MSU Federal Credit Union 2019–2020 Jazz Artist in Residence

Kenny Washington, jazz drums

As a young hard-bop revivalist in the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, drummer Kenny Washington was in demand by older musicians, including jazz legends such as Lee Konitz, Betty Carter, Johnny Griffin, Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry and Tommy Flanagan.

The Brooklyn-born Washington studied with former Dizzy Gillespie drummer Rudy Collins and attended New York's LaGuardia High School for Music and Art. As a teen, he worked with Konitz and recorded with the saxophonist’s nonet in 1977. He also worked with Carter from 1978 to 1979, and with Griffin in 1980.

A prolific freelancer and sessions player, Washington has compiled an enormous discography performing with prominent, legendary figures in jazz. Among the long list of distinguished musicians are Ronnie Matthews, Lee Konitz, Betty Carter, Johnny Griffin, Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry, George Cables, Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton, Sonny Stitt, James Spaulding, Phil Woods, Bill Charlap, Bobby Watson, Curtis Lundy and Tommy Flanagan. He currently plays with Ahmad Jamal.

Washington's strong interest in jazz history led him to write liner notes and help prepare classic jazz re-releases by Art Blakey, Count Basie and others. He has taught drumming at the New School in New York City, and worked as an announcer at the New Jersey jazz radio station WBGO.

For more information about Kenny Washington, see this article from Modern Drummer Magazine.