

Jazz and poetry

Jazz and poetry has a very rich history," said Rich Falco, director of Jazz Studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. "I've worked with poets in the past and I've found it a very rewarding experience."

Falco's latest collaboration is with poet Tim Mason. The two will join forces for an evening of jazz and the spoken word at 8 p.m. Saturday, April 12, at the Green Rooster Coffeehouse, located at the United Congregational Church, 6 Institute Road. Proceeds from concession sales will benefit the Domestic Violence Prevention Program.

Falco will conduct the WPI Jazz Ensemble, a nine-piece group that will improvise soundscapes for Mason's recitations.

Mason, who is best known for his work at the Old Vienna Kaffeehaus, (where he booked world-class poets, jazz musicians and artists of every stripe for over a decade), is also a published author and champion of the local slam poetry scene.

In the '50s, jazz and poetry traded licks in a period referred to as the Beat Generation. Poets such as Jack Kerouac, Kenneth Rexroth and Langston Hughes sparred with the likes of Charles Mingus, Zoot Sims and Al Cohn.

"The rhythm of beat poetry is just a natural," Falco said. "The beat poets tried to capture the spirit and melodic rhythm of bebop. We are going to do it like it would have been done in the period. Which is: Get out there and do it!

"I had asked Tim if he would do some reading first; then we'll combine," Falco said. "There are two ways to combine. One is to have the poetry integrated into the music. The second would have been: Do a reading, then have an improvised reaction from a jazz ensemble. We chose to use the former.

"Essentially, we'll be trying to re-create some of the beat poets' energy and spontaneity and pull that off in a live performance," Falco said.



Tim Mason

— Chet Williamson