



A Not-For-Profit Organization

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

“We Always Swing”® Jazz Series

21 N. Tenth St.

Columbia, MO 65201

573/449-3009 (P) • 573/875-0356 (F)

info@wealwaysswing.org

wealwaysswing.org

**“WE ALWAYS SWING”® JAZZ SERIES ANNOUNCES
FIRST SIGNIFICANT PERSONNEL SHIFT IN ORGANIZATION’S 32-YEAR HISTORY.
“CO-DIRECTORSHIP” MODEL BEGINS OCTOBER 1, 2026, AS SEASON #32 GETS UNDERWAY.
REDEFINED ROLES IMPROVES STAFF EFFICIENCY.**

**Josh Chittum, Assistant Director & 16-Year Veteran Staffer
Becomes “Artistic & Education Co-Director.”**

**Jon W. Poses, Jazz Series Founder and Organization’s Only Executive & Artistic Director,
Transitions into “Development & Operations Co-Director” Role With Plans To
Gradually “DePlane” From Jazz Series.**

COLUMBIA, Mo. – The “We Always Swing”® Jazz Series, Columbia’s and Central Missouri’s community-based, all-jazz, independently run non-profit project, announced its first major administration shift since the organization launched more than three decades ago. Beginning October 1, 2026, **Josh Chittum**, staff member since 2010 and currently the Jazz Series Assistant Director, received a promotion and slides into the newly created **“Artistic & Education Co-Director”** position.

Chittum will now oversee planning each season schedule and securing artist bookings as well as continuing to take the lead on maintaining the organization’s educational activities, including serving as the point person for the Jazz Series’ long-standing partnerships and collaborations with Columbia Public School District and MU’s School of Music Jazz Studies Department. Additionally, Chittum continues as Box Office Manager, overseeing “all things tickets,” and maintaining the organization’s social media platforms.

Jazz Series founder **Jon W. Poses**, whose house served as the organization’s operational base from its start date – July 1, 1995 – until relocating to a downtown Columbia storefront in 2002, becomes **“Development & Operations Co-Director.”** A decade later, the Jazz Series moved its current downtown Columbia location, 21 N. Tenth St. Poses will primarily “look for money,” seeking additional sources of funding and support via grants, foundations, sponsorships and major gifts in addition to continuing to cultivate Individual Donations.

The Jazz Series track record securing outside funding continues to be solid with intermittent project support secured via National Endowment for the Arts grants; Missouri Arts Council and Humanities Council grants; as well as submitting successful proposals on an annual basis to the City of Columbia’s Office of Cultural Affairs.

Poses' adjusted role now allows him to spend more time attempting to land support for the "We Always Swing"® Jazz Foundation Fund, the organization's wholly separate fiscal endeavor created four years ago; the Foundation aims to expand performance and education programs, increase staffing and potentially create annual scholarships to afford recipients to further their jazz studies. "It's not something that happens overnight," says Poses. "We need to work hard as an organization to build up the Foundation's coffers – but not negatively impact the annual Individual Donor base."

Poses as well as Co-Director Chittum share in the responsibility to continue to expand the Individual Donor base. Currently, some 500-600 households contribute annually; cumulatively, individual tax-deductible gifts account for one-third of the organization's approximately \$450,000 annual budget. During the three most recent fiscal cycles, July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2026, individual donations surpassed their respective \$150,000 goals. The current FY27 Individual Donor goal has generated \$44,000 in contributions since July 1, the annual start date to each fiscal year.

WHY THE TITLE & SHIFT IN RESPONSIBILITIES?

"Josh has been with the Jazz Series for half of its life," says Poses, noting that Chittum became a staff member in 2010 upon graduating from MU School of Journalism. "He now has 'invested' 16 years in the non-profit organization. At some point – and this is that point," continued Poses, "in a two-person full-time staff, Josh is not just the other person, rather he represents 50 percent of how the Jazz Series runs daily. It's appropriate that he and I stand on equal footing and share in all that is the 'We Always Swing'® Jazz Series."

