

January/February 2016

## Seamus Blake

straight up

**Seamus Blake with the Florian Hoefner Group: Luminosity**

upcount

**Fuel for Passion**

brilliant corners

**Michael Kaeshammer: Piano Man**

Rent Party 6

home cookin'

**Mike Manny**

on the street where you live

**CanU? Yes You Can!**

dreamscapes

**Benny Green**

tune-up

**The Roots of Jazz Improvisation**

you won't forget me

**Mark Murphy (1932–2015)**

choice cuts

**Jimmy Smith (1925-2005): The Sermon**

reflections

**Crossing the River**

January/February 2016: Seamus Blake

## Mike Manny

Written by: Charlene Diehl

*In 2009, pianist (and pilot!) Mike Manny was posted to Winnipeg as part of the Royal Canadian Air Force Band. He brings with him a terrific pedigree: he studied jazz piano at Humber College, then did a Master's on scholarship at the Manhattan School of Music. This past summer, he was posted to the Regional Cadet Support Unit (Northwest), and the shift to regular hours has given him the flexibility to perform more freelance gigs and do some workshops—he's doing a rhythm section clinic for Glenlawn Collegiate in January. He's looking forward to performing at the Jazz Festival this year. Meantime, watch for him around town!*

### How did you get started in this music?

Born and raised in Toronto, I started taking piano lessons when I was five years old at the Humber College Music Education for Children program. It was sort of on a whim that my parents asked me if I wanted to learn music and piano—at five years of age, what do you really know?? Next thing I knew, I was going to music lessons every Saturday morning! Over the years, I was encouraged to add drum set and percussion to my studies at Humber.

During high school at the Etobicoke School of the Arts, I think I ended up playing more percussion and drum set than piano! I also dabbled in French horn and trumpet, and started to hone in on arranging and composition ideas.

After high school, I headed to Humber College, where I fully embraced The Jazz! That led me to graduate work at the Manhattan School of Music, and this was an amazing experience. Being right in the heart of NYC was awesome. The music, the culture, the scene, the food, the hangs—okay, just about *everything!* The opportunity to study at a world-renowned institution was a highlight of my musical upbringing.

I'm very lucky to have had the musical start that I did, and I wouldn't be the musician I am today without the encouragement and inspiration of my music instructors over the years.

### What jazz pianists particularly grab you?

Jazz pianists from the classic jazz Blue Note era are favs. Standouts include Oscar Peterson, Wynton Kelly, Chick Corea, McCoy Tyner, Horace Silver, Phineas Newborn Jr., Hampton Hawes, and George Shearing. I also have some favorites from a multitude of Latin piano players: Eddie Palmieri, Chucho Valdés, Michel Camilo, and Gonzalo Rubalcaba.

Most recently (as in, the last 15 years!), my all-time favourites are Benny Green and Geoffrey Keezer. The amount of harmony and style that pours out of them has grabbed my ears and turned them inside out!

Although he is not a jazz musician, Glenn Gould stands out amongst the sea of pianists. His style and voice is so identifiable, and he had an often "free" interpretation of classical music.

### Who's on your playlist these days?

A better question is, who is not on my playlist! At this moment, I have a gamut of styles—everything from Bach fugues, to Ravi Shankar playing ragas, to Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, to Stevie Wonder's *Songs in the Key of Life*.

For the past decade, I've been checking out Cape Breton piano stylings—there's a certain "swing" in this Canadian piano style with its Scottish and Irish roots. Going further abroad, I enjoy the fusion of jazz and Irish/Scottish traditional music in Simon Thumire and David Milligan's *Third Flight Home* and Michael McGoldrick's *Aurora*, and the straight-ahead trad music of *The Bothy Band*.

### How would you describe your musical philosophy?

One of my main philosophies is to listen—listen to as much music as you can, and learn from all of it, even if you can take away only a small part of it. We are all always learning. I like how Chick Corea puts it: "My one thing is I continue to be interested and want to be a student. I don't want to be a master. When I'm learning something, I'm in my element."

Jazz itself is such a diverse style that there is always something new to hear and learn, and this understanding of diversity has influenced me to listen to and appreciate a wide variety of musical styles. Because of my jazz training, I instinctually listen for the structure, the shape, the feel, and the harmony in all the different musical genres that I enjoy.

Having a connection to your audience is another main goal for me. Regardless of what type of music or venue, musicians should always want to connect with people. People created music together, so why not enjoy it all together?

### ARTICLES

upcount (50)

straight up (56)

brilliant corners (141)

tune-up (50)

choice cuts (49)

home cookin' (51)

on the street where you live (45)

countdown (1)

dreamscapes (36)

our man in paris (6)

you won't forget me (22)

reflections (53)