

March/April 2016

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Brad Turner: Triple Threat

Written by: Mike Manny

Winnipeg's good musical fortune continues in March when the Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra hosts one of Canada's foremost jazz musicians, jazz trumpet player Brad Turner.

Brad has shared the bandstand or recorded with the musical likes of Joe Lovano, Kenny Wheeler, John Scofield, Michael Moore, Renee Rosnes, Jimmy Greene, Ingrid Jensen, Dylan van der Schyff, Mike Murley, Seamus Blake, Charles McPherson and Michael Blake. Brad's groups have opened for McCoy Tyner, Roy Haynes, Wayne Shorter, Clark Terry, Diana Krall, and Tony Bennett, to name a few.

However, trumpet is definitely not Brad's only talent. Born in Langley BC, Brad started his musical studies on the piano at the age of 7. Soon afterwards, due to the lack of piano in his grade school concert band, he started playing the snare drum, which eventually drew him to the whole drum set. At 10, his grandfather, also a trumpeter, gave him a cornet—which he still has and still plays! These early musical experiences gave Brad the tools to become the triple threat he is today.

Although jazz is his main focus now, Brad began an undergraduate degree in classical trumpet at Western Washington University; he graduated with a double major in a jazz degree. He continued his studies at the University of North Texas, where he raised his level on the trumpet to be musically and technically prepared to tackle the challenges of being a professional trumpet player. Completing his studies, he returned to Vancouver in 1992.

His distinctive voice has earned him many awards and accolades, including the National Jazz Awards for Jazz Composer of the Year (2000 & 2002), Musician of the Year (2005), Victor Lynch-Staunton Prize for excellence in musical achievement (2006), Canadian National Jazz Awards for both Producer and Trumpeter of the Year (2008), Jazz Report magazine's Jazz Composer of the Year (2001), and back-to-back Juno Awards for Best Contemporary Jazz Album with the well-known group Metalwood (1997 & 1998). More recently, Brad received the 2014 Mayor's Art Award for Music, from the City of Vancouver.

Now with seven recordings as a leader, Brad maintains a busy professional life, with a packed schedule of live performances, recording, and teaching. He has been an instructor in the Jazz Studies program at Capilano University since 1992, where he actively encourages flexibility in his students. Here's how he put it in a recent interview about his work at Capilano:

"It's very important to us that our students have an open mind so we expose them to all sorts of music, from 90s grunge to hip hop to the Vancouver Symphony," Brad says, adding that that's the way to widen the job prospects, being able to play all kinds of music. None of that matters, though, if you don't practice. Brad quickly adds, "first, you have to master your instrument and it's not until then, that your imagination can come through it."

I couldn't agree more!

You can hear the wonderful Brad Turner performing with the Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra at the Winnipeg Art Gallery on March 20. Also on the bill is Winnipeg chanteuse and composer, Monika Wall. The show, "Coast to Coast," gives listeners an opportunity to hear music by many of Canada's fine composer-arrangers—including these two featured artists. See you there...

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