

Milt Hinton Institute for Studio Bass: July 7 through 13 in Oberlin

by Mike Telin



For seven decades, bassist Milt Hinton played with the most influential artists in American music. While doing so, Hinton chronicled his experiences through the lens of his ever-present camera. This week the Oberlin Conservatory will celebrate its ties to the late performer with the [Milt Hinton Institute for Studio Bass](#), a biennial summer program for developing musicians that takes place this year the Oberlin campus from July 7 through July 13.

Designed for bass students ages 13-21 of all ability levels, the Institute consists of a week of master classes, performances, bass ensembles, studio sessions, lectures, and workshops. It focuses on a comprehensive range of genres: classical, early music, jazz, slap, Latin, and electric. Directed by Oberlin Professor of Jazz Studies and Double Bass Peter Dominguez, the Institute will feature the nation's finest teachers and performers across a variety of styles.

The Institute is part of an ongoing relationship between Oberlin and the Hinton estate to ensure that the legacy of “The Dean of Jazz bassists” will be kept alive well into the future.

The roots of Dominguez's relationship with Hinton go back to 1979. In a 2014 [interview](#) with *ClevelandClassical.com*, Dominguez recalled his first meeting with Hinton. “I was in a lesson with Richard Davis at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Richard told me that Milt Hinton was starting a scholarship competition and he thought I would be a good candidate. I asked Richard a question about the competition, and he said, ‘Well, I don't know the answer to this. Hold on a second.’ Davis went over to the rotary phone and dialed a number and said, ‘Hi Milt? I have

a student here who has a question,’ and he handed the phone to me.” Dominguez went on to win that first scholarship competition.

In a recent telephone conversation, Dominguez noted that this year’s Institute has two new programs. “We have eleven teachers coming in to study the Suzuki method with Virginia Dixon, who is the foremost authority on teaching little ones. We also have four certified teachers who will be offering classes.” In addition to the adults attending the classes, Dominguez noted that three twelve-year-olds will be participating, accompanied by their parents.

In total, this year’s Institute will host 35 students from eleven states, the majority of whom are between the ages of 15 and 17. “There are a lot of classical players, but the bass is different from other studio instruments; it happens to be that one instrument that can cross many different genres and styles.”

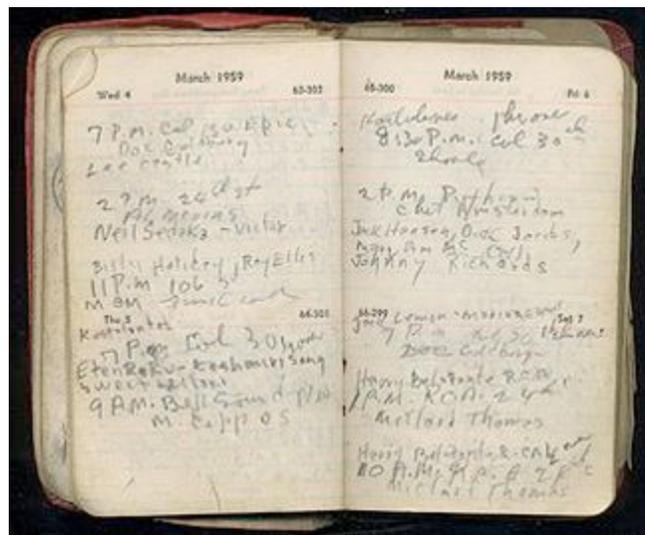


Another innovation highlighting the versatility of the bass will be the 10:00 pm Hinton Institute Showcases in the Birenbaum in the Hotel at Oberlin. The free concerts will feature Hinton Institute faculty and guest artists. Saturday the 7th will spotlight percussionist Zaire Darden and pianist Theron Brown. It’s Baroque night on Sunday the 8th, with cellist René Schiffer, bassist Tracy Rowell, and harpsichordist Mark Edwards. Latin jazz will fill the room on Monday the 9th when bassist Cheo Hernandez, timbale player Sammy De Leon, conga player Ray Guzman, and pianist Jackie Warren take the stage. Tuesday the 10th welcomes pianist Joe Hunter and vocalists Vanessa Rubin and Evelyn Wright, with Darden on drums.

On Saturday, July 7 at 7:30 pm in Clonick Hall, Oberlin's Curator of Special Collections Jeremy Smith leads a presentation on the life and impact of the Dean of Jazz Bassists titled "Who is Milt Hinton?" The event is free.

As always, at the heart of the Institute will be Milt Hinton Day on Wednesday July 11. It's a daylong celebration of the life and legacy of Hinton through film, music, and more. The events are free and open to the public.

On view will be digitized copies of Milt Hinton's date books and contracts, part of The Milton J. and Mona C. Hinton papers which are housed at the Oberlin Conservatory. In a 2014 [interview](#) with this publication, Jeremy Smith described the papers as essentially all the materials compiled by the Hintons over the course of their lives. "Everything is there, including date books that both Milt and Mona kept documenting his day-to-day musical activities from the 1950's until his death in 2000. They show who he was playing with and what recording sessions he was on."



Smith noted that the papers include correspondence between Hinton and other musicians, as well as with United States presidents. "We have awards he was given, honorary doctorates he received, and documents about streets that were named after him. We have articles and newspaper clippings, financial records, contracts from when he was with Cab Calloway, and even tax records."

In addition to being a great musician, Milt Hinton was also a respected photographer. "There are over 60,000 black & white photos. He really captured a unique perspective of jazz musicians that other photographers didn't have. He wasn't an outsider coming in with a camera and setting up lights and being intrusive. He was just Milt hanging out in the studio and backstage."

As Part of the 2018 Milt Hinton Day there will be a screening of *Keeping Time: The Life, Music & Photographs of Milt Hinton* at 3:45 pm in Kulas Recital Hall. The documentary combines rare footage, photographs, and compelling interviews as it follows Hinton throughout his career on stage, on the road, and in the studio. *Keeping Time* will be followed by a Q&A session with David Berger and Holly Maxson of the Hinton estate.

The day will conclude with the Hinton Institute Gala Concert at 7:30 pm in Warner Concert Hall featuring Institute faculty. The concert will be followed by a reception. “It’s going to be an eclectic concert that pays homage to the virtuoso players like Giovanni Bottesini. It will also showcase the renaissance of bass playing that’s taken place over the past 30 years.”



Dominguez (left) said the program will open with a jazz piece, then go right to Bach. “Diana Gannett has arranged a Mozart violin sonata with bass accompaniment that she’ll play with Donovan Stokes. Sam Suggs is playing Dragonetti’s theme and variations, and I’ll do some Piazzolla. Between Ben Williams and Eddie Gomez, there

will be some great jazz, and Mimi Jones will both sing and play.”

The concert will also include performances by Oberlin jazz professor Jay Ashby, bassist and luthier Bruno Destrez, Cleveland Orchestra principal bass Maximilian Dimoff, pianist Luis Perdomo, drummer Billy Drummond, Virginia Dixon, Cleveland Pops principal bass Ann Gilbert, performer and past president of the International Society of Bassists John Kennedy, Cleveland Music Settlement Suzuki teacher Audrey John Melzer, Butler University faculty member David Murray, Oberlin faculty member Tracy Rowell, and educator Inez Wyrick.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com July 2, 2018.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)