



## Fantastic jazz

### A camp for jazz players, young and old.

By Bill Meredith

Optometrist Dino D'Onofrio calls his week at the Tritone Jazz Fantasy Camp at Nazareth College in Rochester, New York, "downright therapeutic. To say it was educational and musically inspiring is truly an understatement," says the drummer.

Drew Fase, a singer, pianist, and customs broker, quoted on the camp's website, [tritonejazz.com](http://tritonejazz.com), says, "They call it a 'fantasy' camp. It's not just a fancy name. Your jazz fantasy *does* come true."

Three men launched the camp, which was held in 2004 from June 27th-July 2nd, and which is open to musicians of all talent levels who are at least 21 and who sing or play jazz. Founders Jim Doser and Fred Sturm are both longtime musicians and music professors. The third partner, communications consultant Bob DeRosa, is a self-described "PR guy" who only recently took up an instrument.

"I started playing the acoustic bass in 1993, when I was 42," DeRosa says, "and was looking for ways to accelerate my progress. One of the ways was by attending a jazz camp at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. I had been playing for only about a year at that time, and I was just horrible. But I went for three years, and it gave me the impetus to seek out local people in Rochester to play with."

Saxophonist Doser is a neighbor of DeRosa's. A professor at the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music at the time, Doser is now director of the school district's music program in Penfield, New York. He recruited trombonist and fellow Eastman professor Sturm, now director of Jazz and Contemporary Music at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin.

As they considered creating a music camp, the discussion turned to DeRosa's experience at the camp at Moravian College, with its mix of high school and college students. "That wasn't working," he recalls. "In some cases, the adults were intimidated by high school and college kids who could read everything and play circles around them." The trio settled on the idea of an adult camp.

The first jazz-fantasy camp at Eastman took place in 1997. Expecting about 25 campers, they were surprised that 40 people attended, which suggested a potential for growth. They formed Tritone Music Inc. in 1998, and conducted separate camps at Eastman (through 2002, after which they moved to Nazareth) and at Bailey's Harbor, Wisconsin. Sturm's influence gave rise to the latter. And the successful Tritone at Bjorklund (the name of the jazz and cultural center in Bailey's Harbor) completed its seventh consecutive camp this past July 11th-16th.

The six-day camp costs between \$695-\$1,045. The three price tiers represent tuition only (mostly for local musicians), tuition plus meals (a great opportunity for discussion), and tuition with meals and lodging. Doser and Sturm function as both instructors and players in the camp combos. DeRosa acts as an administrator and "bass player where needed" for combos, leaving the teaching to bassists like Ike Sturm, Fred's son.

Guest artists this year included guitarist Gene Bertoncini — who's worked with Buddy Rich, Wayne Shorter, and Tony Bennett — and pianist/composer John Harmon, who's worked with Flora Purim and Yusef Lateef. A typical camp day includes rhythm exercises, jazz theory, vocal and instrumental master classes, and rehearsals, concerts, and jam sessions in either small combos or big bands.

"We all have full-time jobs," DeRosa says. "It's a part-time venture for all of us, and we certainly don't get rich. We just wanted to specialize in the needs of the adult learner, and we're dedicated to keeping our camper-to-faculty ratio at no more than 5-to-1. Our spectrum of ages at Nazareth this year was 23 to 87. So we work with everyone from young people just out of college to our 87-year-old retired engineer, who's still playing the same sax that he bought in the 1930s." ▲

