

BIOGRAPHY OF NEIL GONSALVES

Neil Gonsalves completed his BMus(Hons) in 1993 and a M.Mus(cum laude) in Jazz Performance and Composition in 1999, both at the University of Natal (Durban).

In 1994 he began teaching part-time in the music department at Natal Technikon. He performed at the IAJE conference in Boston with student group 'NU Jazz Link' and in Seoul, South Korea with 'Sekunjalo'. In 1995 he formed 'The Core' with Feya Faku and Lex Futshane, using the grouping as the means to perform original compositions. He became a permanent staff member at Technikon Natal.

Gonsalves presented a paper at the South African Jazz Educators conference at UCT on the Technikon Natal bridging course in 1996. At the conference he accompanied 'NU Voices' and went on to record with them during that year. Performances at the State theatre in Pretoria with Bheki Mseleku and at the opening of the International Convention Centre in Durban followed during 1997.

In 1998 Gonsalves, together with Mageshen Naidoo, Logan Byrne and Bruce Baker of Landscape Prayers fame, formed 'Tonk' in order to perform and workshop original compositions. These compositions and arrangements formed the basis of his Masters recital and portfolio. He was also appointed to the full-time staff of the music department at Technikon Natal.

In 1999 he was invited to teach at the 7th annual National Youth Jazz Festival in Grahamstown. He also performed with Gito Baloi and Brice Wassi at the Living Treasures festival in St. Lucia and Shongweni, during this year.

A busy year followed in 2000. Neil performed with Ernest Ranglin at WOMAD in Benoni and did two tours of Europe, including France, Germany and Switzerland with Johnny Clegg. He also performed with Clegg in Seoul at the 'Sounds of Peace' concert. He accompanied the SAMRO overseas candidates and completed commissioned work by SAMRO for the National Youth Jazz Band. Live performances included Barney Rachabane at Jabula Inn, a two-piano concert with Melvin Peters at Howard College and a performance with Busi Mhlongo and Brice Wassi at the Arts Alive Festival at Mega Music and the Living Treasures Festival in Shongweni. He also accompanied Mageshen Naidoo's Masters Recital at the South African Jazz Educators conference.

In 2001 he performed at the Jabula Inn with Winston Mankunku Ngozi and locally with Johnny Clegg, Busi Mhlongo and 'Tonk'. He toured Europe again with Clegg including two sold-out nights at the Hammersmith Odeon in London. He traveled to Oslo and Cape Town with Clegg as part of an international aids awareness programme. 2001 saw the re-formation of 'The Core' with Feya Faku, Lex Futshane and Bruce Baker.

Gonsalves performed with Busi Mhlongo and Johnny Clegg locally during 2002 and then toured with him to Europe and to the opening festival of the Esplanade Theatre on the Bay in Singapore. He performed with an expanded version of 'Tonk' (including three horns) at the Awesome Africa Festival. During the same year he taught and performed at the Grahamstown National Youth Jazz Festival along with Bruce Cassidy, Chris Collins, Dennis Tini, Barney Rachabane, Mike Rossi and Efrain Toro.

In 2003, performances included the World Parks congress at the ICC, The North Sea Jazz Festival in Cape Town, the Durban Jazz Festival with Busi Mhlongo and the World Roads conference at the ICC. He toured Europe and performed in Dubai with Clegg as well as performing at Awesome Africa with an Indo-Afro group featuring Natalie Rungan.

Local performances during 2004 included Johnny Clegg, Busi Mhlongo, Brian Thusi and Philani Ngidi at the Awesome Africa Festival. Gonsalves was the opening act for David Sanborn in Durban.

In 2005 and 2006 Neil taught at the National Youth Jazz Festival in Grahamstown and during the time performed Rick van Heerden's original compositions with Rick, Bruce Cassidy, Carlo Mombelli and Kevin Gibson.

In 2006 he performed with Concord Nkabinde at the Festival and performed original compositions and arrangements with the All-Star Jazz Band featuring Chris Collins(US), Johan Horlen(Sweden), Gustavo Bergalli(Arg), Louk Boudenstein(Holland) and a Dutch rhythm section. He again teamed up with Concord at the Joy of Jazz Festival in Johannesburg.

He travelled to Gothenburg as part of exchange programme between the Universities of KwaZulu-Natal and Gothenburg during 2006 and recorded a CD of mainly original compositions with Swedish musicians and performed as part of acclaimed smooth-jazz guitarist, Ronny Jordan's band.

In 2007, Gonsalves played four piano trio gigs at small venues in British Columbia, Canada and was the opening act for Michael Bolton at Westridge Stadium in Durban. He taught at the National Youth Jazz Festival in Grahamstown and performed with the Awesome Big Band, during the Festival. He accompanied candidates for the SAMRO International Overseas Scholarships for vocalists.

A highlight of 2007 was the release of his debut CD, 'North Facing'.

This year (2008), Neil Gonsalves has performed with visiting Swedish musicians, saxophonist Thomas Jaderlund and vocalist Karin Bengmark. He has been commissioned to write music for an SABC documentary on overcoming physical disability and earlier this year was selected to conduct the National Youth Jazz Band in Grahamstown, the Joy of Jazz festival in Johannesburg and the Cape Town International festival.