



## STEFON HARRIS

### SHORT BIOGRAPHY

*"His music needs no labels like 'postmodern' or 'cutting edge'. It is Stefon Harris music, as Charles Mingus, he insisted, was Mingus music."*

- **Nat Hentoff, *Jazz Times Magazine***

Educator, Vibraphonist and Composer, Stefon Harris has been heralded as "one of the most important young artists in jazz" by The Los Angeles Times. A four-time GRAMMY™ nominee, he is a seven-time Best Mallet player by the Jazz Journalist Association, the recipient of Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, Downbeat's Critics Poll Winner for Vibraphone (2015, 2013) and 2014 Expanded Critic's Poll for Vibes from Jazz Times. He won a 2014 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Jazz Album for *Wonder: The Songs of Stevie Wonder* as a member of the SF Jazz Collective. Harris earned a BM in Classical Percussion and a MM in Jazz Performance from Manhattan School of Music. He tours worldwide with his bands Sonic Creed, Blackout and Ninety Miles. Harris teaches at New York University and is Artistic Director of Jazz Education at New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC). He has been Artist in Residence at Fontana Chamber Arts, Kalamazoo, The Lied Center in Lincoln, Nebraska, and San Francisco Performances. Harris currently teaches at the Brubeck Institute through their Distance Learning program and at the Institute's Summer Jazz Colony. Stefon's landmark TED Talk, "There are No Mistakes On The Bandstand" was the most watched in its 2011 release and has over 500,000 views. He has emerged as a leading informance presenter in Corporate Leadership workshops with Fortune 100 companies around the world. In 2014 Stefon co-founded The Melodic Progression Institute with business partner Clif Swiggett. Their first app, Harmony Cloud™ was released on iTunes in January 2016.

### LONG BIOGRAPHY

Vibraphonist-composer Stefon Harris is heralded as "one of the most important young artists in jazz (*The Los Angeles Times*)." he is unquestionably developing what will be a long and extraordinary career.

Stefon Harris' passionate artistry, energetic stage presence, and astonishing virtuosity have propelled him into the forefront of the current jazz scene. Widely recognized and lauded by both his peers and jazz critics alike, award-winning musician is committed to both exploring the rich potential of jazz education and blazing new trails on the vibraphone.

A graduate of Manhattan School of Music, Stefon received a B.M. in Classical Music and a M.M. in Jazz Performance. He is a recipient of the prestigious Martin E. Segal Award from Lincoln Center and has earned four Grammy nominations including Best Contemporary Jazz Album for *Urbanus* (Concord Music, 2010), Best Jazz Album for *The Grand Unification Theory* (2003) and the 2001 release of *Kindred* (Blue Note) and his 1999 release of *Black Action Figure* (Blue Note) for Best Jazz Instrumental Solo. NPR honored his latest CD, *Ninety Miles* (Concord) as one of the Best Releases of 2011. Harris was named winner of 2014 Expanded Critic's Poll for Vibes from Jazz Times and the 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Downbeat Critics Poll for Vibes (2013). He has been voted Best Mallet player by Jazz Times Critics Poll and by the Jazz Journalist Association (2000-2004, 2011-2013), Debut Artist of the Year by Jazz Times, Chicago Tribune's Debut of the Year and Downbeat's Critics Poll Winner for Vibraphone (2013) and Rising Star, Vibraphone (2006, 2004, 2003) Newsweek Magazine's Best Jazz CD, Best New Talent and 1999-2000 Readers Poll Best Vibraphonist by Jazziz Magazine. North Sea Jazz (Netherlands) awarded Harris the International 2002 Bird Award for Artist Deserving Wider Recognition.

Mr. Harris has performed at many of the world's most distinguished concert halls, including the Carnegie Hall debut of *African Tarantella,,,Dances with Duke* (2006 Blue Note), Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, The Kennedy Center, San Francisco's Herbst Theater, UCLA's Royce Hall, Chicago Symphony Center, Detroit Orchestra Hall, and

The Sydney Opera House. In June 2007, his quartet performed a retrospective of his original compositions with the Jazz Sinfonica Orquestra in Sao Paulo, Brasil. He has toured and recorded with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and performed his original compositions with the Dutch Metropole Orchestra in Den Hague. He has toured South Africa, Asia, South America and Europe performing at the North Sea Jazz Festival, Istanbul Jazz Festival, and the Umbria Jazz Festival among others. In 2001 he premiered *The Grand Unification Theory* a full-length concert piece commissioned by The Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, which was later presented at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. He has also appeared at the legendary Playboy Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, and the Orange County Performing Arts Center. In March 2005 Mr. Harris debuted *Suite Moments* a special commission from The Wharton Center for Performing Arts, Michigan State University. In May 2006 he premiered *Portraits of The Promised*, commissioned by Fontana Chamber Arts for People's Church Sesquicentennial Celebration in Kalamazoo, MI. In 2009 Stefon was the subject of three documentaries by WGVU-TV which earned three Michigan EMMY™ nominations and three Gold Camera Awards (U.S. International Film & Video Festival). He joined the San Francisco Jazz Collective in 2007 and toured through 2013 in addition to leading his band Blackout and other special projects. Harris was commissioned by the chamber group Imani Winds supported by a grant from Music Accord and wrote the piece *Anatomy of a Box: A Sonic Painting in wood, metal and wind*. Pairing the jazz concept of improvisation within a classical framework, the 2009 performance debut through Hancher Auditorium in Iowa City received grand reviews

An active educator Mr. Harris teaches throughout the United States and internationally through his Distance Learning Lab. He is Director of Curriculum Development at the Brubeck Institute (CA), Artistic Director of Jazz Education at New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), Brubeck Summer Jazz Colony and Visiting Professor at Rutgers University (NJ).

