Remembering

Dave Brubeck

Pacific celebrates the life of a legendary alumnus and jazz great

By Patrick Giblin and Katie E. Ismael

“As we celebrate Dave’s life, we are reminded of the resolve, purpose and joy with which he lived. We embrace this same resolve as we strive to perpetuate his unique legacy.”

Simon Rowe,
Brubeck Institute Executive Director
In December, the world lost a legend, an iconic figure who fueled excitement about jazz around the globe and ignited discussions about civil rights, cultural diplomacy and the definitions of music simply by playing his piano.

The Pacific community also lost its most famous son. Dave Brubeck ’42 died from heart failure on December 5, 2012, near his home in Norwalk, Conn. He would have turned 92 the very next day.

In a remarkable coincidence that best demonstrated Brubeck’s continued impact on the music world, he was nominated for a Grammy along with his son Chris for their work *Ansel Adams: America*. The nomination was announced along with dozens of other awards just a few hours after Brubeck passed away.

The loss was felt profoundly at his alma mater. Besides Brubeck’s many deep connections to Pacific, members of the University community had known him personally, enjoyed his music, heard him in concert or had studied his work in depth in the Brubeck Collection, a comprehensive archive of papers, music, recordings and photos of Dave and Iola Brubeck. The collection is one of the programs of the Brubeck Institute, which was established in 2000 at Pacific to preserve and continue Brubeck’s legacy.

“Dave Brubeck dedicated his life to an art form he believed reflected American ideas of freedom and individual expression,” said President Pamela A. Eibeck. “Dave personified the Pacific spirit—his creativity, his ideals, his courage, virtue and commitment inspire all of us at the University, every single day.

“We will miss Dave deeply. We have lost a tremendous man, a tremendous spirit, who has truly helped to transform the world around him. He has left a great legacy that University of the Pacific is honored to continue to bring to life, in perpetuity,” she said.

**Finding His Rhythm**

Born on December 6, 1920, in Concord, Calif., to Pete and Elizabeth Ivey Brubeck, Dave grew up among a family of musicians. His mother was a classical piano teacher and his two older brothers, Howard and Henry, were accomplished musicians as well. Brubeck began playing the piano at age 4, and throughout high school, he played jazz on weekends with local bands. He later credited his unique sense of rhythm to his father’s career as a rancher and his years on the family ranch, saying that the rhythms created by the footsteps of horses and cattle stuck with him.

He entered the College of the Pacific in 1938, studying classical music while playing jazz at local venues. During his time at Pacific, music students were forbidden to play jazz in the practice rooms.

In 1941, he met Pacific sophomore Iola Whitlock, who became his wife, creative partner and primary lyricist.

After graduating in 1942, Brubeck enlisted in the U.S. Army and married Iola. While serving in World War II, he led the first integrated military jazz band, as part of the Third U.S. Army (under General George Patton). After his discharge in 1946, Brubeck attended Mills College in Oakland, studying with French composer Darius Milhaud, who encouraged him to blend jazz elements into his compositions.

**An Era of Innovation and Fame**

After leading an award-winning group from 1949 to 1958, Brubeck brought together the “classic” Dave Brubeck Quartet featuring alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, drummer Joe Morello and bassist Eugene Wright.

The Quartet’s appearances on college campuses in the 1950s introduced its individual style to jazz students across the nation and broke the longstanding tradition limiting jazz music to nightclubs and dance halls. It led to the release of a number of innovative albums, including *Jazz at Oberlin, Jazz Goes to College* and *Jazz at the College of the Pacific*.

The Quartet toured the nation, performing with leading jazz artists such as Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald and Charlie Parker. In 1954, *Time* magazine ran a cover story about Brubeck’s prominence, and the group won numerous top honors in *Downbeat* magazine and readers’ polls.
Snapshots of a legendary life...

1938
Brubeck enters Pacific as a pre-veterinary student; however, he is soon convinced that he would do better in the Conservatory of Music. Brubeck recounts his zoology professor’s life-changing advice — “Brubeck, your mind is not on cutting up frogs. Go across the lawn to the Conservatory, because that’s where your mind is.”

1941
Brubeck and Iola meet at Pacific and begin a lifetime partnership.

1958
The classic Dave Brubeck Quartet, made up of (l. to r.) Brubeck, Paul Desmond, Eugene Wright and Joe Morello, would make jazz history for the next 10-plus years.

