

Mike Freeman

Musician * Composer * Bandleader * Recording Artist * Arranger * Educator * Producer

Vibraphonist and composer **Mike Freeman** has been a part of the New York jazz and Latin music scene for over three decades. Dan McClaneghan of Allaboutjazz described him as "masterful" and ranked among other top names of the instrument. With spirited soulful swing, Freeman's performances have taken him from North America and Europe to the Azores, Caribbean, and South America. His seven recordings of original music have gained national and international attention with extensive radio airplay charting on jazz, contemporary jazz, and World Music radio. "Blue Tjade," a tip of the hat to Cal Tjader, followed by "Venetian Blinds," with music for El Rey Tito Puente and NEA Jazz Master Bobby Hutcherson, are the latest in a line of clave-infused recordings Mike has produced.



A 2019 Lower Manhattan Cultural Council grant recipient

Mike produced the two concert series "Latin Music In Hell's Kitchen, A History" with guest legends Ray Mantilla and Jose Mangual Jr. performing at the Times Center. He's also produced two Band Together benefit concerts. One for musicians affected by hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria (Puerto Rico in particular) with proceeds going to the Jazz Foundation of America and the other after Hurricane Katrina, benefitting the Tipitinas Foundation and New Orleans-area musicians.

Performance highlights for Freeman as a leader include the Fox Jazz Festival and Riverfront Jazz Festival in WI; the Trinidad & Tobago Steelpan & Jazz Festival; Festival Internacional, Terciera, Azores; Central Park's Harlem Meer concert series in New York City; performing for Flood Relief in Des Moines, IA; Jazz on the Green in Omaha, NE; the Berks, Rehoboth Beach, Hennessy Greenwich Village, and JVC Newport (at Saratoga) jazz festivals; the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE) convention, and an extensive tour of Portugal, cosponsored by the Fulbright Foundation and the American Embassy (USIA), where he received the Medal of the City of Guarda.

Other endeavors include writing a decade-long series of commissioned compositions and arrangements for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Percussion Scholarship Program and in 2014 was commissioned by the late drummer/educator Ed Uribe to write arrangements for a national percussion curriculum for China that were performed by members of the Shanghai Symphony at Shanghai Symphony Hall.

Mike is also known for his work and recordings with several acclaimed Latin groups. The vibes behind the name, he's worked extensively with legendary percussionist Ray Mantilla's Good Vibrations Band, touring much of Italy. "Good Vibrations," Savant Records, was Jazzweek's top Latinjazz recording on radio in 2006. Mike is featured with Ray's Tres Amigos and also appears on his latest CD "High Voltage," Savant. He was part of Lucho Cueto's all-star group Black Sugar, "Estamos Azucar," which gave blockbuster performances for thousands at the Toros Y Salsa Festival in Dax, France, and at the Festival Internacional de Salsa in Lima, Peru. For fifteen years he's been a member of Jose Mangual Jr.'s Son Boricua featuring the late Jimmy Sabater (one of the architects of Boogaloo) that performed for large gatherings at salsa congresses in New York, L.A., and Atlanta. His vibe work can also be heard on recordings with Mark Holen's eclectic Latin blues band Zambomba. In the 1990s he created the book for, and performed with, Jorge Jimenez's salsa group Timba Vibes. This was followed by a fifteen-year association with salsa singer Julio Salgado. He performed with the Spanish Harlem Orchestra (directed by Oscar Hernandez) at Madison Square Garden and with Willie Villegas's Joe Cuba Sextet for New Jersey's salsa congress, both with legendary sonero Cheo Feliciano.

Mike endorses Mike Balter Mallets

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Born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, Mike Freeman started learning drums at age five and began playing professionally at age thirteen. At twelve, he began playing the vibraphone, and by fifteen, he was a percussionist for the Omaha Symphony under conductor Thomas Briccetti. During his last year of high school, he began traveling to Chicago to study with renowned percussionist and veteran studio musician Bobby Christian. He graduated DePaul University with a Bachelor of Music in composition with high honors in 1981. In New York, where he's lived and worked since, he studied with composer/arranger Hale Rood (who wrote for Louie Bellson).

Family: Mike's grandfather was a drummer and leader of Ron Freeman and the Melody Masters, a popular band that was heard on the radio in the Midwest. Neal Hefti played in his band before becoming famous in California. Mike's paternal grandmother sang and played the organ and marimba. His maternal grandmother was a talented piano player in her youth. Mike's father, Harry Freeman, worked his way through college playing the saxophone and clarinet.

"LATIN JAZZ DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER THAN THIS"
-MARK SULLIVAN, ALLABOUTJAZZ