

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my honor and privilege to recommend Max Holm. In my five decades as a performing artist and educator, I have encountered countless talented pianists, but Max, at age 29, represents something rare: a complete artist whose technical mastery, compositional voice, and profound musicality mark him as a significant voice in the future of American jazz piano.

I have known and worked with Max since 2018, first when he entered Berklee College of Music as one of the elite Presidential Scholars and was accepted into the prestigious Berklee Global Jazz Institute. Over these seven years, I have witnessed his remarkable artistic evolution from an exceptionally gifted student into a mature professional with an increasingly distinctive creative identity.

### **Artistic Excellence and Recognition**

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Max's abilities have been recognized at the highest levels of jazz education and performance. He received the DownBeat Magazine Outstanding Jazz Piano Soloist Award and won Outstanding Soloist at the Essentially Ellington Competition at Lincoln Center, among others—achievements that speak to his command of both the jazz tradition and contemporary improvisation.

What sets Max apart is not merely his technical facility, but his ability to make deeply personal artistic statements through the piano. He played his original composition "Gran Via" privately for Chick Corea, who said "You make that piano sound good! Play that chorus again!" Coming from an artist of Chick's stature, this was not polite encouragement but genuine recognition of Max's distinctive touch and creative voice.

### **Compositional Voice and Creative Range**

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Max has composed over 200 original works spanning jazz, neo-classical fusion, Latin, Mediterranean, and beyond. His prolific output demonstrates not only creative drive but also the kind of artistic restlessness that defines important artists. Max's music has been placed in major film and television productions, including Anne Hathaway's and Jessica Chastain's film *Mothers' Instinct*, including his jazz arrangements of Bach's "Air on the G String" and "Prelude in C Minor." His work has been seen and heard over 80 million times globally across films, network television, streaming platforms, and other media.

His album work shows sophisticated conceptual thinking. While his primary focus remains jazz and jazz-neo classical fusion, he moves fluidly between idioms. As a young player, he was a featured

performer on the award-winning album *The Inside of the Outside* alongside Jeff Coffin, Branford Marsalis, Victor Wooten, and Trombone Shorty.

## **Performance Achievement**

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Max has performed hundreds of times across the United States and Europe, often with renowned jazz musicians in prestigious venues and at major festivals. With his namesake quartet, he has appeared at multiple jazz festivals on two continents.

His comfort and authority on stage reflect years of serious performance experience. He understands how to communicate with audiences, how to lead ensembles, and how to balance respect for the jazz tradition with his own creative vision.

## **Educational Leadership and Community Engagement**

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Max previously taught jazz composition, arranging, jazz piano, and coached ensembles at Oklahoma State University. He has given master classes in both the United States and Europe. His book *Ace Your Sight-Reading Audition!* is published in English and Spanish and is used by musicians across the US, UK, Spain, Mexico, and Brazil.

Max also delivered a TED talk about his near-death experience at age 13 and how it catalyzed his passion for jazz—a story that reveals not only his personal resilience but also his ability to inspire and connect with audiences beyond the piano.

Max was chosen for Jazz Band of America as a high school student and performed for an Indianapolis audience. He has demonstrated both the teaching ability and the personal narrative to meaningfully connect with young musicians.

## **Professional Readiness and Career Trajectory**

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Max graduated summa cum laude from Berklee in 2020 with a Bachelor of Music degree in Professional Music, with triple concentrations in performance, composition, and production—a combination which speaks to his understanding that contemporary careers require versatility and business acumen.

He runs his own music label and publishing company (Max Holm Music, BMI), and maintains an active sync licensing catalog. His music has been licensed for Meta's social media platforms and metaverses. He is fluent in English and Swedish, with conversational Spanish, and holds dual US/EU citizenship, positioning him for international career development.

This is an artist who understands the full landscape of a 21st-century music career—performance, composition, recording, licensing, education, and entrepreneurship.

## **Personal Qualities**

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Beyond his musical gifts, Max possesses the resilience and work ethic essential for a sustainable career in jazz. He overcame significant adversity in his youth, including severe bullying, abuse, and a near-death experience requiring seven blood transfusions. These experiences forged in him an uncommon depth and seriousness of purpose.

He is humble, focused, and deeply committed to growth. In our lessons and conversations, he consistently asks thoughtful questions, welcomes critique, and demonstrates genuine intellectual curiosity about music history, theory, and the creative process.

## **Conclusion**

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Max is American-born, world-class in his abilities, and positioned at a pivotal stage of his career. He has already proven his artistry through awards, recordings, performances, and the respect of established musicians.

I recommend Max Holm without reservation and with genuine excitement. Should you require any additional information or recordings, or wish to discuss his candidacy further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With respect and admiration,

**Joanne Brackeen**

NEA Jazz Master

Professor of Jazz Piano

Berklee College of Music

Boston, Massachusetts