



SULLIVAN FORTNER
Pianist, Composer, Educator
www.sullivanfortnermusic.com

“An artist with his own distinct style”

— *The New York Times*

“His fundamentals as a player could hardly be stronger, and his instincts as a composer and bandleader are almost startlingly mature.”

— *The New York Times*

“Fortner’s ability to simultaneously project his own voice and reflect those of others reveals an empathy...”

— *DownBeat Magazine*

“A winning pick”

— *Jazz Weekly on Moments Preserved*

For the past decade, Sullivan Fortner has been stretching deep-rooted talents as a pianist, composer, band leader and uncompromising individualist. The GRAMMY Award-winning artist received international praise as both key player and producer for his collaborative work on *The Window* (Mack Avenue, 2018), alongside multi-GRAMMY winner, vocalist-composer Cecile McLorin Salvant. As a solo leader, he has released *Moments Preserved* (Decca, 2018) and *Aria* (Impulse!, 2015) to critical acclaim, and he’s only getting started. This past year, Fortner earned recognition in multiple *DownBeat* Critics Poll categories, winning first place in Rising Star Piano and Rising Star Jazz Artist.

In addition to associations with such diverse voices as Wynton Marsalis, Paul Simon, Diane Reeves, Etienne Charles and John Scofield, Fortner’s frequent and longtime collaborators have included Ambrose Akinmusire, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Stefon Harris, Kassa Overall, Tivon Pennicott, Pete Bernstein, Nicholas Payton, Billy Hart, Gary Bartz, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Fred Hersch and the recently departed Roy Hargrove. The highly-sought improviser has

performed across the country and throughout the world at such cultural institutions as Jazz at Lincoln Center, Jazz Standard, Smalls Jazz Club and New Orleans clubs??? as well as celebrated festivals, including at Newport, Monterey, Discover, Tri-C and Gillmore Keyboard, among others. In 2019, he brought his band to the historic Village Vanguard for a week-long engagement as a leader. Fortner's notable studio contributions include work on Etienne Charles's *Kaiso* (Culture Shock, 2011), Donald Harrison's *Quantum Leap* (FOMP, 2010), and Theo Croker's *The Fundamentals* (Left Sided Music, 2007).

Playing solo or leading an orchestra, Fortner engages harmony and rhythmic ideas through curiosity and clarity. Within phrases, he finds universes, and listeners often hear how he's moved by each note he explores. Coming up in New Orleans, Fortner began playing piano at age 7, following a storied lineage of improvisers, masters of time and every iteration of the blues. He earned his Bachelor of Music from Oberlin Conservatory and Master of Music in Jazz Performance from Manhattan School of Music (MSM). A champion of mentorship, Fortner has offered masterclasses at MSM, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), Purdue University, Lafayette Summer Music Workshop, Belmont University and Oberlin Conservatory where he held a faculty position.

Pulling distinct elements from different eras, Fortner's artistry preserves the tradition and evolves the sound. He seeks connections among different musical styles that are at once deeply soulful and wildly inventive. Both his works and his insights have been featured in culturally iconic publications, from *The New York Times* to [The Root](#). Accolades include 2015 winner of the Cole Porter Fellowship by the American Pianists Association, Leonore Annenberg Arts Fellowship and the 2016 Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists.

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