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**ON THE COVER** — *Miles Davis at 100: Rutgers Jazz Ensemble. Rutgers Jazz Ensemble photo by Lynne DeLade was taken at a December 5, 2025, performance at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center.*

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### CORRECTIONS:

The Coltrane 100 tour featured in the March 2026 issue of Jersey Jazz will give 21 performances at 19 venues across the U.S. and Europe. The concerto written for Joe Lovano by Douglas Cuomo should have been spelled all in lower case: "a raft, the sky, the wild sea"

In the March Rising Star feature on Kristin Field, the photo of pianist Seraphina Taylor was taken by Lynne DeLade.



## Bassist Martin Wind's 'Chordless' Trio Adds Piano to Area Album Release Performances

*April Appearances Will Be at Smalls, Puffin Cultural Forum in Teaneck, and the Deer Head Inn*

BY JAY SWEET

German-born bassist and composer Martin Wind has built an extensive résumé with more than 20 albums as a leader or co-leader and performance credits with legends such as clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, guitarist Pat Metheny, alto saxophonist Phil Woods, harmonicist Toots Thielemans, and many others. He has regularly performed at some of the top jazz venues in the world. Upcoming performances include two nights

at Mezzrow in New York with pianist Bill Cunliffe's trio on April 3 and 4, as well as release performances for his newest record *September* (2026, Laika Records) with his Gravity Trio and special guest Glenn Zaleski on piano—April 9 at Smalls Jazz Club, April 10 at the Puffin Cultural Forum in Teaneck, NJ, and at the Deer Head Inn in Delaware Water Gap, PA, April 11.

“For the record *September*, I worked again with my two partners

PHOTO BY JEFF DUNN

## BEYOND GRAVITY

in crime. The tenor player is Peter Weniger—he and I go back to the winter of 1987–88, when the National Youth Jazz Orchestra in Germany was founded. We were both part of that first lineup. He was already an established player, and I was more on the bench, so to speak. Over the years, though, we kept finding ourselves making music together again and again.

“Jonas Burgwinkel is the drummer, and he’s really one of the major voices in Germany right now. He’s maybe a decade and a half younger than Peter and me, but he’s already a professor at the conservatory in Cologne. He’s played with people like Chris Potter, John Scofield, and Fred Hersch—musicians from the U.S. who seek him out when they’re touring in Europe.”

A few years ago, the trio gathered in Berlin, where Weniger directs the Jazz

Institute, and recorded their first album, *Gravity* (2023, Laika Records). “At the time, I wasn’t sure if it would be Peter’s record or more of a collective effort, but I eventually decided to release it under my name,” Wind said. “We toured quite a bit, including opening the Jazz Baltica Festival in my home state of Schleswig-Holstein. After living with that format, I wanted to revisit it, his time writing specifically for the band.”

For the new project, Wind expanded the palette. “I also invited reeds specialist Scott Robinson as a special guest. He’s a close friend here in Teaneck, and we’ve played in each other’s groups for years. I thought it would be interesting to bring together my European collaborators and my American counterpart and just let those worlds interact.”

One of the defining elements of the Gravity Trio is its chordless format—saxophone, bass, and drums.



**Martin Wind Gravity Trio, from left, Wind, Jonas Burgwinkel, and Peter Weniger.**

Wind is not the first to explore this setting; notable other recordings include Sonny Rollins’ *Way Out West* (Contemporary Records:1957), Joe Henderson’s *State of the Tenor* (Blue Note:1985), Branford Marsalis’ *Trio Jeepy* (Columbia Records: 1988), Joe Lovano’s *Trio Fascination*

(Blue Note: 1997), and Joshua Redman’s *Back East* (Nonesuch: 2007). The format presents both freedom and responsibility for the bassist.

“In a chordless trio, what we love is the freedom to react harmonically. There’s no guitar or piano locking us into a fixed framework. I start thinking

PHOTO BY JEFF DUNN

## BEYOND GRAVITY

more in terms of counterpoint rather than just outlining chords,” Wind explained. “That’s the thrill—you can reshape the harmony in real time. But that freedom comes with a challenge. You have to be intentional so the harmony is still clear to the listener. At the same time, you want an open, resonant sound on the bass, which often leads to more ‘bass-friendly’ keys. It’s a different way of playing and a different way of listening.”

When it comes to writing, Wind moves fluidly between approaches. “I write in different ways. ‘King of the Castle’ (on *September*) was written on the bass. I wanted something that really resonated on the instrument. But sometimes I write at the piano, and sometimes away from any instrument. That’s something I learned from Kenny Werner—writing without trying to hear everything in advance. So, I have different compositional



**Pianist Glenn Zaleski will be a special guest at April area performances.**

modes, different entry points depending on what I’m trying to discover.”

