed
- 4A Garen Cuthrell
- 5A Zachary Fruits

- 5A Keith Farmer
- 4A Crissy Duran
- 4A Anthony Windle
- 3A John Jonas
- 5A Brian Ebert
- 3A John Jonas
- 4A Crissy Duran
- 4A Tom Chapman



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Dáddarío

## Mile High Jazz Fest Schedule Thursday, February 9th

Judges - Steve Christopher, Dave Wiske, Mark Harris, Anisha Rush, Shane Endsley

- 8:50 Arvada West HS
- 9:15 Prairie View HS Jazz Ensemble
- 9:40 Denver Christian Jazz Band
- 10:05 Westlake MS Wolverine Jazz Ens.
- 10:30 Deer Creek MS Jazz Band
- 10:55 Rocky Top MS Jazz Band
- 11:20 Pine Creek HS Jazz II

### Noon Concert Matt Skellenger Group

- 1:30 Pine Creek HS Jazz I
- 1:55 Pine Creek HS Jazz Combo
- 2:20 Horizon HS Jazz III
- 2:45 Eaglecrest HS Jazz I
- 3:10 Horizon HS Jazz II
- 3:35 Eaglecrest HS Jazz II
- 4:00 Horizon HS Jazz I
- 4:25 Wheatridge HS Jazz Ensemble

- 5A Zach Graf
- 5A Armando Solis
- 1A Aimee Delnero
- MS Michael Windham
- MS Jim Sudano
- MS Shelby Serio
- 5A Stoney Black

- 5A Stoney Black
- 5A Stoney Black
- 5A Tim Dailey
- 5A Jason Mabrey
- 5A Tim Dailey
- 5A Jason Mabrey
- 5A Tim Dailey
- 3A Kendra Graf

## Mile High Jazz Fest Schedule Friday, February 10th

Judges - Steve Christopher, Dave Wiske, Mark Harris, Anisha Rush, Shane Endsley

8:25	Rampart HS Jazz I	4A	David Altman		
8:50	Rampart HS Advanced Jazz	4A	Keith Acuncias		
9:15	Lakewood HS Jazz Ensemble	5A	Austen Jankowski		
9:40	Chatfield HS Jazz Combo	5A	Phil Emery		
10:05	Century MS Jazz II	MS	Jared Crump-Bertram		
10:30	Goddard MS Jazz Bandits	MS	Mike Farrell		
10:55	Chatfield HS Jazz Ensemble I	5A	Phil Emery		
11:20	Altona MS Jazz Band	MS	Dana Clanin		
Noon Concert					

## Masterclass with Rainbow Sign

1:30	Fairview HS Jazz III Combo	5A	Travis Keller
1:55	Century MS Jazz I	MS	Jared Crump-Bertram
2:20	Fairview HS Jazz II Combo	5A	Travis Keller
2:45	Englewood HS Jazz I	2A	Spencer Mallot
3:10	Fairview HS Jazz I Big Band	5A	Travis Keller
3:35	Englewood HS Jazz II	2A	Spencer Mallot
4:00	Fairview HS Jazz I Combo	5A	Travis Keller

## **Evening Concert**

Rainbow Sign Brian Blade, Bill Frisell, Jason Moran, and Thomas Morgan Play the Music of Ron Miles 7:30 PM - See registration about tickets



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### Or Audition Online at msudenver.edu/music



Bachelor of Music in Performance Bachelor of Music in Jazz & American Improvised Music Bachelor of Music in Composition Bachelor of Music Education Bachelor of Arts in Music Theory Bachelor of Arts in Music

