



JOEL ROSS
Vibraphonist | Blue Note Artist

Joel Ross continues refining an expression that's true to his sound and his generation. In 2019, the vibraphonist-composer issued his anticipated Blue Note debut, Edison Award-winning record *KingMaker* to eruptive critical acclaim, followed by his 2020 release *Who Are You?* which features his band Good Vibes at their most synchronous. *New York Times* critic Giovanni Russonello praised the album for the ways it "speaks to a new level of group cohesion...more tangle, more sharing, more possibility."

"Ross' playing erupts through the layers of lush arrangements like consistent currents of electricity, high-powered and full of luminous energy"

— *DownBeat*

Ross has topped the *DownBeat* Critics Poll Rising Star category for vibraphone — graduating beyond the Rising Star to well-honed artist in 2021 — as well as the Jazz Journalists Association Critics Poll for Mallet Instrumentalist of the Year in 2020 and 2021. He recently became one of the youngest artists to earn a coveted Residency Commission from The Jazz Gallery and a spot in The Jazz Gallery All Stars band through which he performed live at The Kennedy Center. In 2020, he received a Jazz Coalition Commission for *Praise in the Midst of The Storm*, a performance suite featuring Brandee Younger, Marquis Hill, Craig Weinrib, Dezron Douglas and longtime friend and collaborator Immanuel Wilkins, with whom he recently performed a three-night duo program live at The Village Vanguard as part of the storied venue's streaming series. In 2021, Ross enjoyed a residency at Roulette Intermedium for Jazzfest Berlin, premiering original work *She Walks in the Spirit* alongside Gabrielle Garo, Brandee Younger, Mimi Jones, Savannah Harris and Nappy Nina, and *4nette* alongside Immanuel Wilkins, Thomas Morgan and Craig Weinrib, in January and May, respectively. He has performed multiple residencies at Baby's All Right in Brooklyn.



“Particularly on his own compositions, Mr. Ross and the band treat rhythm as both fundamental and unfixed, while dousing the music in harmonies derived from modern gospel”

— *The New York Times*

Folkloric resonance incubates Ross’ artistry. Improvising melodies or composing at the piano, he leaves space for a theme to emerge and evolve, always inviting creative response. Nimble, virtuosic lines approximate speech. He often transitions among the roles of storyteller, protagonist and supporting character. Inspired by mentor Stefon Harris’ empathetic, whole-self approach to articulation, Ross has adopted an entire ethos dependent on truthful, ongoing communication. Honesty persists throughout his sets. And with each release, he reaffirms a commitment to authentic discourse.

The Parable of the Poet, Ross’ third release for Blue Note Records, explores feelings self-awareness — confidence, doubt, regret and forgiveness — through storytellings and retellings. Using collaborative improvising, collective melody and instrumental features, the intuitive band leader spotlights unique attributes of fellow artists Immanuel Wilkins, Maria Grand, Marquis Hill, Kalia Vandever, Sean Mason, Rick Rosato, Craig Weinrib and returning special guest Gabrielle Garo. *JazzTrail* praises the new gesture as “a frontline with four horns and a sharply focused rhythm section where piano and vibes coexist harmoniously together, [resulting] in glittering, polished surfaces that bring together emotion and devotion. Ross is a serious bandleader, and this album is a combination of his creativity, skill, and generosity.”

“He may have changed the vibes’ role within the comping realm...he’s developed a language where he’s able to play in between other people’s solos, with some landmarks, without normal comping chords — a motif way of comping”

— **Immanuel Wilkins**

A steadfast improviser, Ross saturates live sets with a lyrical intuition that’s equally grounded in melody and phrasing. He plays the moment. Rather than impose energies on the music, he allows moods to set, linger and transform. His style and approach embraces contributions from improvisers of all genders. In recent years, he’s engaged artists of similarly tenacious voices, including Makaya McCraven (*Universal Beings*, 2018), Maria Grand, Kassa Overall, Nicole Mitchell, Gerald Clayton, Melissa Aldana (*Visions*, 2019), Walter Smith III (*In Common*, 2018), Georgia Anne Muldrow, Jure Pukl (*Broken Circles*, 2019), Rajna Swaminathan, Wynton Marsalis & the Jazz at Lincoln



Center Orchestra, Gabrielle Garo, Joshua Redman, Kalia Vandever, Zakir Hussain, Brandee Younger, Zach Moses Ostroff, Savannah Harris, Marcus Gilmore, Mimi Jones, Rashaan Carter, Nappy Nina, Matt Brewer, Miho Hazama, Sergio Tabanico and Marquis Hill (Modern Flows Vol. 2, 2018), who penned liner notes for *Who Are You?*

“The bright future stretching before Ross has as much to do with that emotional expression as anything that happens between his mallets and those metal bars”

— NPR

Playing thoroughly in the broad, resonating tradition of Black music, Ross draws inspiration for his layered expression from vital, intersecting scenes of his native Chicago. Imbibing nuanced traditions from improvised music hubs to the church, he embraced a range of gestural possibilities he’d begin refining in New York. After graduating from University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, Ross pursued a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jazz Studies from The New School in downtown Manhattan. Now based in Brooklyn, he regularly performs across the country and around the world. As a leader, he’s appeared at such storied venues and iconic events as The Village Vanguard, Smalls Jazz Club, Umbria Jazz Festival, The Jazz Gallery, Winter Jazz Fest, Newport Jazz Festival, Dizzy’s Club, BRIC Jazz Festival, The Blue Whale, North Sea Jazz Festival, The Brubeck Institute, Kuumbwa Jazz Festival and Ekene Ijeoma’s Breathing Pavilion at The Plaza at 300 Ashland, among others. His most recent tour included dates at Triennale di Milano, Teatro dell’Arte and Teatro Ariston in Italy; Muziekgebouw Eindhoven, small hall, LUX Nijmegen, Lantaren Venster, Bimhuis, Rokit Festival and De Oosterpoort in The Netherlands; Ronnie Scott’s in London; Le Duc des Lombards in Paris; and Jazzclub Unterfahrt and Halle 424 in Germany, among other international venues. A highly sought collaborator, Ross has performed with equally dynamic leaders at Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Village Vanguard, SF Jazz, Duc des Lombards, Ronnie Scotts, Jazz Standard, Red Sea Jazz Festival, Frost Amphitheater at Stanford, Yoshi’s Oakland and California Jazz Conservatory.

During the pandemic, Ross began expanding his artistry to include creative positions away from the bandstand, including podcast appearances for Christian McBride’s “Live Wax” and Dave Douglas’ “A Noise from the Deep.” The Art Center at Duck Creek in East Hampton invited him to curate an entire performance program featuring original works from Joel Ross and Parables, Maria Grand and Patricia Brennan. In 2020, John Zorn tapped Ross for authorship contributions to the ninth installment of his theory



and practice *Arcana* series. In 2021, Ross joined the adjunct faculty at Manhattan School of Music and The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in New York City.

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