



Mike Downes

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Bio

"As gifted a composer as he is a bassist." - *Chris Kosky, International Society of Bassists*

"Mike's time playing is delightfully inventive...his lines are clear, hip, and agile. His technique and intonation are extraordinary." - *Kim Richmond, Jazz Player Magazine*

"Emotionally direct, profoundly lyrical bass work." - *Stuart Broomer, The Whole Note*

Juno award winner Mike Downes has earned a reputation as one of Canada's finest jazz artists. Based in Toronto, he has been active as a bassist, composer, arranger and educator in the Canadian music scene since the early 1980s.

His musicality, emotional depth and melodic approach to the bass have thrilled audiences in Europe, Japan, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Iceland, the United States and Canada. In addition to leading his own groups, Mike has performed with virtually all of Canada's top jazz musicians, including Oliver Jones, Diana Krall, PJ Perry, Renee Rosnes, Don Thompson, Kirk MacDonald, Terry Clarke, Guido Basso and Pat LaBarbera. He has been in demand to perform with visiting jazz artists such as Chris Potter, Michael Brecker, John Abercrombie, Peter Erskine, Kenny Wheeler, Jack DeJohnette, John Taylor, Paquito D'Rivera, Dave Liebman, Billy Hart, Phil Woods and many others.

Mike's extensive discography highlights his work as a bassist, composer and arranger. He has released four recordings (a 5th to be released in early 2014) as a leader to critical praise. His most recent recording *Ripple Effect* features his trio with masterful musicians Robi Botos and Ethan Ardelli. Other recordings include Molly Johnson's 2009 Juno award-winning *Lucky* and Juno-nominations Lorne Lofsky's *Bill Please*, Ranee Lee's *Dark Divas* and *Maple Groove*, Shirantha Beddage's *Identity* and Molly Johnson's *Another Day* and *Messin' Around*.

Mike began playing bass at the age of eight, encouraged by his bass-playing father. He also studied trombone and piano and was quickly recognized as an upcoming talent. He began performing as a teenager in Winnipeg, Canada, where he played in diverse settings from rock bands to big bands and from corporate functions to television and radio shows. After being named "Jazz Musician of the Year" in Silver Heights Collegiate, a high school reputed for its music program, he was offered a full scholarship to study bass and trombone at St. F. X. University in Nova Scotia. After two years at St. F.X. he completed a Bachelor of Music degree at McGill University in Montreal. He was already balancing a professional career with his studies, missing the first three weeks of classes on a cross-Canada tour and performing regularly in Montreal. After graduating he was awarded a Canada Council Grant to study with bassists Dave Holland and John Clayton. Mike moved to Toronto in 1990, and later completed a Masters degree in Music Composition at York University.

In 1994 Mike formed the Mike Downes Quartet, featuring saxophonist Phil Dwyer, pianist Dave Restivo and drummer Ted Warren. That group performed regularly in Toronto and recorded *Forces* in 1995. As part of a cross-Canada tour the band recorded for two days in CBC studios in Winnipeg. That recording was later released as *Then*. In 2004 Mike's trio recorded *The Winds of Change*. The recording, chosen as one of the year's top CDs by Jazz FM features a heartfelt, spacious and melodic approach to trio playing from

three of Canada's top jazz musicians. His recording *Ripple Effect* won the 2014 JUNO award for Traditional Jazz Album of the Year. Mike began work on the *In the Current* suite for large jazz ensemble in 2008 while completing a master's degree in composition from York University. Featuring a group of some of Canada's finest musicians, *In the Current* on Addo Records is his latest recording.

Helping to mentor and inspire young musicians is an important component of his career. He has been the Bass Department Head at prestigious Humber College in Toronto since 2000. He has also been featured as a Yamaha artist/clinician throughout Canada, at the Paekche Institute in Seoul, South Korea and the infamous Conservatoire de Paris. Mike is the author of *The Jazz Bass Line Book* published by Advance Music of Germany. The book is receiving world-wide acclaim as one of the most informative books available on the subject. He is also co-author of *Jazz and Contemporary Music Theory*.

Selected awards:

- 2014 Juno Award (Traditional Jazz Album of the Year) – Mike Downes – *Ripple Effect*
- 2013 Juno Nomination – Shirantha Beddage – *Identity*
- 2012 Winner of Le Prix de Jazz with Robi Botos trio – Montreal Jazz Festival
- 2012 Canada Council for the Arts production grant to record *In the Current*
- 2012 Ontario Arts Council grant to record *Ripple Effect*
- 2011 Toronto Downtown Jazz Special Projects Award for *In the Current*
- 2009 Juno award – Molly Johnson – *Lucky* (best jazz vocal recording 2009)
- 2009 Recipient of a Toronto Arts Council Grant to compose new music for large jazz ensemble
- 2007 *Gemini* (original composition) chosen for *Yasukuni Terashima Presents Jazz Bar 2007* best-of jazz compilation (Japanese release on vinyl and CD)
- 2007 NISOD Excellence Award (*presented by the University of Texas at Austin*)
- 2007 Juno Nomination - Molly Johnson – *Messin' Around*
- 2006 Jazz Bassist of the Year nomination - National Jazz Awards
- 2005 Jazz Bassist of the Year nomination - National Jazz Awards
- 2005 *The Winds of Change* (see Discography) voted one of the top ten recordings of 2005 by Jazz FM
- 2004 Juno Nomination - Rane Lee - *Maple Groove*
- 2004 Recipient of a Yamaha Music Artist Endorsement
- 2003 Juno Nomination - Molly Johnson - *Another Day*
- 2001 Juno Nomination - Rane Lee - *Dark Divas*
- 1997 Recipient of a Canada Council touring grant to perform with the Mike Downes Quartet
- 1996 Winner of the *Prix Du Maurier* at the Montreal International Jazz Festival with Roy Patterson
- 1995 Recipient of a FACTOR Recording Grant
- 1995 Juno Nomination - Lorne Lofsky - *Bill Please*
- 1989 Recipient of a Canada Council Arts Grant "B" to study with Dave Holland and John Clayton

More information can be found at www.mikedownes.com