

Ascending local jazz duo shares love for art form

By Matthew Anderson

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Those who think jazz is all cymbal-tapping and bass-strumming in some dirty little downtown nightclub should think again, according to Greg Dyes and Richard Turco, two musicians plugging away in Boulder's jazz scene.

By no means run-of-the-mill, struggling artists skipping from gig to gig, Dyes and Turco have studied the music they play and have impressive credentials to back them up. Dyes, a composer, pianist and CU graduate student, teaches African-American Music History and Appreciation at CU. His versatility ranges from rock 'n' roll to classical orchestral works, and he has written music for both symphonies and jazz ensembles.

Turco's command of the saxophone and flute "is comparable to that of musicians who are considered to be our nation's greatest jazz virtuosos," said Karl Eggert, disc jockey at KGNU.

The duo will give a free concert at 8 p.m. Friday in Old Main Theater.



Richard Turco coaxes his sax with 'virtuoso' style. He pairs up with pianist Greg Dyes tonight in Old Main Theater.

At first sight, the two musicians seem an unlikely pair. While Dyes dresses conservatively, in dark slacks and a button-down shirt, Turco strolls in wearing tennis shoes, shorts and a T-shirt.

Dyes has declared teaching as his profession; Turco is delighted just to have graduated from college.

No matter what the personality or background differences, their common ground clearly is music.

"When I was around ninth or 10th grade, I really decided I wanted to be in music," Turco said. Turco, 27, received his bachelor's degree in film scoring from Boston's Berklee College of Music, where musicians such as Quincy Jones and Branford Marsalis also studied.

"I'd come home after school and practice for three hours while my dad was saying, 'Shut up! I want to hear the news!'"

Dyes, 39, also grew up on jazz but with a father who was a music major and jazz fan.

"I remember when I was really small watching him practice the saxophone, watching him go off to gigs with his yellow and black checkered (tuxedo) jacket," Dyes said.

This is a typical image people may hold of jazz today: the 1930s outfit, going off to gigs, just listening to music to soothe the pain of the Depression.

But perhaps the best way to describe jazz is, as Dyes calls it, "America's classical music." An American original, jazz got its start in the late 1800s. Today's dominant music, rock 'n' roll, wasn't heard of until the 1950s.

Although jazz may not be the majority's favorite today, it has held its own for over a century. Its following, while small, is devoted — and growing.

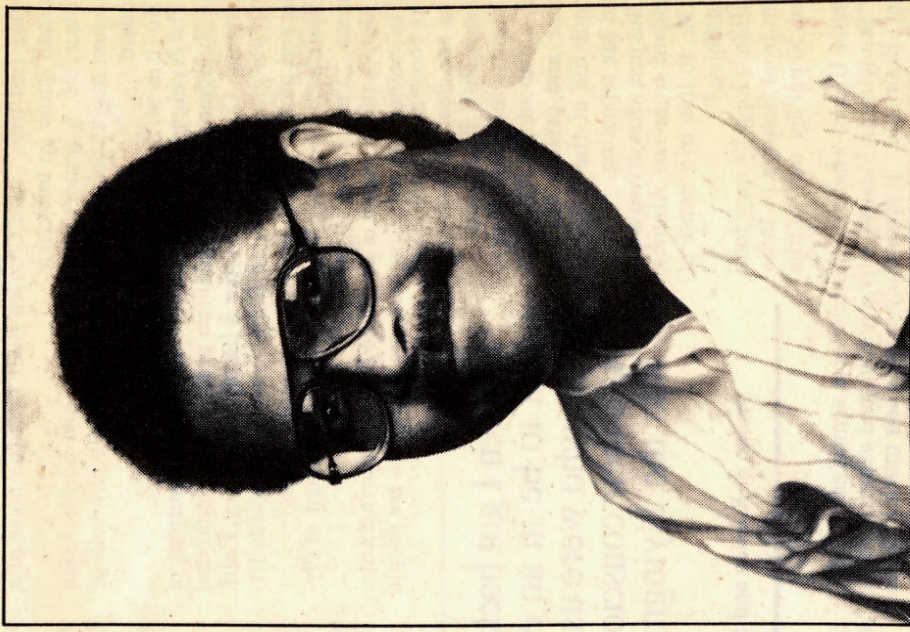
Moment-to-moment improvisation is one of jazz's main attractions. Although Beethoven made a name for himself by creating brilliant, sweeping symphonic compositions, his work is written down, ready for nameless musicians to play.

In jazz, the musicians make the art. Once it's played, it can only linger in the memory or audio recordings. As a result, we'll never know what the first jazz musicians sounded like.

"The beauty of jazz is that every time you play a song, it's completely different," Turco said.

"People who haven't heard jazz before just think it sounds like a bunch of mess. But really, what you're hearing is improvising at a very high speed. Each note does mean something," he said.

Listening to the greats, such as John Coltrane or Miles Davis, "is still the best way to learn," Dyes said. "Know-



Greg Dyes teaches African-American music history at CU. His keyboard mastery includes skillful contemporary jazz. ing) all the theories in the world really doesn't help you if you don't have a feel for the music."

For both Turco and Dyes, jazz is more a spontaneous expression of themselves than a money-making venture. But "you're at the ground roots of what we hope is a real nice little music entity," Turco said.

With a hint of big-time ambition, he adds: "My goal is to do a CD next spring — summer at the latest. That's a promise."

As for Dyes, he plans to graduate from CU next year with a doctorate in musical arts composition.