

## Billy Hart

### Assistant Professor of Jazz Percussion

Billy Hart is Assistant Professor of Jazz Percussion at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. An educator and performer who is widely considered to be among the most gifted modern drummers, Hart has performed with the most celebrated jazz musicians in history. Called “one of the unsung giants of jazz by *Modern Drummer*, he is equally at home in electronic and rock-influenced styles, free jazz, and bop.

While still in high school, Hart played in rhythm-and-blues bands accompanying such important artists as Otis Redding, Joe Tex, and Smokey Robinson at the Howard Theater in Washington, D.C. During the 1960s he performed with Jimmy Smith, recorded with Benny Golson in London, and toured with Wes Montgomery.

Following Montgomery’s death in 1968, Hart moved to New York, where he recorded with McCoy Tyner, Wayne Shorter, and Joe Zawinul. In 1970, Hart joined Herbie Hancock’s group and was a member for three years. At the same time, he was a member of the New York Jazz Quartet. In the late 1970s, with drummers Freddie Waits and Horace Arnold, Hart formed Colloquium III, a group that led percussion workshops at the New York Drummers Collective.

Hart performed or recorded with many other notable artists, including Miles Davis, Stan Getz, Wayne Shorter, Jimmie Rowles, Joanne Brackeen, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, Doug Raney, Lee Konitz, Duke Jordan, Chico Freeman, Johnny Coles, Paul Bley, and many more. He worked with the Mingus Dynasty in the 1980s and early 1990s, and from 1984 to 1990, he was a member of the group Quest, led by Dave Liebman and Richard Beirach. During this period he also appeared in two videos, *Jazz in America: Gerry Mulligan* (1982) and *Jazzvisions: All Strings Attached* (1988), the latter with John Patitucci, John Scofield, Tal Farlow, John Abercrombie, Larry Coryell, and Larry Carlton. In 1988 he wrote the book *Jazz Drumming* (Rottenburg, Germany, and New Albany, IA, 1989). Throughout the 1990s he performed at the celebrated Sweet Basil club in Manhattan.

All told, Hart has more than 600 recordings and landmark performances to his credit.

In 2007, Hart collaborated with fellow jazz studies faculty members on the jazz recording of *Beauty Surrounds Us*, one of the two initial albums on the Oberlin Conservatory’s new music label, Oberlin Music.