

## MASTER BIO (2025 Edition – Reverse Chronological)

Puerto Rican-born, Chicago-based tenor saxophonist, multi-woodwind instrumentalist, composer, bandleader, and educator Roy McGrath continues to expand the reach of Afro-Caribbean jazz through his performances, compositions, and collaborations. His music bridges the folkloric traditions of Puerto Rico with the improvisational language of jazz, creating a voice that is both rooted in heritage and forward-looking in scope.

In 2025, McGrath released *Magpie: The Music of Joe Clark* on Entre Amigos Records. The album, recorded during the same sessions as his 2024 release *Entre Amigos*, pays tribute to Chicago trumpeter and composer Joe Clark, whose works McGrath performed extensively during his Asia tour. *Magpie* showcases McGrath's expressive tenor sound and his ability to merge jazz and folkloric influences within contemporary ensemble writing.

*Entre Amigos* (November 15, 2024) captured the results of a month-long tour across Asia, during which McGrath refined sixteen compositions written and arranged collaboratively. Recorded immediately upon returning to Chicago, the album celebrates collective authorship and long-standing musical camaraderie. The two releases have been acclaimed by *Paris Move*, *Chicago Jazz Magazine*, *The Arts Fuse*, and *Making a Scene* for their compositional sophistication, rhythmic vitality, and ensemble precision.

In 2022, McGrath premiered *Menjunje*, a project exploring folkloric rhythms of Puerto Rico such as Bomba (Sicá, Yubá, Cuembé) and Plena, alongside Cuban styles including Guaguancó, Bolero, Cha-Cha-Cha, and Son. *Menjunje* was developed in partnership with Chicago-based cultural organizations including the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, the Puerto Rico Arts Alliance, the Walder Foundation, and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE). The group appeared at the Chicago Jazz Festival, Chicago Latin Jazz Festival, Glenwood Arts Festival, CU Jazz Festival, Mayfest, and Mole de Mayo Festival.

McGrath's 2017 release, *Remembranzas*, earned a Latin Grammy nomination for its fusion of jazz harmony and the poetry of Julia de Burgos within the rhythmic frameworks of Bomba and other Puerto Rican styles. The project originated from *Julia al Son de Jazz* (2015), commissioned by the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, where McGrath served as Director of the Youth Afro-Caribbean Jazz Ensemble (2013–2018). He also led two major tribute performances that year: one honoring composer Rafael Hernández, featuring vocalist Chali Hernández, and another dedicated to Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Orchestra for the Chicago Latin Jazz Festival.

McGrath's debut album as a leader, *Martha* (2014), was featured in the Jazz Institute of Chicago's NextGEN Concert Series and awarded a DCASE grant to tour Mexico in 2015. Following the success of *Martha*, McGrath undertook four additional international tours to Singapore, Myanmar, South Korea, and China, establishing himself as a prominent cultural ambassador for Chicago's jazz community.

A dedicated educator, McGrath has served as Artist in Residence at Roosevelt University (2025), the University of Puerto Rico (2025), and the College of DuPage (2024–2025), and as Guest Lecturer at the University of Chicago (2025). He has presented masterclasses across Asia through Dulwich College International's Diversity Education Series, teaching in Shanghai, Suzhou, and Beijing on multiple tours in 2014, 2017, 2019, 2024, and 2025, as well as in Mexico City and at Universidad del Turabo in Puerto Rico (2013). His earlier teaching appointments include Jazz Saxophone Instructor (Non-Majors) at Northwestern University (2013–2015), Afro-Caribbean Jazz Ensemble Instructor for After School Matters and the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center (2016–2018), Woodwind and Brass Instructor at Flatts and Sharpe Music Academy (2013–2019), and Steel Band Instructor at William Hatch Elementary School (2016–2019).

McGrath's commitment to arts education extends to his work with community programs such as Chicago's Night Out in the Parks (2016–2019, 2023–2024) and his leadership in multicultural youth ensembles. Earlier in his career, he performed with the Evanston Symphony Orchestra and toured nationally with ensembles including Easy Company and the Gustavo Cortiñas Quintet, appearing throughout the U.S. Gulf Coast and East Coast.

He has received multiple grants and fellowships from institutions including the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), the Walder Foundation, the South Arts Jazz Road Program, the Jazz Foundation of America, and the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, recognizing his contributions to performance, composition, and cultural exchange.

McGrath holds a Master of Music in Jazz Studies and Saxophone Performance from Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music (2014), where he studied under Victor Goines and Chris Madsen, and a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Performance from Loyola University New Orleans (2009), where he studied with Tony Dagradi and Delfeayo Marsalis. He was a full scholarship recipient at the Berklee College of Music Five-Week Summer Performance Program (2006) and graduated with honors from Colegio San José in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico (2006). He has attended masterclasses with leading artists including Ron Carter, Miguel Zenón, Wynton Marsalis, Sherman Irby, Eddie Gómez, David Sánchez, and Chris Potter.

Through his work as a performer, composer, and educator, Roy McGrath continues to build bridges between traditions, cultures, and generations. His artistry reflects the intersection of Puerto Rican identity and the evolving language of jazz—an ongoing dialogue between island and city, memory and innovation.

## **MEDIUM-LENGTH BIO (≈300 words)**

Puerto Rican-born, Chicago-based saxophonist, composer, and bandleader Roy McGrath bridges Afro-Caribbean folkloric traditions and modern jazz through a body of work that reflects both his heritage and contemporary improvisational language.

His most recent releases, *Entre Amigos* (2024) and *Magpie: The Music of Joe Clark* (2025, *Entre Amigos Records*), document his development as a composer and leader following a month-long Asia tour. The two albums have been praised by *Paris Move*, *Chicago Jazz Magazine*, and *The Arts Fuse* for their inventive writing, rhythmic sophistication, and ensemble clarity.

McGrath's earlier projects include *Menjunje* (2022), which explores Puerto Rican and Cuban folkloric forms within a jazz framework, and *Remembranzas* (2017), a Latin Grammy–nominated suite inspired by the poetry of Julia de Burgos. His debut album *Martha* (2014) marked the start of an international touring career that has included performances across the United States, Latin America, and Asia.

An active educator, McGrath has served as Artist in Residence at Roosevelt University, the University of Puerto Rico, and the College of DuPage, and as Guest Lecturer at the University of Chicago. He has presented masterclasses across Asia, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, and previously taught at Northwestern University and the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, where he directed the Youth Afro-Caribbean Jazz Ensemble.

Recipient of multiple awards and fellowships from the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), the Walder Foundation, and South Arts, McGrath continues to advance a creative vision that connects Puerto Rican tradition with contemporary jazz expression.

## **SHORT BIO (≈150 words)**

Roy McGrath is a Puerto Rican-born, Chicago-based saxophonist, composer, and bandleader whose work unites the folkloric rhythms of the Caribbean with modern jazz. His most recent albums, *Entre Amigos* (2024) and *Magpie: The Music of Joe Clark* (2025, Entre Amigos Records), have been acclaimed for their originality and depth.

A Latin Grammy–nominated artist, McGrath’s previous projects *Menjunje* and *Remembranzas* highlight his commitment to integrating Puerto Rican and Afro-Caribbean traditions into contemporary jazz composition. He has toured extensively across Asia, the Americas, and the Caribbean, and serves as an educator and artist in residence at leading institutions including Roosevelt University and the University of Puerto Rico.

Recipient of multiple awards from DCASE, the Walder Foundation, and South Arts, McGrath continues to develop a body of work that reflects his Puerto Rican roots, his Chicago home, and the evolving language of jazz.