



Ulysses Owens Jr.

Drummer Producer Educator

Heralded as a “powerhouse of a showman” (*Glide Magazine*), a “legitimate jazz triple threat” (*Critical Jazz*) and a drummer who “take[s] a back seat to no one” (*The New York Times*), performer, producer and educator Ulysses Owens Jr. goes the limit in the jazz world and beyond.

One of the most sought-after drummers of his generation, Owens sets the mark. From GRAMMY award-winning performances with Christian McBride’s acclaimed Trio and Big Band to world tours with Kurt Elling and Joey Alexander, Owens’s artistic command of percussion has earned him positions in some of the most successful jazz ensembles of the 21st century. Owens’s reverence for tradition distinctly manifests in his straight-away playing style, but it is the versatility of his talent— his unique ability to manipulate texture and create penetrating musical shapes— that attracts the attention of jazz’s heavy hitters. His performance catalog includes collaborations with Nicholas Payton, Wynton Marsalis, Monty Alexander, Dianne Schurr, Renee Fleming and Mulgrew Miller, just to name a few.

A burgeoning force in the industry, Owens has been named a Rising Star by DownBeat’s Critics Poll for five years straight. He is a recipient of the 2013 ASCAP Plus Award, a Gold Medal winner of the 2014 Global Music Awards, a 2015 Jazz at Lincoln Center *Swing!* Awards Honoree, and 2019 “3rd Runner-Up,” in Classic Jazz Category in the Modern Drummer Magazine Readers Poll. Still, most notable of Owens’s accomplishments are his performances on the 2010 GRAMMY award-winning Kurt Elling live album, *Dedicated to You*, and the 2012 GRAMMY award-winning Christian McBride Big Band album, *The Good Feeling*. His work with Joey Alexander, the Christian McBride Trio, and Gregory Porter have also received recognition by the Recording Academy, garnering GRAMMY nominations for the albums; *My Favorite Things*, *Countdown*, *Out Here* , *Live at the Village Vanguard*, *Nat King Cole and Me*.

At the heart of Owens’s work is a passion for creation and the desire to reach new audiences. On and off stage, music emanates from every inch of his being, and no performance goes unmarked by Owens’s signature smile. Owens is a gifted

bandleader, claiming five successful albums of his own (*It's Time for U, Unanimous, Onward and Upward, Falling Forward, Songs of Freedom.*) and four self-produced albums with the New Century Jazz Quintet (*Time is Now, In Case You Missed Us, Arise, and Soul Conversion*), a skillful group he co-leads with pianist Takeshi Ohbayashi in Japan. Owens's band-first philosophy ensures that all conversations with an audience remain fluid and focused, another stamp of his seasoned expertise and professional sophistication.

Amidst touring, Owens is regularly involved in special projects. In 2015, he served as Artist-in-Residence at the Park Avenue Armory Conservancy where he presented *Ulysses in 3*. This multi-disciplinary performance piece showcased the literary masterpiece *Ulysses* by James Joyce, the work of celebrated choreographer Ulysses Dove and Owens's own original compositions, weaved together through the mediums of music, dance, spoken word and visual art. That same year, Owens was commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Museum of Modern Art to compose a work for the Museum's Summer Garden Series. The final result was a seven-movement suite entitled *Stages of Us* reflecting on the African American experience.

A strong believer in community engagement, Owens has ardently supported cultural institutions. From 2012 to 2015, Owens served as the Jazz Vesper Series Artistic Director at the world-renowned Abyssinian Baptist Church. He was also appointed Artistic Music Curator for the legendary Minton's Playhouse, at the request of restaurateur Alexander Smalls, producing over 85 shows for the jazz club during its 2015 fall season.

Owens has also been making a name for himself in production circles, having accumulated over 40 producer credits in just a few short years. His production of Olivia Foschi's *Perennial Dreamer* was described by *JazzTimes* as "fresh, innovative, and refreshingly uplifting...appealing to a new generation of listeners, while still honoring jazz as a tradition." The Owens-produced Abiah album, *Life as A Ballad*, debuted at #20 on the Billboard charts, and his production of Candice Hoyes's album, *On a Turquoise Cloud*, was named one of the best albums of 2015 by SoulTrain.com. Co-producing, GRAMMY winning singer, Alicia Olatuja's albums "Timeless," and her most recent album "Intuition, Songs from the Minds of Women," having been released in February, 2019 and has been receiving rave reviews.

Owens's steadfast belief that "music is a universal language with the ability to heal the soul," coupled with his commitment to disseminating art, is encapsulated no greater than in his lifelong career educating music's next generation of leaders. Owen's C.V. includes positions at music schools across New York City and countless speaking engagements hosted domestically and abroad. In 2016, Owens was invited by Wynton Marsalis and Aaron Flagg of the Juilliard School's Jazz Studies Program,

Owens's alma mater, to join the institution's esteemed faculty as an instructor for small ensembles.

Despite spending the greater part of his calendar year on the road, Owens also remains tightly connected to his hometown of Jacksonville, Florida where his family founded Don't Miss a Beat, Inc., a non-profit organization empowering young people to dream big and give back to their communities through a blend of musical, artistic, academic, and civic engagement programming. As DMAB Artistic Director, Owens has created programs for over 200 children and teens annually, including a cross-cultural exchange that gives students the opportunity to experience art and culture abroad. Having had the fortune of dedicated mentors throughout his career, Owens's interest in investing in young people's education and self-esteem is a deeply personal cause and one essential to his vision of pushing art forward.

As an educator Owens' has delved into the realm of being the co-creator of his online jazz drum video course, "Finding Your Beat," distributed and produced by Open Studio Network, and has amassed thousands of subscribers globally that desire to learn more about his performance and teaching philosophy. He has most recently been asked by Hal Leonard Publishing company, to write his first book "Jazz Brushes for the Modern Drummer: An Essential Guide to the Art of Keeping Time," set for release by January 2020.

Owens' most recent album, "Songs of Freedom," features the music of Abbey Lincoln, Joni Mitchell, and Nina Simone; released by the Resilience Music Alliance record label. This album has been selected by JAZZIZ Magazine of one of 10 Jazz albums to listen to in March 2019. The album features bassist Rene Marie, Alicia Olatuja, and Theo Bleckmann as the featured vocalists, and David Rosenthal, Allyn Johnson and Reuben Rogers in the band.

Ulysses remains consistently in demand for new projects as an Artist, Producer, and Educator, remaining one of the most sought-after drummers and thought leaders of his generation. Yet what matters to him consistently is giving back and continuing to be grateful for a new day, to make a difference in the lives of others.