

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 23, 2012

Tickets & Information: 212/854-7799; www.millertheatre.com

Press Contacts:

Aleba Gartner, 212/206-1450; aleba@alebaco.com

Charlotte Landrum, 212/854-2380; CL2867@columbia.edu

“Anytime Byron does a new project he always explores the subject very deeply...

It is a very moving experience listening to it.” — *BBC3*

**MILLER THEATRE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS**

brings home its 2011-2012 *Jazz* series with Don Byron’s newest project:

Don Byron New Gospel Quintet

Saturday, February 25, 8:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$25 • CU Students: \$7 • All other students: \$15 with valid ID

From Miller Theatre Director Melissa Smey:

“I am so excited to present the Don Byron New Gospel Quintet as Miller’s last jazz performance this season. Every project Don Byron undertakes, he pursues with commitment and thoughtfulness, and I cannot wait to share his newest work with the Miller audience. His exploration of Gospel’s roots is sure to be fascinating and soulful, and we are pleased to be able to present it during Black History Month.”

Saturday, February 25, 8:00 p.m.

Don Byron New Gospel Quintet

A master interpreter of a variety of genres, Don Byron has worked in an astounding range of musical contexts. His latest project, the **Don Byron New Gospel Quintet**, is informed by Byron’s in-depth studies of gospel music, particularly the songs of Thomas A. Dorsey. In his words: “I am combining my own compositions with traditional Gospel pieces in a way I have not attempted before.” The result is a joyous, profound, and affecting musical experience.

ARTISTS: Don Byron, *clarinet and saxophone*
Carla Cook, *vocals*
Xavier Davis, *piano*
Brad Jones, *bass*
Pheeroan akLaff, *drums*

BIOS:

Bronx, New York-born **Don Byron** is a singular voice in an astounding range of musical contexts, exploring widely divergent traditions while continually striving for what he calls "a sound above genre." As clarinetist, saxophonist, composer, arranger, and social critic, he redefines every genre of music he plays, be it classical, salsa, hip-hop, funk, klezmer, rhythm & blues, or any jazz style from swing and bop to cutting-edge downtown improvisation. Byron has presented a multitude of projects at major music festivals around the world, most recently in Vienna, San Francisco, Hong Kong, London, New Zealand, and New York, including a run on Broadway. His countless collaborations with other artists range from the Duke Ellington Orchestra to Daniel Barenboim to Salif Keita. He has composed and arranged music for films, dance, and for chamber ensembles and appeared as actor in the film *Kansas City* by Robert

Altman and in *Lulu on the Bridge* by Paul Auster. He has composed the soundtracks for several documentary films, including director Joel Katz's acclaimed *Strange Fruit* about the history of the anti-lynching song made famous by Billie Holiday, and for *Red-Tailed Angels*, a film about the Tuskegee Airmen. From 2000-2005, Byron was Artist-in-Residence at New York's Symphony Space, where he curated the "Contrasting Brilliance" series in performances with his Adventurers Orchestra, interpreting music ranging from Stravinsky to Sly Stone and from Raymond Scott to Earth, Wind and Fire, among others. His discography comprises a dozen albums for mostly Blue Note and Nonesuch Records. *Ivey-Divey*, his Lester Young/Nat King Cole/Buddy Rich Trio-inspired recording, was voted Record of the Year 2004 by *Jazz Times Magazine* and nominated for a Grammy Award. His most recent CD releases are *A Ballad for Many*, featuring his own compositions performed by the Bang On A Can All-Stars, and *Do the Boomerang*, a tribute to the music of soul/R&B legend, saxophonist/singer Junior Walker. Don Byron is also an experienced teacher who has led residencies at the University of California San Diego, the University of Nevada Reno, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Columbia University. He is currently a Visiting Associate Professor at both MIT and The State University of New York, Albany, where he teaches theory, saxophone, improvisation, and composition.

Carla Cook is a daring jazz singer/songwriter who sings standards beautifully -- but she doesn't stop there. Cook is willing to put a jazz spin on songs not written by traditional jazz composers. Songs that, until you hear her sing them, you'd never imagine could be interpreted as jazz. In her songbook you'll find elements of R&B, European classical, Motown, blues and Gospel. That willingness to simply sing what she loves, bringing an earthy sophistication to every song, is what gives Cook her signature style. Cook goes beyond the American jazz standard repertoire, reinterpreting songs from the rock and R&B worlds. Though jazz has always been Cook's primary focus, she has been quoted as saying that her favorite artists range from Miles Davis to Chaka Khan to Johann Sebastian Bach. In her native Detroit, Cook started singing as a young child in the Methodist church. During her formative years, she studied privately voice, piano and string bass. After leaving the Motor City, Cook moved to Boston to attend Northeastern University. While in Boston, she formed the first of several jazz ensembles, and in 1990 she moved to New York, where she became active on the Manhattan club scene. In 1998 Cook signed with MAXJAZZ, a small independent jazz label based in St. Louis. In 1999 Cook recorded her debut album, *It's All About Love*. The CD enjoyed favorable reviews and received a Grammy nomination in the Best Jazz Vocal Performance category and was awarded the AFIM Indie Award for Best Jazz Vocal in 2000. In 2000, Cook recorded her second album, *Dem Bones*, and in 2002 she recorded *Simply Natural*, both for MAXJAZZ.

