

Earl MacDonald stands as a luminary figure in the world of contemporary jazz, pushing the boundaries of musical convention as a pianist, composer, and arranger. Heralded by the Hartford Courant as a “magical, musical alchemist of hip hybrids,” MacDonald's unique voice is a testament to his in-depth exploration of jazz, seamlessly combining his passions for artistic expression and social justice.

MacDonald's unquenchable artistic spirit is on display across his seven albums, ranging from a quartet with cello, percussion & saxophone to a full 17-piece jazz big band. The album "Re:Visions - Works for Jazz Orchestra" earned widespread acclaim, with critic Dan Bilawsky declaring MacDonald “a major force in the world of jazz composition.” This album received a JUNO award nomination for Jazz Album of the Year, and its title track, "Friday Night at the Cadillac Club," secured the esteemed Sammy Nestico Award for jazz arranging.

A pivotal moment in MacDonald's artistic evolution came with the release of "Open Borders" in 2017. On this thoughtfully crafted sextet album, he reimagined his music as a powerful tool for raising awareness about injustices and inspiring lasting global change. His nuanced approach earned him the Connecticut Office of the Arts' 2020 Artistic Excellence Award, highlighting the profound impact of using music as a conduit for social action.

MacDonald's artistic philosophy, rooted in collaboration, is exemplified by projects like the animated short film “By Our Love.” Created with a team of visual and digital media artists, this project explores political tribalism within faith communities, aiming to encourage introspection and initiate meaningful conversations.

Beyond his musical contributions, MacDonald's dedication to jazz education is evident through awards from the AAUP (American Association of University Professors) for teaching innovation and excellence. Currently serving as the Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Connecticut, he actively adjudicates jazz festivals, presents at conferences, and teaches at summer programs. This commitment underscores his passion for nurturing the next generation of artist-citizens, following in the footsteps of his mentor, NEA Jazz Master Kenny Barron.

Looking forward, MacDonald is set for another groundbreaking collaboration in which he plans to use poetry to explore intersectional narratives about human rights, migration, gun violence prevention, climate issues, and racial justice. By creating art songs for bass-baritone voice and piano, complemented by guest instrumentalists, MacDonald seeks to enhance societal impact through the universal power of music.

As Earl MacDonald etches an indelible mark at the intersection of music, art, and justice, his creative journey continues to unfold. Experience his performances, collaborations, and educational initiatives at www.earlmacdonald.com or connect on Instagram (@earlmacdon) and Facebook (/earl.macdonald). Join him in the conversation as he continues to use music as a force for positive change.