MARK GROSS

Two-time GRAMMY Award-winning saxophonist Mark Gross has built a career that bridges the deep traditions of jazz with the unmistakable soul of the Black church. A commanding alto saxophonist known for his rich tone, rhythmic authority, and hard-swinging approach, Gross has spent more than three decades performing, recording, and teaching around the world.

Born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, Gross grew up surrounded by gospel music. His father was pastor of Mt. Zion Church of God in Christ, and the music that filled both the church and the Gross household became a lasting foundation for his sound. He later studied classical music at the Baltimore School for the Arts before attending Berklee College of Music, where he studied with noted woodwind educators Joe Viola and Bill Pierce and earned his degree in Music Performance in 1988.

Soon after graduating, Gross joined the legendary Lionel Hampton, beginning a professional journey that would place him alongside some of the most important musicians in modern jazz. Over the course of his career, he has performed and recorded with artists and ensembles including Dave Holland, Nat Adderley, Delfeayo Marsalis, Mulgrew Miller, Nicholas Payton, Dizzy Gillespie, Nancy Wilson, Jimmy Heath, Buster Williams, Cyrus Chestnut, Regina Carter, Jimmy Cobb, Freddie Hubbard, the Mingus Big Band, the Village Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, and the Duke Ellington Orchestra, among many others.

Gross received two GRAMMY Awards for his work with the Dave Holland Big Band, appearing on the acclaimed recordings *What Goes Around* and *Overtime*. As a bandleader, he has developed a body of work that draws on hard bop, blues, gospel, and the broader African American musical tradition, including *Preach Daddy*, *Riddle of the Sphinx*, *Blackside*, and + *Strings*.

His career has also extended well beyond the jazz club and recording studio. Gross has performed on Broadway in productions including *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Kat and the Kings*, *Swing!*, and *After Midnight*, where he served as lead alto saxophonist with the Jazz at Lincoln Center All-Stars. His screen appearances and musical work have included Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* and HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*.

Education has remained an equally important part of Gross's musical life. He has taught and mentored emerging musicians through institutions including Princeton University, William Paterson University, Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts, the Prins Claus Conservatoire in the Netherlands, and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, where he serves as Director of Jazz Instruction.

For Gross, these roles—performer, bandleader, educator, and mentor—are parts of the same musical continuum. His playing carries forward the language of the musicians who shaped him while refusing to treat jazz as a museum piece. Gospel, bebop, hard bop, blues, and swing remain living materials in his hands: traditions to be honored by continuing to create with them.

Whether leading his own ensemble, appearing with a big band, teaching the next generation, or stepping to the front of the stage with alto saxophone in hand, Mark Gross approaches the music with the same fundamental conviction: jazz lives through sound, spirit, swing, and the musicians willing to carry the story forward.