

JAZZ

FESTIVAL 2025



Christopher Merz, MM
Jazz Festival Clinician

Christopher Merz, MM professor of music, has served as director of jazz studies and director of the award-winning UNI Jazz Band One at the University of Northern Iowa since 2002. Under his direction, the band has toured in South Africa, Cuba and Thailand as well as the east coast of the US, and has recorded 18 albums featuring many original compositions and arrangements by student and faculty writers.

The 2006 recipient of the CHFA University Book and Supply Outstanding Teaching award, Merz was also the 2016 recipient of the John L. Baker Faculty Development award and is a member of the Community Jazz Center of Des Moines (2023) Jazz Educators of Iowa (2015) Hall of Fame. He is a past president of Jazz Educators of Iowa (JEI), and the

founder and director of the UNI Combo Camp, an annual event for high school jazz students and music educators, which takes place each June.

An active performer, Merz is a member of The Iowa Jazz Composers' Orchestra, the Mike Conrad/Chris Merz duo, and Big Fun, a soul jazz sextet led by Steve Grismore. His own projects include Christopher's Very Happy. Band, which has released two albums of his original compositions, and Shorter Stories, which features UNI faculty colleagues performing his arrangements of the music of Wayne Shorter. Their recent recording, New Juju, is available on Bandcamp and all streaming platforms.

An accomplished composer/arranger for large jazz ensembles, Merz has received commissions from university and high school big bands throughout the country and is published through UNC Jazz Press and ejazzlines. He is also a highly sought-after guest soloist, clinician and conductor at university and high school jazz festivals nationwide, and is endorsed by D'Addario and TM Custom tenor saxophones.