Xavier Davis is an accomplished pianist, composer, and arranger. His debut recording *Dance of Life* was released on Metropolitan Records in 1999, featuring original compositions along with his arrangements of classic standards. Xavier's second recording as a leader, *Innocence of Youth*, was released in April 2002 by Fresh Sounds New Talent. Xavier has performed with many of today's great jazz musicians. He started his career by working with the legendary vocalist Betty Carter for nearly two years. He is on her 1996 Verve release *I'm Yours, You're Mine*. Xavier's early career was also marked by working with drummer Carl Allen, who featured Xavier's composition, *The Message*, on his 1995 Atlantic Records solo release. Xavier worked with trumpeter Tom Harrell regularly from 1997 until 2005, appearing on four of Harrell's RCA Victor releases and associate producing *Live at the Village Vanguard*. He was a member of vibraphonist Stefon Harris' quartet and violinist Regina Carter's group for a number of years, and has performed and/or recorded with Freddie Hubbard, Sonny Fortune, Abbey Lincoln, Joe Lovano, Donald Byrd, Bob Berg, Joe Chambers, Gary Bartz, John Faddis, Nat Adderley, Nicholas Payton, Wessell Anderson, Vincent Herring, Antonio Hart, Don Braden,

The New Jazz Composer's Octet, Ron Blake, Vanessa Rubin, Nnenna Freelon, Steve Turre, Russell Malone, The New York Voices, Billy Hart, Manhattan Projects, and Diahann Carroll, among others. Xavier played keyboard for the television series "Cosby", and currently writes music for national television commercials as well as an upcoming PBS documentary. In 2005, Xavier became the first person to receive the "New Works" grant twice from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation under the auspices of Chamber Music America. During the 1999– 2000 season, Xavier was Musical Director of the Boy's Choir of Harlem, and has taught classes at The Juilliard School since 2008. Born in 1971, Xavier is a native of Grand Rapids, Michigan. His mother began teaching him piano when he was four. Xavier received his bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University (WMU) where he studied piano with Dr. Stephen Zegree.

Brad Jones

New York-born Brad Christopher Jones is a bassist, composer, and educator. He has recorded, performed, and toured around the world with a diverse array of artists that include Ornette Coleman, Elvis Costello, Elvin Jones, David Byrne, Muhal Richard Abrams, Sheryl Crow, Deborah Harry, Dave Douglas, Vernon Reid, John Zorn, Don Byron, Marc Ribot, and The Jazz Passengers. Brad has released three recordings under his own leadership with two separate projects: "Uncivilized Poise" and "The Embodiment" with his band Aka Alias, and "Pouring My Heart In" with the Brad Jones Quartet. Brad is also an experienced educator who has taught workshops and master classes in France, Italy, Canada, and Mexico and is part of the music faculty at Columbia University in New York City.

Pheeroan akLaff believes that the arts are a way to give thanks and to work for change. He is a musician who has kept New York vibrant with live music and emerging performance art for over thirty years. His personal style of drumming with adventuresome composers has been voluminously documented in several areas of Creative Music. As a young artist Pheeroan akLaff toured countries of Africa, Asia, and Europe. His associations with Wadada Leo Smith, Oliver Lake, Anthony Davis, Henry Threadgill, Sonny Sharrock, and eventually Yamashita Yosuke, Liu Sola Henry Brant, and Andrew Hill presented him with challenging expansions of musical systems. He utilized his versatility with a wave of funk and reggae-influenced performances and recordings in the early 1980s. He lived and worked in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire with Marie Rose Guiraud's dance troupe. He met Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Sonny Okosun, and Steve Rhodes while visiting Frank T. Fairfax III in Lagos, Nigeria. U.S. State Department tours of nine African nations, the Near East, and India in 1982 and 1985 were to follow. Pheeroan akLaff featured his writing for quintet, quartet, and trio as a headliner at the Willisau festival of Switzerland, the Sju festival of the Netherlands, the Montsalvat festival of Australia, and the Moers and Nurnberg festivals of Germany. He led the Double Duo ensemble dedicated to the spiritual music of John Coltrane using the sound of two saxophonists, Mixashawn and Ravi Coltrane, and two drummers, akLaff and his mentor Rashied Ali. His solo performances have occurred in Japanese temples and on theater stages. He wrote and performed *Frederick Douglass Chronicles* using the published letters of the 19th century statesman. Since 1991, Mr. akLaff has taught drums to university students. He began at The New School in New York and is presently at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. He has been at the forefront of musical expression and cultural enrichment through his approach to the drum set. He has taught students in Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

Jazz at Miller Theatre

New York's jazz heart wasn't always located downtown. Once it was found on 52nd Street and before that on 125th, and for many decades its

most powerful radio voice has been WKCR-FM on the campus of Columbia University. Just a few yards away, jazz finds an uptown home at Columbia's Miller Theatre. This season's *Jazz* series began in November with the astounding, inventive **Lionel Loueke Trio** and the bold and energetic **Renee Rosnes Quartet**. This spring the **Anat Cohen Quartet**, led by the Israeli woodwind virtuoso, makes its Miller debut and finally, the amazing Don Byron rounds out the series by bringing his new project, the **Don Byron New Gospel Quintet**, to the stage.

Columbia University's Miller Theatre is located north of the Main Campus Gate at 116th St. & Broadway on the ground floor of Dodge Hall.

Single tickets are now available online at www.millertheatre.com.
The public may also purchase tickets through the Miller Theatre Box Office in person or at 212/854-7799, M-F, 12-6 p.m.

For further information, press tickets, and to arrange interviews, please contact Aleba & Co. at 212/206-1450 or aleba@alebaco.com.

For photos, please contact Charlotte Landrum at 212/854-2380 or CL2867@columbia.edu.

#