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El Camino College to Present Chris Mello Memorial Jazz Festival

El Camino College's Music Department will present the Chris Mello Memorial Jazz Festival at 7 p.m. April 10 in Marsee Auditorium.

The festival celebrates the life of Christopher J. Mello, former director of the El Camino College Guitar and Jazz Studies programs and associate professor, who passed away last June. A reception is scheduled for 6 p.m. in the lobby of Marsee Auditorium, with a display of student photography and guitar music in honor of Mello.

From 2009-2014, Mello made important contributions to the ECC Guitar and Jazz Studies programs, providing leadership that built an elite music program in an amazingly short period of time. He was also was a leader in his department, division, campus, and community. The Guitar and Jazz Studies programs are his legacy, in addition to the students and faithful stewards of the future of jazz music who he influenced.

Born in Somerset, Massachusetts, Mello was a highly accomplished jazz musician who started at an early age working in the pit orchestras of the Boston and New York scene, musical theater productions, and performing with orchestral groups such as the MET Wind Orchestra and the Boston Pops.

After graduating high school, he went on to formally study the guitar at the University of Massachusetts and then completed his master's degree at the University of North Texas as a teaching fellow in the jazz department. While studying, he also toured with the Dallas Jazz Orchestra and served as a staff columnist for Just Jazz Guitar Magazine. In 2007 Mello completed his doctorate in music from USC.

An active performer in the L.A. scene, he performed/recorded with: Idina Menzel, Ernie Watts, Norah Jones, Vanessa Williams, the Dixie Chicks, Cafe Tacuba, Justo Almario, Jeff Kashiwa, Paul Schaeffer, Kenny Wheeler, Giovanni Hidalgo, Dan Higgins, Katia Moraes, Bill Cunliffe, Bobby Shew, the Banda Brothers, Shelly Berg, and a host of others. He also recorded music for VH-1, Taco Bell, Verizon Wireless, the Latin Grammy Awards, Touchstone Pictures, Greenlight Studios, and Disney.

The Chris Mello Memorial Jazz Festival will feature performances by Aaron Serfaty, jazz drums; Otomaro Ruiz, piano; Eliseo Borrero, bass; the El Camino College Jazz One Big Band directed by Alan Chan; and the Jazz Two Big Band, directed by David Sills.

In further tribute to Chris Mello's legacy, a scholarship for students who will transfer to a four-year university and major in instrumental music was established. Contributions to this scholarship can be made through the El Camino College Foundation. Checks should be made payable to the El Camino College Foundation with a notation for the "Chris Mello Scholarship" and mailed to: El Camino College Foundation; 16007 Crenshaw Blvd.; Torrance, CA 90506. Donations can also be made online via www.elcaminocollegefoundation.org

Tickets to the Chris Mello Memorial Jazz Festival are \$15 and may be purchased at www.centerforthearts.org, by phone at 310-329-5345 or toll-free at 800-832-ARTS. The Ticket Office is open Monday-Friday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Campus Parking is \$3. The Marsee Auditorium is located at 16007 Crenshaw Boulevard, Torrance.

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