1976
In the ’70s Brubeck forms a group with his sons Darius, Dan and Chris. The group tours and records as Two Generations of Brubeck, including this trip to South Africa in 1976. He cancels the end of the South Africa tour due to segregated audiences.

1988
The Brubeck Quartet tours the Soviet Union and accompanies President Reagan to perform at his summit with Gorbachev.

2003
Brubeck is named a Living Legend by the Library of Congress. He performs with the Dave Brubeck Quartet and the Brubeck Institute Jazz Quintet at the Awards Ceremony.

Brubeck INSTITUTE 1999
In 1999–2000, the Brubecks establish the Brubeck Collection at Pacific, a unique accumulation of materials representing more than 70 years in the lives of Dave and Iola Brubeck; the University also establishes the Brubeck Institute to build on their legacy.
The Quartet plays at colleges across the nation in the 1950s and '60s. Touring the South, Brubeck never succumbs to pressure to replace his black bass player Eugene Wright, even when concerts were canceled.

The Dave Brubeck Quartet travels to Poland, Turkey, India, Ceylon, East and West Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq on the first tour organized by the U.S. State Department to advance the interests and values of the U.S. through cultural diplomacy.

The Brubeck Quartet records *Time Out*, which includes the bestselling jazz single “Take Five.” In 2005, the recording is entered into the Library of Congress and is inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame as one of the most significant albums of our time.

The London Symphony Orchestra presents Brubeck with its prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award.

Historical photos are from the Brubeck Collection in the Holt-Atherton Special Collection of the University Library.
Pushing Musical and Cultural Boundaries

In 1958, the U.S. State Department selected the Dave Brubeck Quartet as official “Cultural Ambassadors” for the United States. They toured and performed in Europe, Poland, India, Pakistan and the Middle East.

That year, Brubeck performed for the Monterey City Council, convincing them to approve the first Monterey Jazz Festival—one of the most influential music festivals in the world today.

Championing social justice and racial equality, Brubeck never gave in to pressure to replace black musicians in his band, even when concerts were canceled. He also fought against playing to segregated audiences.

He broke musical boundaries with the Quartet’s 1959 groundbreaking jazz album *Time Out*, made up of entirely original music in unorthodox time signatures—then an unheard-of practice.

Brubeck played numerous times at the White House and in 1964 became the first jazz artist to perform at a state dinner. He played at the 1988 Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Moscow and performed a commissioned work for Pope John Paul II during a 1980 visit to San Francisco.

Delving into the world of choral and classical music, Brubeck scored the mass *To Hope! A Celebration* and wrote operas, oratorios and music for ballets, including *Points on Jazz* for the American Ballet Theatre in 1960.

After the classic quartet stopped performing as a group in 1967, he performed with other musicians and his sons Darius, Chris and Dan, often featuring them as guest artists.

*Ansel Adams: America*, a multimedia orchestral piece co-written with his son Chris, premiered at the Stockton Symphony in 2009 and has been performed across the country and in Europe. His cross-genre original work based on John Steinbeck’s novel, *Cannery Row Suite*, premiered at the 2006 Monterey Jazz Festival to rave reviews and was performed later at Pacific.

Continuing to perform into his 90s, he remained actively involved with Pacific’s Brubeck Institute. Institute Executive Director Simon Rowe made a visit to Dave and Iola’s home just weeks before his passing.

“I was constantly amazed by Dave’s determination to engage in dialogue, even in the face of ever-increasing health issues,” Rowe reflected at the University’s December tribute to Brubeck.

“As we celebrate Dave’s life, we are reminded of the resolve, purpose and joy with which he lived. We embrace this same resolve as we strive to perpetuate his unique legacy through the Brubeck Institute,” Rowe said.

Brubeck was preceded in death by his son Michael. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Iola, sons Darius, Christopher, Daniel and Matthew, daughter Catherine, 10 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

**Brubeck’s Sweet Remembrance of His Alma Mater**

During a visit in 2010 to Brubeck’s Connecticut home, President Eibeck asked if he would play some songs and whether he would mind if she sang with him.