Wind’s first instrument was guitar. “I remember sitting in a circle with about 10 people playing ‘He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands.’ It only had two chords—E and B7. The E was easy, but it would take five or six seconds for everyone to get their fingers into B7 before we could continue. I was about 12.

“At 15, my band director asked

if I’d play electric bass in the big band. I said, ‘Yes,’ thinking it was temporary, but I never looked back. I studied with Elmer Turnage, who had me working through a Simandl book, even on electric bass. (Franz Simandl was a double bassist from Austria-Hungary most remembered for his book *New Method for String Bass*). That’s how I learned to read. Eventually, I switched to upright, especially since a small bebop group didn’t want electric bass. Within a few months, I was playing in both

the big band and orchestra. That shaped everything. I never saw classical and jazz as separate worlds.”

Wind went on to study at the conservatory in Cologne with Wolfgang Güttler, a former Berlin Philharmonic bassist under Austrian conductor, Herbert von Karajan. “He taught me everything—not just technique, but how to think like an artist.” After completing his studies, Wind received a scholarship to New York University. “It was a small program at the time. My connection

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SINCE A SMALL BEBOP GROUP  
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From left, Scott Robinson, Bill Mays, Matt Wilson, Wind. Robinson is a special guest on the new album, *September*. Mays was an important mentor to Wind when he moved to New York.

was bassist Mike Richmond—we met through the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. He told my wife and me to move to Teaneck, and we did. At 28, I focused less on technique and more on composition, arranging, and repertoire, and especially listen-

ing. That was the biggest difference I noticed with American musicians—their ability to react in real time.”

Wind quickly found his footing in New York. “I started playing small gigs, got recommended around, and began teaching non-majors in my

first semester. Around that time, my first son was born, so those years were intense, but amazing.” Among his most important mentors was pianist Bill Mays. “He would fax me lists of tunes I needed to learn, really pushing me, and then recommended me once I got to New York.” (See “Talking Jazz with Bill Mays”, *Jersey Jazz*, September-October 2019).

Another key influence was Jim McNeely. “He would occasionally put up a signup sheet for lessons at NYU. Not many people took advantage of it, so I did. We’d play duo, talk arranging, go over my music. It was incredible. Through him, I got recommended to play with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra.” Wind also credits Kenny Barron, with whom he recorded his previous release *Stars* (2026), for a lasting piece of advice: “Don’t put things off. If you have something to say, make it happen.”

Wind’s profile rose significantly after placing third in the 1995 Thelonious Monk Competition. “I have to mention John Clayton, a huge mentor and friend. I met him in 1989 at Centrum Jazz Camp (in Port Townsend, WA). He doesn’t believe in competition, but he still helped me prepare. I also worked with Jeff Hamilton, who helped me with repertoire. That competition introduced me to the U.S. scene. I played in front of Milt Hinton, Ron Carter, Percy Heath, Charlie Haden, and Christian McBride—an unbelievable jury. The guitar competition was happening at the same time, so I also played in front of Pat Metheny, John Scofield, Jim Hall, Pat Martino, and Mark Whitfield. Everyone was there—Clark Terry, Wynton Marsalis, Herbie Hancock. It was incredible.”

One of Wind’s career highlights was his annual work with the Kenne-

PHOTO BY JEFF DUNN

## BEYOND GRAVITY

dy Center Honors Orchestra, which has since been halted due to recent and “unfortunate” institutional changes. “I got involved through Chris Walden, a friend from Cologne who became a major arranger in LA. He recommended me when they needed someone who could handle both orchestral and big band work. The Musical Director was bassist Ricky Minor. I did it for six or seven years. One of the highlights was being part of Aretha Franklin’s ‘Natural Woman’ performance—the one where she drops the fur coat. I was in the orchestra behind the curtain. We also performed with artists like Renée Fleming, John Legend, and many others. There’s even a moment where I’m onstage with Dianne Reeves. I really loved those weeks.”

Looking ahead, Wind shows no signs of slowing down. “Starting tonight (March 10), I’m at Birdland for

five nights with Anat Cohen, Matt Wilson, and Gary Rissmiller. Then I head to Germany for the *September* release tour. I’ll also be in Graz, Austria, working with bass students. They have a ‘bass night,’ and we’ll perform my arrangements. That’s something I’ve developed through my teaching at Hofstra University, where I started a bass ensemble. We’ve done pieces like ‘Yardbird Suite,’ and last year I completed an arrangement of Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* for bass ensemble, which we performed at the ISB Convention in Tallahassee.”

Wind continues to build a body of work rooted in tradition, exploration, and collaboration, moving fluidly between continents, ensembles, and roles. Like his name suggests, his career doesn’t stand still; it shifts direction when needed, but always carries the music forward while continuing to connect to the jazz’s rich past.



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