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The Maine Jazz Camp in Farmington, now in its 28th summer, has gained a reputation for attracting some of the best musicians in the world to be faculty members. Not primarily academics, these (mostly younger) players are working musicians, fresh from the clubs and concert halls on the major-league jazz circuit.

Paul Lichter, of the Dimensions in Jazz series, has made it a practice in recent years to present a faculty group at a Portland venue on the eve of the camp's opening. This year, he booked a quartet led by guitarist Pete McCann, and the foursome gave a fine performance at the Center for Cultural Exchange.

This was something more than simply a pickup band assembled for the show. Two of the band members are featured on McCann's just-released CD, "Most Folks."

Alto saxophonist John O'Gallagher and drummer Mark Ferber knew the all-original McCann compositions well and were able to make expansive contributions as the evening went along. Bassist Alexis Cuadrado, though sometimes a bit buried in the sonic mix on Saturday, took to the material and showed considerable gifts during his few solo spots as well.

Wisconsin native McCann's taste and style can be said to be as eclectic as what is called jazz has become in recent years. There were elements of blues, rock, Americana, fusion and more in the eight-tune, 90-minute show.

"Yes, My Friend" was one of the heavier pieces played. Built around a hard ostinato, the piece's singsong melodic hook led into an intense solo by O'Gallagher, augmented by edgy chordings from the leader. McCann's own solo got the most out of his small amplifier as the thunder of a rock tune was approximated, but with the fleet variations and rhythmic turns that only skilled jazz musicians can pull off.

The group also got the crowd excited with the intense funk of "Isosceles," a piece that showcased Ferber's way of laying down a groove without getting stuck in it.

"Jo Jo's Waltz" featured the purest jazz (by traditional definitions) of the night, while "Lonely Prairie Dog" had that sort of reverberant twang and spaciousness often associated with the work of Bill Frisell.

O'Gallagher took a breather on a couple of pieces that were the most quietly absorbing of the evening. "Hunter Gatherer" was an all-too-brief bit of musical poetry that took everyone to a pensive place on a cushion of harmonic subtlety. And "Las Tias" established a sweet, gentle reflection in a Latin style.

This and virtually every tune offered during the performance revealed McCann to be a songwriter of considerable gifts. He is way beyond just producing frameworks through which technique can be displayed, and the band was up to the interpretive task.

It's hard not to think that the camp students are a lucky bunch to be able to study under such artists.