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Trumpeter reached Dizzy-ing heights

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It's 1970. Trumpet legend Dizzy Gillespie is playing with his band at the Jazz Workshop, a famous club in San Francisco. A young, brash, 15-year-old trumpet player, too young to be in the club, talks his way into Gillespie's dressing room hoping to get a few tips or maybe even a quick lesson from the master. Instead, the young player and his mom get more than they ever bargained for. They end up watching the show, from a table by the stage, and as Gillespie's band make its way through *A Night in Tunisia*, Gillespie wanders over to the table where the young boy is sitting and asks him to get up on stage with the band and play the ending of the song. Two songs later, his head is in the clouds, because has just played with one of the true legends of jazz.

On April 12 and 13, the trumpeter, who is still not that old, is coming to Winnipeg for two performances as part of the Izzy Asper Jazz Series. Jon Faddis will be fronting a quartet with Steve Kirby (bass), Will Bonness (piano) and, on drums, a rhythm machine from south of the border, Lewis Nash.

Faddis, whom Gillespie once referred to as "the best ever, including me," started playing the trumpet at age eight after becoming inspired by an appearance by Louis Armstrong on television. He continued studying and practising through school, but it was not until he was 12 and saw Gillespie play at a concert that he truly began to commit himself to the task of becoming a musician. A few years later, his guest appearance with Gillespie's band took place, and upon graduating from high school, he got a call to join Lionel Hampton's band on the road. So, at the age of 18, he packed up his bags and left his parents' house for the jazz capital of the world, New York City.

I caught up with Faddis last week at his home in New Jersey, and he told me over the phone that to this day, Gillespie remains one of his biggest influences.

"Roy (Eldridge), Louis Armstrong, Bunny Berigan and, of course, Dizzy Gillespie are the guys I always look back to for my inspiration. I never really studied European classical music in school, but I consider guys like (Duke) Ellington, (Billy) Strayhorn and Miles Davis to be our classical music. So I focus on their music when I need inspiration."

His experience with Hampton, a vibraphonist, percussionist and bandleader, proved to be pivotal as well, as it landed him in New York and among some of the most outstanding jazz players of the time, including Clark Terry, Sonny Rollins, Charles Mingus, Thad Jones, McCoy Tyner and Blue Mitchell. By the time he was in his mid-20s, he had developed his own sound and style. In the late 1970s

and '80s, when many jazz musicians were hard-pressed to find work in their own field, Faddis, along with players like Michael Brecker, went into the studio with pop artists like Billy Joel, Mick Jagger and Eric Clapton to pay the bills. Faddis even played trumpet on the famous Village People hit YMCA.

These days, Faddis says, he is almost too busy.

"Right now I've got two big bands -- the Jon Faddis Jazz Orchestra, which is the successor to the Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra, and the Chicago Jazz Ensemble. I'm also teaching at Purchase College in New York and the Manhattan School of Music. So I don't get too many days off. But when I do take a vacation, me and my wife actually go to Canada, to a little place called Lake O'Hara just past Lake Louise."

Although he's done a lot in his career and already has so little free time, he is still looking for more challenges.

"I want to do more writing in the future, and I'm hoping to collaborate with some arrangers who can adapt my music to a symphonic setting, so I can play with different symphonies."

To check for ticket availability for his two shows at the Berney Theatre on the Asper Jewish Community Campus, log onto www.ticketmaster.ca

Aspiring musicians may also want to check out his workshop at 7 p.m. April 13 at the Centre culturel franco-manitobain.

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