

Ben Wolfe Biography

New York bassist/composer and bandleader Ben Wolfe's music has been described as **"Mingus and Miles Davis meet Bartok and Bernard Herrmann"** (Ben Ratliff - The New York Times). Acclaimed by some of the jazz world's most respected critics for his **"wit and cool intelligence"** and signature **"innovative, melding of hard-swinging jazz quartet, outstanding guest soloists and classical string quartet."**, Wolfe continues to produce works that draw top-flight reviews from fans and jazz journalists alike.

Ben's most recent release *Fatherhood*, touted by New York City Jazz Record's Elliott Simon as a **"career defining work... creative meshing of distinctive forms and genres, mature alteration of previously released material, elegant arrangements of difficult material and strong leadership"**, adds to his extensive collection of original albums, and ties together a career of musical prestige.

There is no doubt that after decades as one of the most sought-after bassists in jazz, performing with top names such as Wynton Marsalis, Harry Connick Jr., Diana Krall and many others, award-winning composer and bandleader Ben Wolfe is clear about his creative direction... **"Much of the music I've composed; particularly the music that includes strings, I think of as chamber music within a jazz context."** – Ben Wolfe

Ben leads several distinctive ensembles, featuring top jazz veterans, and upcoming young talents, presented in a range of formats, from Quartet to Sextet, featuring trumpet, saxophone, and vibraphone. His extended works for Octet, comprised of jazz quartet plus string quartet have been described as **"ground-breaking"**. **The Ben Wolfe Trio** plays brilliant, innovative arrangements of songs from *The Great American Songbook*, as well as the music of Thelonious Monk and others. And-- **The Ben Wolfe Quintet** continues to be a mainstay at Dizzy's Club in NYC, performing an annual four-night run in the late summer, each year.

An award-winning composer, **Ben is a two-time recipient** of Chamber Music America's *New Works: Creation and Presentation Program Grant* through the Doris Duke Foundation. First received in 2004, Ben was able to use this funding to compose his extended work *Contradiction: Music for Sextet*. Ben received the grant again this year, and is currently writing his next extended composition. Wolfe has distinguished himself through a significant catalogue of original music, including over **one hundred songs across nine albums**, several extended works, and the film score for Matthew Modine's 2008 short *I Think I Thought*. The New York Sun hailed his work on this film as, "a standout music score."

Likened by more than one jazz critic to the works of Charles Mingus and Max Roach, Ben's compositions infuse his hard-swinging jazz combo with string quartet, and are acclaimed for their **"inspired writing and off the beaten path"** approach, music that **"emboldens the tradition with neo-classical overtones, yet never fails to swing"**.

Wolfe's early career included **Grammy award-winning, platinum-selling collaborations** with both Harry Connick Jr. and Diana Krall, including Harry's 1988 soundtrack album *When Harry Met Sally*, and Diana's 1999 release *When I Look in Your Eyes*. He appeared alongside both artists on numerous world tours.

Wolfe's ongoing and close association with Wynton Marsalis; during which Marsalis recorded as a guest on two of his albums, has seen Ben appear on a number of Wynton's releases, and included a stint in the Wynton Marsalis Septet and membership in the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO), where he performed with jazz luminaries such as Joe Henderson, Doc Cheatham, Jon Hendricks, Harry "Sweets" Edison, and Billy Higgins, among many others. Contemporary jazz greats with whom he has also worked and recorded include Branford Marsalis, Orrin Evans, Eric Reed and Benny Green.

Ben Wolfe's full list of recorded original albums as a leader:

- *Fatherhood*, Resident Arts Records (2019)
- *The Whisperer*, Posi-Tone (2015)
- *From Here I See*, MAXJAZZ/Mack Avenue Records (2013)
- *Ben Wolfe Quintet: Live at Smalls*, SmallsLIVE (2011)
- *No Strangers Here*, MAXJAZZ/Mack Avenue Records (2008)
- *My Kinda Beautiful*, Planet Arts Records (2004)
- *Murray's Cadillac*, Amosaya Music (2000)
- *Bagdad Theater*, Mons Records (1997)
- *13 Sketches*, Mons Records (1996)

Ben maintains a busy schedule, performing and touring on the international stage. Currently a member of the teaching faculty at The Julliard School in New York City, Ben is helping to shape and mentor the jazz scene's next generation of outstanding talent.

"Ben Wolfe swings with authority!"- to quote Wynton Marsalis. It can't be said any better!