

For Immediate Release

Earl MacDonald's new album, **CONSECRATED**
due out Sept. 24, 2021 via Outside in Music.



Sparked by a crisis of faith,
pianist Earl MacDonald issues a touching collection of hymns
with an intensely personal connection.

Outside in Music proudly announces the September 24th, 2021 release of *Consecrated*, the seventh studio album from acclaimed jazz pianist, arranger and educator, Earl MacDonald. It's an album of traditional hymns, brimming with poetic elegance. Unlike any of MacDonald's previous award-winning recordings, vocals stand front-and-center, with Canadian "up and comer" **Karly Epp** introduced as an important, new collaborator. Her stirring vocal interpretations mixed with MacDonald's thoughtfully-crafted instrumental underpinnings convey a wide spectrum of sentiments, ranging from reverence and gratitude to petition, pleading and lament.

The supporting musicians were handpicked, based on the dynamic each brings to the project as sonic colorists and creative instigators. The band's distinctive international flair effervesces, with four Canadians, a Brazilian, and three Americans. The unique improvisational voices of **David Smith** (trumpet), **Kris Allen** (saxophones), **Karl Kohut** (string bass) and Grammy-award winner, **Rogério Boccato** (percussion) shine throughout. French hornist Alex Gertner and trombonist Sean Nelson provide added hues to the orchestration of selected pieces. *Consecrated* is a deeply spiritual, personal album for Earl MacDonald, and therefore, a deeply refreshing one for the jazz listener. In both his musical artistry and in life, MacDonald clearly searches for beauty and a connection to the Divine, while comfortably exploring dissonance – both cognitive and musical.

Epp explains the uniqueness of the album, as it addresses the spiritual disorientation we've felt the last several years resulting from the church's entanglement in politics: "The message of love is really integral to the Christian faith. The whole point is to love other people. Unfortunately, that's not the model of Christianity currently being presented."

Of the album's ten spellbinding tracks, saxophonist Kris Allen contributed the sole original – *Be Still*. The song conjures comparison to the meditative, contemplative worship style of

music associated with the Taizé ecumenical community. In this practice, short chants repeat at length. Epp's recurrent vocal line serves as a constant through line, with the band astir around it.

Traditional hymns, chosen for their timelessly relevant lyrics and strong melodies comprise the remaining program. MacDonald's supportive, meticulously-crafted arrangements reinforce the thematic content of each song. *Sweet Hour of Prayer* takes on a delicate, intimate atmosphere, filled with mystery and wonder. A light bossa nova feel heightens the sense of awe on *Holy, Holy, Holy*, to create a more expansive, worshipful environment. Heightened disquietude and inner turmoil stem from the loping triple-meter groove and angst-tinged harmonies MacDonald effectively applied to *O God of Love, Grant Us Your Peace*.

The album title comes from the song, *Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated*, to which MacDonald infused tasteful samba dance rhythms. In his extensive online notes, MacDonald shares that his scarred and bruised faith bolstered through careful examination of this song's poetic lyrics. The process elicited big questions: "Has my faith changed, or just my relationship to the church? And IF I remain committed to my faith tradition, how could I more fully embrace the process and journey of not withholding anything from God?"

Track listing:

1. Be Still My Soul
2. O God of Love, Grant Us Your Peace
3. Sweet Hour of Prayer
4. Holy, Holy, Holy
5. By Our Love
6. Be Still
7. Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated
8. The Love of God
9. Be Thou My Vision
10. In His Holy Temple



More About Earl MacDonald:

Described as "a magical, musical alchemist of hip hybrids" (Hartford Courant) and "a major force in the world of jazz composition" (Dan Bilawsky, AllAboutJazz.com), MacDonald's inexhaustible commitment to the jazz art form reveals itself in his performing, composing and teaching.

All seven of MacDonald's albums differ in instrumentation – ranging from a quartet comprised of cello, saxophone, piano & percussion to a full 17-piece jazz big band. This variance speaks to MacDonald's restless artistic spirit, unquenchable inquisitiveness and his desire to continue stretching himself musically. Such experimentation led one reviewer to

speculate vis-à-vis “. . . an attempt to create a hybrid jazz form” (JazzReview.com). Each project leaves an indelible impression, garnering critical acclaim and accolades: two Independent Music Awards (for Jazz Song and Jazz Producer of the Year) and two JUNO nominations for jazz album of the year.

As a composer, MacDonald embraces the roles of social commentator and provocateur, broaching consequential subject matter in his music. In addition to composing music for his own ensembles and recording projects, MacDonald often receives commissions to write pieces for jazz big bands. Praised for his creative compositional voice, MacDonald won the Sammy Nestico Award, sponsored by the Airmen of Note, was a finalist for Charlie Parker Jazz Composition Award (during his affiliation with the BMI Jazz Composer’s Workshop in New York City) and twice he appeared as a finalist for the ArtEZ Composition Contest in the Netherlands. His compositions for 17-piece jazz orchestra have been performed by professional and university-based ensembles across North America.

MacDonald serves as a professor and Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Connecticut. The UConn Chapter of the AAUP honored MacDonald with its Excellence in Teaching Innovation Award (2006), and the Teaching Promise award (2003). In 2013 he garnered the *Outstanding Faculty Award* for the School of Fine Arts. His passion for jazz education stretches beyond UConn; he adjudicates educational jazz festivals in the U.S. and Canada, presents at conferences, conducts high school honor bands, and teaches at summer programs and jazz camps.

His own education includes a bachelor of music degree in jazz performance at Montréal’s McGill University and a master of music degree from Rutgers, where he apprenticed with NEA Jazz Master, Kenny Barron. (Barron’s recording of MacDonald’s *Wanton Spirit* earned a Grammy-nomination.) MacDonald jokes about “attending the *Maynard Ferguson Finishing School for Bandleaders-in-Training.*” The experience he gained as Ferguson’s pianist and musical director at the end of the 1990s cast a formative imprint.

Despite his considerable career accomplishments, one senses the best lies ahead. He recently accepted the musically influential role of Composer-in-Residence for the Hartford Jazz Orchestra. MacDonald says, “Artistically, I hope to continue the long, impactful tradition of political and social activism that jazz music and its musicians have created.”

Earl MacDonald is currently available for interview.

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