

2018 Spotlight Jazz Semifinal Panel

David Arnay is a pianist, bassist, guitarist, composer, recording artist, music teacher and consultant in the Los Angeles area. He is on faculty at the USC Thornton School, teaching Jazz Studies and Popular Music. Mr. Arnay devotes most weekday hours to his students, also performing several nights each week – leading his own jazz group, as a piano soloist, and as a sideman. Collaborations include extended runs with reedman Bennie Maupin and guitarist Phil Upchurch. Mr. Arnay played guitar and keyboards for the original Los Angeles production of the Broadway hit musical RENT starring Neil Patrick Harris, for over 250 performances. His most recent jazz CD “8” was released in May 2013.

Zane Carney is a guitarist, singer, and songwriter, most known for his work with John Mayer, his band CARNEY, and Broadway's "Spider Man -Turn Off The Dark." Mr. Carney has shared the stage with Stevie Wonder, Keith Urban, and Roy Hargrove, appeared on Oprah, Ellen, and David Letterman, opened for U2, Fergie, and The Black Crowes with CARNEY, and worked collaboratively with Bono & The Edge, Don Was and Alex Da Kid. As a freshman at USC's Thornton School of Music, he was approached by David Foster to tour the world with up and coming jazz sensation Renee Olstead - a moment that solidified Mr. Carney's career as a hired-gun guitarist; one that has included playing with house bands for network TV shows, signing to a major label (Interscope) via CARNEY, recording as a go-to guitarist for producers including the likes of Justin Timberlake. More recently, John Mayer handpicked Mr. Carney to play guitar in his touring band and on his album “Paradise Valley. Mr. Carney was a Spotlight Grand Prize Finalist in Jazz Instrumental.

Tom Luer, saxophonist, has performed with Poncho Sanchez, the Gordon Goodwin Big Phat Band, Wayne Bergeron Big Band, and the Toshiko Akiyosi/Lew Tabackan West Coast Renunion Band, among others. He has toured with Queen Latifah and his television appearances include the American Music Awards, the Tonight Show with Jay Leno, and the Ellen DeGeneres show. He recently released his debut recording, and recording appearances include the Mike Barone Big Band “Flight of the Bumblebee”, Curt Berg and the Avon St. Quintet “At Stagg St. Studio”, and on Paul Tynan and Aaron Lington's “Bicoastal Collective”. He serves on the faculty at Cal Poly Pomona where he teaches Jazz Saxophone Jazz Improvisation and Jazz History. His additional teaching experience includes faculty positions at the University of North Texas, Texas Christian University and Bethel College.

Dan Lutz is the bassist and musical director for Jonathan Butler. He has played on Butler's last four albums and toured the world with him. As a session bassist, Mr. Lutz has played on albums or toured with artists including Michael Buble, Melody Gardot, Lizz Wright, Kandace Springs, Josh Groban, Robben Ford, Roger Kellaway Trio, Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band, Lang Lang, Ana Moura, Thomas Dybdahl, and Ginny Owens. Movie and TV performances are featured in True Blood, Chronicles of Narnia, Incredible Burt Wonderstone, The Day the Earth Stood Still, 500 Days of Summer, Marathon Oil, and RVing Campaign. Mr. Lutz also plays for Broadway shows at the Pantages Theater including Hamilton, Lion King, Wicked, Phantom of the Opera, Book of Mormon, Dirty Dancing, Young Frankenstein, Grease, A Chorus Line, Pippin, and Legally Blonde. He is currently on the Faculty Cal State University, Northridge.

Dan Schnelle is one of the most talented, in-demand drummers in the Los Angeles area. He understands how to make other musicians comfortable, while bringing enough of the unexpected to his playing to keep it consistently exciting. Unsatisfied with the idea that the drum set is merely a time-keeping device, Mr. Schnelle is thoughtful about how this unique instrument, with its nearly limitless variety of sounds, can be tastefully and effectively deployed in a wide variety of musical situations. Years spent collaborating with some of the best musicians in Los Angeles (and beyond) has earned him a reputation as a hard-working, professional, and creative team player; one who is, above all, committed to musical excellence. Find him performing, recording or collaborating with great artists, including Anthony Wilson, Josh Nelson, Larry Goldings, Gilad Hekselman, Laurence Hobgood, Walter Smith III, Joshua White, John Daversa, Dayna Stephens, Billy Childs, Larry Koonse, Ben Wendel, John Beasley and many more.