

HOT FLASHES

By Seton Hawkins

Musician-Producer's Corner

As someone who took up the electric bass in high school and waited until halfway through college to tackle the acoustic bass, Mark Wade's back story might not immediately indicate a future career as a versatile musical voice and champion of new music. However, with performance credentials including stints with Jimmy Heath, Don Byron, Sharon Isbin, the Key West Symphony and the Janacek Symphony, Wade has proven to be precisely that.

Equally comfortable in classical music and jazz, Wade's multifaceted career has enabled him to develop unique insights into the music industry, that have inspired him to take on producer and impresario roles through his non-profit organization New Music Horizons.

To hear Wade describe it, his musical origins were "a very backwards road," as he slowly wound his way toward taking up acoustic bass and approaching multiple genres of music. "It's a different road from what most people take," he recalls "When most kids were hitting 19 or 20 and had been playing for maybe ten years, particularly in classical music, I was instead a college jazz major who had started on electric bass! I started playing classical music as a hobby. When I got out of college, I joined a community orchestra, so my hobby turned into a part-time job, which then turned into an absolute part of what I do as a professional musician."

While a circuitous path, Wade finds a common thread in his continual search to pursue difficult challenges in music. This desire led him from rock into jazz and, ultimately, into incorporating classical music into his working repertoire.

A founding member of the Queens Jazz Overground, a collective-styled organization focused on presenting concerts, developing artists and building audiences, Wade has engaged heavily on the arts administration side in order to promote new music.

Moving on from the Queens Jazz Overground, Wade has since found a new path through New Music Horizons which is dedicated to supporting emerging composers in the classical and jazz fields by curating high-quality performances and developing dedicated audience members. Wade's career-long work across genres uniquely qualifies him for this vision.

"Playing classical music and jazz, and playing new music in both genres, you see

the difficulty artists can have in connecting with new audiences," he explains. "And 'connecting' doesn't just mean getting people to show up to the gig, it means introducing audiences to new compositions and getting them to come back. So this organization is here not only to promote emerging composers at legitimate cultural institutions, but also to engage the audiences and get them deeper into music."

The impact of Wade's efforts has certainly been felt, not least of all by Wade himself. February 2015 marked the release of Wade's debut album, *Event Horizon*, an offering that beautifully embodies and reflects the bassist's focus on engendering new music. Comprising almost exclusively Wade's original compositions, *Event Horizon* is a trio record—with Tim Harrison on piano and Scott Neumann on drums—highlighting a versatile and imaginative musical voice interested in showcasing compositional chops rather than simple head charts.

"I always wanted to wait until I had something creative to contribute, and a band and music I wanted to record," he explains. "While I was in residence at Flushing Town Hall, it all came together. The trio I put together for that residency became the band I decided to record."

Indeed, the trio CD serves as a logical continuation of Wade's passions in his music and in his arts advocacy role. "There's very much a connection here," Wade notes. "I'm running an organization dedicated to promoting original music, and on my record, I'm playing my own music. That can be a bit unusual for a debut record, but this is something I feel strongly about. The work with New Music Horizons brought back my desire to compose."



Mark Wade

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