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**MORRIS**

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**34th Annual Morris Jazz Festival April 12-14, 2012**

*Summary: The 34th annual Morris Jazz Festival will kick off Thursday April 12, 2012. Jazz Fest offers young musicians the chance to work with and experience some of the most talented jazz performers in the country.*

(April 11, 2012)-The 34th annual Morris Jazz Festival will kick off Thursday April 12, 2012, and run through Saturday, April 14th, 2012 at the University of Minnesota, Morris. The Thursday night performance will begin at 7:30 p.m. in Edson Auditorium, with the West Central All-Stars, a festival favorite, opening the show.

The Morris Jazz Fest offers young musicians the chance to work with and experience some of the most talented jazz performers in the country. For fans, it offers a unique opportunity to enjoy concerts performed by the Morris jazz ensembles and diverse guest artists each evening throughout the event. The 2012 festival promises to be a rich and soulful experience, with a diverse mixture of talent to satisfy everyone. Drummer Dennis Mackrel and saxophonist Gary Smulyan will be playing alongside Morris' Jazz Ensembles at the nightly performances, and conducting Jazz Clinics during the day with invited high school and college students. Vocal jazz group Northern Colorado Voices will add a fresh new sound to the musical palette this year.

Drummer, composer, and arranger Dennis Mackrel was a child prodigy who began playing the drums at two years of age. While attending the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), Mackrel joined the celebrated UNLV Jazz Ensemble, where his drumming and arranging skills caught the attention of famous jazz vocalist Joe Williams. In 1983, Mackrel joined the Count Basie Orchestra on the personal recommendation of Williams. He would become the youngest member of the orchestra and the last drummer to be hired by Basie personally. Mackrel travelled with the Basie Orchestra until 1987, when he left for New York to become the drummer of choice for a number of large ensembles including The American Jazz Orchestra, The Carla Bley Big Band, The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, The Dizzy Gillespie All Star Big Band, and his own band, The Manhattan Symphony Jazz Orchestra.

Baritone saxophonist Gary Smulyan is a gifted multi-instrumentalist who started his music career by first learning alto saxophone during his teenage years on Long Island. Today, he is critically acclaimed across-the-board and recognized as a major voice on the baritone saxophone. His playing is marked by an aggressive rhythmic sense, an intelligent and creative harmonic approach and, perhaps most importantly, a strong and incisive wit. Smulyan has shared both the stage and the recording studio with a stunning potpourri of luminaries, including trumpeters Freddie Hubbard and Dizzy Gillespie saxophonist Stan Getz pianist Chick Corea timbales king Tito Puente and R&B/Blues and soul icons Ray Charles, B.B. King, and Diana Ross.

Northern Colorado Voices is the University of Northern Colorado's (UNC) premier vocal jazz group, performing exciting new arrangements of jazz, rock, and pop favorites as well as original songs. They have opened for the New York Voices, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Patti Austin, Sixth Wave, and will open for the Real Group at the UNC/Greeley Jazz Festival in 2012. The group includes 2010 DownBeat Student Music Award-winner Kate Skinner, Angela Parrish, Ashlee Varner, Dan Barton, Andy Jaramillo, and Evan Bell. Kate Skinner directs the group

Cost for tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for senior citizens and youths under 18, and \$5 for Morris students. Tickets may be purchased at the Student Center Information Desk or in the Office of Student Activities, or by calling (320) 589-6080 for more information.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at [morris.umn.edu](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.