

# Jazz—with *Kavanah*

Saxophonist and composer Shauli Einav '08E (MM) captures the attention of critics with his blend of Israeli themes and traditional Western jazz.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

IN THE PAST DECADE OR SO, JAZZ CRITICS have remarked widely on a recent spate of exceptional jazz musicians emanating from a place that might seem unlikely: Israel, a nation with no historical connection to the African diaspora, and a population of just 7.7 million people in an area smaller than Massachusetts.

One of those musicians is saxophonist, composer, and arranger **Shauli Einav** '08 (MM), a native of Jerusalem who got hooked on jazz as a youth, during his family's annual treks to the Red Sea Jazz Festival, a four-day event held since 1987 in the southern resort city of Eilat.

His debut release, *Opus One* (Plus Loin), has attracted the attention of critics writing in jazz media such as *DownBeat* and *Jazz Times* and news outlets such as National Public Radio and the *Jerusalem Post*. He's been called "emerging" and "noteworthy." "Découverte assurée" ("Discovery assured"), noted a Belgian critic.

Saxophonist and composer **Walt Weiskopf** '80E initially drew Einav to Eastman, where he was teaching in the early 2000s. He calls Einav's playing "authentic and rooted."

"Shauli is extremely talented and has tremendous instinctive love for every aspect of jazz," says Weiskopf. "He's a singularly motivated and original jazz musician."

Einav says his approach is to "play the truth."

"It's like when you talk to someone, and you sense they're telling you something true, with integrity," he says. "It's the same thing in music. You can sense when a player is playing the truth versus just moving his fingers around, showing off. The music should have essence."

One might also say *kavanah*. *Kavanah* is the title of the second track on *Opus One* and a Hebrew word describing a state of



mind for prayer, and more broadly, the state of concentration and intention that infuses spoken words—or musical performance—with meaning and sincerity.

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Einav also says that his work exudes "a feeling of urgency."

The opening track, *Jerusalem Theme*, is an exploration of many dimensions of Jerusalem's past and present, while *Hayu Leilot* ("Those Were the Nights") is Einav's interpretation of a 1940s Israeli standard. *The Damelin* is a tribute to his friend, David Damelin, who was killed by a Palestinian sniper in March 2002, when the two were

both in the Gaza Strip, during the tour of military service that's mandatory for young Israelis, men and women alike.

As a high school student, Einav was captivated by the late Arnie Lawrence, a jazz saxophonist who founded New York's New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, then moved to Israel in 1997 on a mission to unite Jews and Arabs through music. It was Lawrence whom Einav credits with inspiring him to "play the truth." He recalls walking two miles each day from school to Lawrence's studio, where he took master classes. The walk was long and often hot, but as Einav says, "for a 16-year-old guy, it was great."

Einav remembers distinctly his first encounter with Weiskopf, whom he says was "one of my favorite saxophonists growing up."

"When I saw him perform at the Red Sea Jazz Festival, I went up to the stage afterwards, when he was putting away his instrument. I asked him if I could take some lessons with him. I asked him where he taught. He said he taught at the Eastman School." From there, says Einav, going to Eastman was "my top priority."

Einav calls the band he assembled on *Opus One* his "dream band," crediting pianist Shai Maestro, trombonist Andy Hunter, bassist Joseph Lepore, and drummer Johnathan Blake, with much of the recording's success.

But Einav is the first to note that starting out takes more than talent in a band and its leader. It also takes connections, since one of the first things people in the industry want to know are the names of your mentors.

"Four reasons the 29-year-old Einav garners attention in a crowded field are his mentors," writes John Ephland in *DownBeat*, referring to Lawrence, Weiskopf, Harold Danko, the composer and pianist who chairs Eastman's jazz and contemporary media department, and the saxophonist Dave Liebman.

Starting out also requires entrepreneurialism.

"Jazz is a very competitive field. You spent a lot of time promoting your band and your solo career. We have to do everything—the bookings, getting people to the gigs, everything. I spend many hours on the computer."

"It's a maze," says Einav of New York's jazz scene. "But I'm a big believer in opening up as many doors as I can." 

## In the News

### STEPHANIE MCCURRY '83 (MA) WRITES PRIZE-WINNING BOOK ON CONFEDERACY



**Stephanie McCurry '83 (MA)**, a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, won dual honors for her book *A Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Harvard University Press, 2010). She won the 2011 Merle Curti Award for the best book in American social or intellectual history and the Avery O. Craven Award for the most original book on the Civil War and Reconstruction eras, both given by the Organization for American Historians, the main professional organization for scholars of American history. The book was also named a finalist for the 2011 Pulitzer Prize in history. McCurry argues that the Confederate

experiment to build an allegedly democratic government in which political rights extended only to slaveholding white men—a minority of the population as well as a minority of the population of Southern white men—collapsed due to its internal contradictions and the agitation of groups long assumed powerless, namely slaves and poor women.

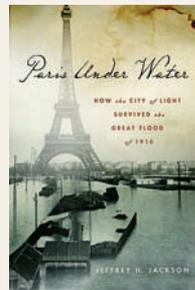
### STEPHEN COOK '07M (MPH) HONORED BY AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

**Stephen Cook '07M (MPH)**, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the School of Medicine and Dentistry, has been named Science Advocate of the Year by the American Heart Association. The national award recognizes a medical professional who engages lawmakers on issues related to heart disease and strokes. Cook chairs the childhood obesity committee of the New York state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and is a member of the National Advocacy Task Force of the Obesity Society, a national organization founded in 1982 to study obesity. He also helped develop the Monroe County, N.Y., program HEALTHI Kids ("Healthy Eating and Active Living THrough policy and practice Initiatives for Kids") and participates in the association's You're the Cure policy advocacy network.

### ARTHUR MILLER '55 HONORED BY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**Arthur Miller '55**, University Professor at New York University School of Law, has received one of the United Kingdom's highest honors, Commander of the Order of the British Empire. The honor, bestowed by Queen Elizabeth II, is an order of chivalry recognizing distinguished public service to the UK. For 15 years, Miller helped moderate panel discussions on public policy issues, modeled after the Fred Friendly dialogues he moderated for PBS, for the BBC and Grenada Television. In addition, Miller donated more than 1,800 woodblock prints by the 19th-century Japanese artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi to the American Friends of the British Museum, which were exhibited in 2010 at the Royal Academy in London and at the Japan Society in New York.

### ROCHESTER ALUMNI CLAIM RHODES COLLEGE TOP HONORS



The Clarence Day Awards—the top two faculty honors at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tenn.—both went to Rochester alumni at the school's 2011 convocation. **Jeffrey Jackson '99 (PhD)**, an associate professor of history, won the Clarence Day Award for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity following the publication of his 2010 book, *Paris Under Water: How the City of Light Survived the Great Flood of 1910* (Palgrave Macmillan). **Bernadette McNary-Zak '88**, an associate professor of religion, won Rhodes's Clarence Day Award for Outstanding Teaching. Students and colleagues cited McNary-Zak's imaginative pedagogy and ability to inspire students. She has also

coedited a book on undergraduate research in religious studies to be released by Oxford University Press later this year.