During their musical interlude, he played his rendition of “Pacific Hail.” The piece brings her to tears, she said, and it did so again when it was played during the University’s tribute to Brubeck in December.

“He felt very strongly about ‘Pacific Hail,’” she told the audience. “As his college anthem, it really symbolized what his experience was in becoming a young man here at the University.”

Brubeck’s homage to his alma mater is included in his 2007 album *Indian Summer*, a collection of 16 songs that has been described as telling the story of his life.

See Pacific’s tribute to Dave Brubeck:
[go.Pacific.edu/BrubeckGathering](http://go.Pacific.edu/BrubeckGathering)
Continuing the Legacy:

Beyond leaving a musical legacy, Dave and Iola Brubeck have been lifelong champions of education, community engagement and social change. Their work continues at Pacific’s Brubeck Institute, which has molded some of the nation’s top high school and college jazz musicians and given the area’s youngest schoolchildren their first taste of live concert music, and it continues to foster discourse on important social issues.

During the Institute’s Summer Jazz Colony, 18 outstanding high school musicians receive Brubeck-flavored instruction at the University. The Fellowship Program provides intensive training for five of the most talented young jazz musicians in the nation, who form the award-winning Brubeck Institute Jazz Quintet. Through a number of outreach efforts each year, such as the quintet’s free performance for 2,000 Stockton schoolchildren this spring, the Institute follows Brubeck’s example of introducing jazz to young audiences.

The annual Brubeck Festival further engages the community with a week of concerts, which this year featured headliner Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, along with family celebrations and performances by regional artists and school groups. Festival themes touch on key social issues that were important to Brubeck. Increasing its influence on the national stage, the Institute continues to align itself with partners such as Jazz at Lincoln Center, the United Nations and the Smithsonian Museum to create events and programs around education, the arts and scholarship.

The efforts of Dave and Iola to spur discussion about important social and international issues are also furthered through the Brubeck Collection, a program of the Institute. This vast reservoir of materials from Dave’s 70-year career is of immeasurable value to students and researchers throughout the world studying Brubeck’s music and nonmusic issues.

Professor Keith Hatschek, who interviewed Brubeck for research on his impact on music around the world, said, “Through his actions, he showed us what was really important in life, and his life will live on at Pacific as we continue to share his lessons with our students and our community.”

Second-year Brubeck Fellow Malachi Whitson says Brubeck’s influence on him went beyond just striving to be the best possible musician. “Unlike other musicians, Brubeck’s lifestyle and life decisions had a major impact on how to approach being a better human being. That the truth and honesty within his music is just an extension of who he was as a day-to-day person makes him such an icon for me,” he said.

Supporting Passions and the Institute: a Gift Goes Full Circle

The influence of the Brubeck Institute—and the passion of its namesake—extends beyond the musical world, as Denny LeVett ’61 knows firsthand.

LeVett is a Brubeck Institute Honorary Board Member and a real estate magnate in Carmel and Palo Alto. He’s also an avid gun collector and compiled his rarest collection of Colt firearms into a book, The Patterson Colt Book. When he became a new member of the Institute’s honorary board, LeVett sent a copy to Brubeck.

At the next board dinner, Brubeck told LeVett how grateful he was for the gift and shared his own firearm story: It was 1944, toward the end of World War II, and the U.S. soldier Brubeck had been issued a new pair of boots. During a time when the Germans were fleeing from surrounding countries, Brubeck encountered a German officer who had managed to swim the Elbe River to safety. The officer had lost his boots during the escape, and when he noticed Brubeck had an extra pair hanging from his backpack, he asked him if he could spare them. Without hesitation, Brubeck gave him the boots. The officer was so touched by Brubeck’s generosity that he gave him his new, mint condition Walther P38 pistol hidden in his tunic.

At the end of his story, Brubeck offered the treasured pistol to LeVett. “I was floored by the generous gesture, but there was no way I could accept it. I knew how valuable it was to Dave,” he recalled. But a week later, the Walther P38 was delivered to LeVett.

“It spoke volumes about Brubeck’s desire to support other people’s passions, and I wanted to reciprocate that support,” he said. In turn, LeVett made a significant commitment to help students of the Brubeck Institute pursue their passions through endowed fellowships.

Find out more about the Brubeck Institute and ways to support its mission and students: BrubeckInstitute.org