

## STEPHEN HOUGHTON

It is a true honor and privilege to write about Professor Steve Houghton, who has been on the Jacobs School of Music faculty for the last 19 years. A world-renowned performer and educator, Steve began his professional life quite early—at the age of 20—performing as a jazz drummer with Woody Herman’s Young Thundering Herd. Since that time, he has performed with a who’s who of world-renowned musicians in a wide variety of styles including Gary Burton, Freddie Hubbard, the Toshiko Akiyoshi-Lew Tabackin Big Band, Bob Florence, Paul Anka, Maureen McGovern, and many others. He has appeared as a featured jazz soloist with ensembles around the world and has performed as a classical soloist with the Boston and Philadelphia Pops orchestras, the U.S. Army Band, and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. He has been featured on more than 100 recordings.

As an educator, Steve’s impact has been felt far and wide. In addition to his numerous recordings, he has published over 30 method books, videos, and DVDs. His *Essential Styles* book is considered the drummer’s bible for anyone wishing to study drum set styles. Over the last 40 years he has presented hundreds of clinics in the United States and internationally—at high schools, universities, summer camps, conventions, and professional conferences. In that time, he has served as an artist endorser of Yamaha drums and percussion, Zildjian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks and mallets, and Remo world percussion and drumheads. These collaborations have yielded a wide range of educational publications including, most recently, three video series for the Vic Firth website: *Jazz Rhythm Section 101*, *The Jazz Trio—An Inside View*, and *Inside the Teaching Studio*.

Steve is a selfless teacher and mentor. Not only do his students receive excellent instruction on percussion, they are challenged to discuss and determine various goals and encouraged to be organized in their studies and professional lives. Many of Steve’s students have earned wonderful careers as performers and educators.

In November 2016, Steve Houghton earned the Yamaha Legacy in Education Award, which was presented at PASIC (Percussive Arts Society’s International



Convention). Presiding over the ceremony was John Wittmann, head of artist relations for Yamaha. John said: “Steve Houghton has contributed immeasurably to the field of percussion as a music educator and clinician and has influenced the careers of thousands of aspiring percussionists. During a lifetime of commitment to music education, he has earned respect from his peers as well as from the students who will become the artists and music educators of the future.”

Steve’s vision in educating his students has always taken a practical tone. He often undertakes interesting and valuable projects—having students work on studio recording projects or including them in an online educational video series through the Vic Firth website. These projects give his students real life musical experiences that they will never forget.

While at IU, Steve has implemented many initiatives that have benefitted our students and he invariably christens them with an acronym or nickname. For combos there was Small Group Forum, which became SGF. Rhythm Section Master Class was known as RSM. The Off-Rotation Rhythm Sections were ORRS. His drum set master class is referred to as Drumming Happy Hour. And after he started using his teaching studio for student recording sessions, he dubbed it Houghton Sound.

Beyond the classroom and the stage, Steve has made many significant contributions through service. In the Jacobs School of Music, he has fully

participated in service in two departments: percussion and jazz studies. He served as Percussion Department chair at a critical time, making key hires that rejuvenated the department, and he has served on Jacobs School committees related to innovation, concert programming, curriculum, and the recording studio, and on numerous search committees for various departments.

In the wider professional world, Steve’s service has been very impactful and far-reaching. He served as president of the Percussive Arts Society (PAS) from 2009 to 2010, overseeing several important developments including the opening of the percussion museum—Rhythm! Discovery Center—in Indianapolis. He has served in important leadership roles with several organizations for more than 30 years, including with the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE), PAS, the Jazz Education Network, and MusicFest Canada.

It’s easy to see why Steve has served in leadership roles with so many organizations: he is an ideas person—a person with vision. He looks at a situation and sees what is possible and then he works tirelessly to make it happen in a way that benefits students, the profession, and the community. A prime example at IU is the Holiday Celebration concert that he produced for the Musical Arts Center stage in 2011 and 2019. A lover of Christmas music, Steve brought together faculty and student performers from more than a dozen departments in the Jacobs School of Music to create an extravaganza with orchestra, big band, vocalists, special soloists, and even the dean and the dean emeritus. He organized this far enough in advance to produce a *Holiday Celebration* CD that was available for the first time at the 2011 concert. This is just one example of how Steve can see the big picture and work to make something good happen for everyone involved.

It has been inspiring to work along with Professor Houghton. The students and faculty will truly miss his presence at the IU Jacobs School of Music.

*Tom Walsh  
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