Poses says he has no problem ceding booking and having Chittum create season-long programming schedules. "We will still bounce ideas off each other as we have for several years now," reports Poses, emphatically adding, "but I have no doubt, Josh is fully capable, having been through and seen half the schedules unfold, of delivering imaginative, and sonically and instrumentally varied seasons. He's been involved in booking decisions for some time now; Josh put together a measurable percentage of our current 2026/2027, 11-concert and special-event performance schedule."

Chittum sees the new division of assignments making the Jazz Series a stronger and more efficient operation. The administrative adjustment in responsibilities set the tone for the Jazz Series' well-being as it moves forward. "Shifting positions now gives us time to fine tune, adjust, tweak, establish and fully define the two positions. The benefit of doing that," says Chittum, "will result in the next person having a clear understanding from Jump Street of what the position entails."

FOUNDER JON W. POSES READIES TO "DEPLANE" JAZZ SERIES IN 2027.

While Poses, 73, is "not just going to walk out the door," the Jazz Series has launched a national search to find the person who will eventually assume Poses' newly defined "Development & Operations Co-Director" role.

Poses, who considers himself a life-long jazz fan, frequently jokes, "The only instrument I play is the telephone." He sees himself gradually moving from the just-created Development &

Operations position into a kind of Jazz Series ‘Ambassadorship.’ While no exact date has been set, the goal is to have the next person in place within six months – or sooner. Having started the Jazz Series when he was 41, Poses, reiterating his trust in Chittum, plans to officially “DePlane” sometime this season. “It all depends on our finding the right person for the Jazz Series.”

That’s specifically why Poses is going to continue until the time for the “hand-off” arrives. “You can’t expect someone to walk in here and on Day 1, know how everything works and know everyone who has had a relationship with the Jazz Series, especially if they are not from Columbia,” says Chittum. “Even if it turns out the new hire is local there is still a lot of “inside information” that the successful candidate will need to absorb and learn.” To have a smooth transition, and have the hiring be seamless, Poses and Chittum agree it is going to take time for someone to feel comfortable in the still recently created “Development & Operations Co-Director” role. The two Co-Directors look forward to introducing the new hire to the variety of people and businesses that have supported the Jazz Series to date as well as offering ideas and making suggestions where the next person might be able to establish new contacts and support.

“We’re being realistic about this,” says Chittum. “Jon’s been working at the Jazz Series since before it became the Jazz Series,” referencing the 10 years, between 1984 and 1994 when Poses booked jazz concerts in Columbia and elsewhere around the country. “He has often labeled his first decade of presenting the genre’s artists as the Jazz Series’ ‘Prequel.’”

The first concert under the Jazz Series banner took place on September 21, 1995, one of six performances that inaugural season. Now, in the midst of Season #32, the Jazz Series has delivered more than 400 concerts featuring more than 2,000 musicians. Though the Jazz Series holds forth as a free-standing endeavor in a small market, the project doesn’t play like one. Poses and Chittum are quick to point out that among the many Jazz Series successes are commissioned new works, presenting world premieres that end up on GRAMMY®-nominated recordings, and presenting the likes of Dave Brubeck, Herbie Hancock, Marian McPartland, Wynton & Branford Marsalis, Mingus Big Band, Maria Schneider Orchestra and Snarky Puppy. The Jazz Series staying power and growth has resulted in the organization now being considered one of the country’s most well-respected, all-jazz programs – regardless of market size.

Poses, who arrived in 1978 from Queens, New York, to earn a master’s degree from the University of Missouri School of Journalism, says after leaving the organization, his Jazz Series-related activity will be conducted from the sidelines. “‘Hovering’ is not in my nature, but I’m up for doing whatever I can to help the organization continue to grow and serve as one of Columbia’s seminal arts-driven cornerstones. I consider the Jazz Series to be an unbelievable gift. It’s been – and it continues to be a privilege – to be able to present so many top-tier jazz artists in Columbia, locate the proper stages for them to deliver their incredible talents, and then have as many people as we do attend concerts with many then contributing. I have loved – and continue to love,” said Poses, concluding his thought, by saying, “Everything that is the ‘We Always Swing’® Jazz Series.

#####