

Joe Policastro

Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, Joe Policastro, double bassist, began studying piano at the age of five but switched to the bass at age twelve. He studied classically with Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra bassist Rick Vizachero, and grew up in the Cincinnati jazz scene under Concorde recording artist, Cal Collins, Stan Kenton drummer, John Von Ohlen, and other local talents such as Ed Moss, Ron Enyard, Lee Stolar, Bob Bodley, Steve Schmidt, Jim Connerly, and Ron McCurdy. He studied Classical Double Bass Performance on full scholarship at Miami University where he was a recipient of both the String Department Award and the Orchestra Award. As a recipient of the Hugh Hoffman Scholarship, Joe earned his Bachelor of Music in Jazz/Studio Music from the College Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati. Joe also earned a Master of Music in Jazz Studies from DePaul University in Chicago where he is now on faculty as a Lecturer of Jazz Studies.

After leaving Cincinnati in 2002, Joe lived and worked as a jazz performer in Berlin, Germany. Early in 2003, he moved to Chicago where he quickly enjoyed success as a freelance musician. He has shared the stage with jazz luminaries such as Diane Schuur, Jeff Hamilton, Howard Levy, Phil Woods, Tim Ries, Ira Sullivan, Howard Alden, Rick Margitza, Jim Snidero, David "Fathead" Newman, and Billy Hart, and he is featured on numerous recordings by Chicago artists. Currently, Joe is a member of the Mulligan Mosaics Big Band, Jeff Hedberg's C11, the Chris Madsen Trio, Petra's Recession 7, the Andy Brown Quartet, and the Dan Effland Trio, and he is in-demand as an accompanist for fine vocalists such as Judy Roberts, Kimberly Gordon, Petra van Nuis, Rose Colella, and Paul Marinaro. He has performed at every major venue throughout Chicagoland including the Green Mill, the Jazz Showcase, the Pump Room, Pops For Champagne, Pete Miller's Steakhouse, the Velvet Lounge, Joe's Bebop Cafe, Andy's Jazz Club, the Intercontinental, the Palm Court at the Drake, the Signature Room, and Katerina's. In addition to his work as a bassist, Joe is also a freelance arranger. He leads, composes, and arranges the jazz quartet, Jeru, a group featured at the 2004 Chicago Jazz Festival. He also co-leads and arranges for the Mulligan Mosaics Nonet, a "Birth of the Cool" ensemble dedicated to performing and preserving that music and commissioning new works for the ensemble. His arrangements can be heard on recordings by artists ranging from Petra van Nuis to Ira Sullivan. In May of 2006, Joe temporarily relocated to Bonn, Germany where he performed and taught throughout the Rhineland. While in Bonn, he was an active member of the dixieland and straight-ahead jazz scene and also organized a European version of his quartet, Jeru, with members of the WDR Big Band for concerts and festivals. In April of 2007, he returned to Chicago where he continues to pursue his jazz career. Although he is predominantly a jazz performer, Joe is also active as a studio and stage musician and can be seen and heard in pit orchestras, chamber ensembles, and a variety of popular music groups. He is happy to make Chicago his home along with his wife, Marie, his daughter, Ava, and his dog, Fritz.