For the past decade he has been on the faculty at New York University and was Artist in Residence at Fontana Chamber Arts (Kalamazoo, MI), University of Nebraska, Lincoln, San Francisco Performances, The Isabelle Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston and The Thelonious S. Monk Institute for Jazz Studies. He created a unique interactive program with poets from around the world at the University of Iowa's famed International Writer's Workshop. He returned there in September 2004 to participate in "The Life of Discovery" as part of a statewide celebration of arts and humanities. Harris was recently appointed to the Artistic Advisory Council at Manhattan School of Music in 2015 and currently serves on the Executive Board of Directors for Percussive Arts Society (PAS) and is a former member of the Board of Directors for Chamber Music America and WBGO-FM (Newark, NJ). His 2011 TED talk on "There are no mistakes on the bandstand" was the most watched video in its release and has over 500,00 views. It has led to an active career speaking at Corporate Leadership conferences with Fortune 100 companies.

Mr. Harris was a member of the award winning SF Jazz Collective touring internationally and recording annually. His last CD with the band, *Wonder: The Songs of Stevie Wonder* won a 2014 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Jazz Album. In June 2011, Harris along with David Sanchez and Christian Scott released the critically acclaimed CD *Ninety Miles* (Concord Records). Recorded entirely in Havana, Cuba the project reveals the fascinating reaction that takes place when musicians from different cultures come together and converse in a common language that transcends mere words. A documentary *Ninety Miles Live at Cubadisco* chronicles the adventure. The same year, Stefon was a featured artist on the GRAMMY nominated *"Have You Ever Been?"* (Telarc) by the Turtle Island String Quartet.

*Urbanus* (Concord Records) nominated for 2010 GRAMMY for Best Contemporary Jazz CD solidified the role of Stefon Harris & Blackout as one of the leaders of jazz urban music. Named the "Year's Best New Jazz" by NPR, the follow up to the band's acclaimed Top Ten recording, *Evolution*, was hailed as "A spectacular piece of work sparkling with optimism, ingenuity and emotional immediacy" (Amazon.com) and termed "brilliant" by People Magazine. *Urbanus* sparked a media discussion on the cultural relevance of jazz while "delivering a different kind of unification: intellectually deep and emotionally resonant" (All About Jazz).

Stefon's 2006 recording, *African Tarantella...Dances with Duke* (Blue Note) paired a modern arrangement of Duke Ellington's "New Orleans Suite" and "Queen Suite" along with selections from Harris' "The Gardner Meditations". The latter suite was part of a commission by The Wharton Center for Performing Arts at Michigan State University. The 2003 release of *The Grand Unification Theory* an eleven movement suite featuring Latin, classical, African and jazz influences earned a Grammy nomination, JAZZIZ Critics Choice and 4 star reviews from Downbeat Magazine, Rolling Stone and The Los Angeles Times, His 2001 CD *Kindred* earned him his second Grammy nod for Best Jazz Album. A quartet recording with the noted pianist Jacky Terrasson *Kindred* is a follow-up to his sophomore release *Black Action Figure* (Blue Note Records) also nominated for a Grammy for Best Jazz Instrumental Solo. His premiere

as a leader, *A Cloud of Red Dust*, was voted Best Debut Recording at the *1999 New York Jazz Awards*. In addition to leading his own band, Mr. Harris has recorded as part of The Classical Jazz Quartet, a series of jazz interpreted classics with Kenny Barron, Ron Carter, and Lewis Nash. He has also recorded and toured with many of music's greatest artists, including Joe Henderson, Wynton Marsalis, Milt Jackson, Lionel Hampton, Bobby Hutcherson, Cassandra Wilson, Dr. Billy Taylor, Kenny Barron, Max Roach, Cedar Walton, Mulgrew Miller, Benny Golson, Bobby Watson, Chaka Khan, Kurt Elling, Buster Williams, Dianne Reeves, Charlie Hunter, Yakub Addy Odadaa, Common, Pablo Zeigler. He has performed with Albany Symphony, Berkshire Symphony, Lancaster Festival Orchestra, and Chamber Society of Lincoln Center.

Stefon co-founded The Melodic Progression Institute with Clif Swiggett in 2013 to explore new ways to help musicians learn and grow. This exciting collaboration has led to the development of their first app, Harmony Cloud™ an ear-training learning tool available on iTunes.

Updated 8/2016 – Please destroy any previous versions