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Published November 26th, 2008

Jazz Performance with Saxophone Soloist Geoff Countryman at Campolindo

By *Sophie Braccini*

On Dec 11th at 7:30 p.m. in the Campolindo Performing Arts Center, campo alumni Geoff Countryman (2001) will play with the school's Jazz Ensemble and the Joaquin Moraga (JM) Jazz Cats.

When Geoff Countryman played on Saturday Night Live last December, he didn't know that the music teacher who had inspired him to become a professional musician, Harvey Benstein, would be watching. "One of Geoffrey's classmates told me to watch for him on TV last December," says the music teacher, "and I got a glimpse of him." Bernstein was immediately inspired to give his students the marvelous opportunity to meet and work with someone who is actually making a living as a musician in New York, someone who sat in the very chairs that they are in now.

"I have never come back to play with the band," says Countryman, "I thought it would be a lot of fun and I'm very indebted to Mr. Bernstein, who gave (me) a lot of leeway that helped with my creative side."

"I though having Geoffrey back on campus would be an inspiration for our students," adds Benstein, "he can reinforce what they need to know in high school to be more successful in college. He was also an outstanding student in our Music Theory program and I think he can help those students as they progress."

Adam Noel, JM's Music Director, shares the same enthusiasm, "I am excited to play in this concert. It's always fun for students to play with professionals, but even more so when the professional was educated in their home town. Moraga has more professional musician alumni than it realizes. I'm thrilled to be connecting with Campolindo in concert as well- it's important for my music students to hear what their future can hold."

On December 11th the musicians will present pieces by Benny Carter, Jimmy Giuffre, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk and Cootie Williams, Mark Taylor and Benny Golson.

"Geoffrey was very accomplished as a student at Campolindo and his passion for music making allowed him to pursue his dream," remembers his teacher, "It takes that kind of talent, drive and dedication to be able to make it as a musician."

Today Countryman still plays in the Saturday Night band, with "The Revelations," plays gigs and writes his own music. A few years back he started his own recording company. He teaches music one day a week in a K-12 school in New Jersey.

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