



GERALD CLAYTON
Blue Note Recording Artist
Yamaha Recording Artist
Pianist, Composer, Educator
www.Geraldclayton.com

Full-length bio

“A stunning pianist, a gifted composer”

— *DownBeat*

Gerald Clayton searches for honest expression in every note. With harmonic curiosity and critical awareness, he develops musical narratives that unfold as a result of both deliberate searching and chance uncovering. The six-time GRAMMY-nominated pianist and composer and recent Blue Note Artist formally began his musical journey at the prestigious Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA), where he received the 2002 Presidential Scholar of the Arts Award. Continuing his scholarly pursuits, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Piano Performance at USC’s Thornton School of Music under the instruction of piano icon Billy Childs, following a year of intensive study with NEA Jazz Master Kenny Barron at The Manhattan School of Music. Clayton won second place in the 2006 Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Piano Competition.

“A young star”

— *Giovanni Russonello, The New York Times*

Expansion has become part of Clayton’s artistic identity. His music is a celebration of inherent differences in musical perspectives that promote true artistic synergy. Inclusive sensibilities have allowed him to perform and record with such distinctive artists as Diana Krall, Roy Hargrove, Dianne Reeves, Terence Blanchard, John Scofield, Terri Lyne Carrington, Peter Bernstein, Ambrose Akinmusire, Gretchen Parlato, Ben Wendel, and the Clayton Brothers Quintet. Clayton also has enjoyed an extended association since early 2013, touring and recording with saxophone legend Charles Lloyd.

“Compelling and urgent”

— *WBGO’s Nate Chinen on Happening: Live at the Village Vanguard*

Clayton’s discography as a leader reflects his evolution as an artist. His debut recording, *Two Shade* (ArtistShare), earned a 2010 GRAMMY nomination for Best Improvised Jazz Solo for his arrangement of Cole Porter’s “All of You.” “Battle Circle,” his composition featured on The Clayton Brothers’ recording *The New Song and Dance* (ArtistShare), received a GRAMMY nomination for Best Jazz Instrumental Composition in 2011. He received 2012 and 2013 GRAMMY nominations for Best Jazz Instrumental Album for *Bond: The Paris Sessions* (Concord) and *Life Forum* (Concord), his second and third album releases. In 2021, Clayton earned nominations for Best Improvised Jazz Solo and Best Jazz Instrumental Album for his debut release on Blue Note Records *Happening: Live at the Village Vanguard*.

“A thoroughly enthralling album”

— *DownBeat on Happening: Live at the Village Vanguard*

Capturing the truth in each moment’s conception of sound comes naturally to Clayton. The son of beloved bass player and composer John Clayton, he enjoyed a familial apprenticeship from an early age. Clayton honors the legacy of his father and all his musical ancestors through a commitment to artistic exploration, innovation, and reinvention. A mentor himself, he engages students at all levels of development. Most recently, Monterey Jazz Festival Artistic Director Tim Jackson appointed Clayton Director of Next Generation Jazz Orchestra whose full-band rehearsals pivoted to Zoom during the pandemic. The prolific band leader also has served as Musical Director of the Monterey Jazz Festival On Tour, a project that featured his trio along with Ravi Coltrane, Nicholas Payton, Terence Blanchard and Raul Midón on guitar and vocals. In 2016-17, Clayton turned his imaginative curiosity toward uncovering the essence of the Piedmont Blues experience and expression in early 20th Century Durham. A Duke University commission, Clayton’s evening-length composition explores a mixed media performance engaging some of the most resonating voices in contemporary music. Piedmont Blues has appeared across the United States at Modlin Center for the Arts, Savannah Music Festival, Music Center at Strathmore, Sheen Center and Centrum’s Jazz Port Townsend.

“Clayton’s piano contributions, in their wild, free-spilling, lyrical aspiration, are consistently stunning”

— *JazzTimes*

Clayton expanded his fascination with mixed media in 2019 when he received a commission from Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) to compose a musical pendant for visual artist Charles White’s “5 Great American Negroes” mural. Seeking to bring race and racial tensions to the surface for his audiences, Clayton titled the quintet project *White Cities: A Musical Tribute to Charles White*. His intention for the piece is one of beauty and engagement as well as introspection and discomfort. Throughout the pandemic, Clayton has continued aligning his work with social inquiry and unrest and the fragmentation of progress. In January 2020, he began work on the critically acclaimed score for Sam Pollard’s award-winning documentary *MLK/FBI* which garnered international praise for its stark, honest handling of a subject matter that often receives incomplete treatment or outright erasure. The emotional resonance of Clayton’s score imbues the film with subtle, lingering moments of struggle and humanity, and helps capture a complex arc of an enduring subject.

“Clayton approaches...with pensive grace as he slowly unravels thick, striking chords”

— *DownBeat*

Clayton looks forward to continuing to populate an international tour schedule for his latest projects, as well as pursuing new musical and interdisciplinary concepts and collaborations. To keep up with Clayton’s tour schedule, visit his frequently updated calendar and follow his social channels.

Condensed bio

“A stunning pianist, a gifted composer”

— *DownBeat*

Gerald Clayton searches for honest expression in every note. The six-time GRAMMY-nominated pianist-composer and recent Blue Note Artist began formal studies at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Piano Performance at USC’s Thornton School of Music under the instruction of Billy Childs, following a year of intensive study with NEA Jazz Master Kenny Barron at The Manhattan School of Music. In 2006, Clayton won second place in the Monk Institute of Jazz Piano Competition.

Inclusive sensibilities have allowed Clayton to collaborate with such distinctive artists as Diana Krall, Roy Hargrove, Dianne Reeves, Terence Blanchard, John Scofield, Terri Lyne Carrington, Peter Bernstein, Ambrose Akinmusire, Gretchen Parlato, Ben Wendel, the Clayton Brothers Quintet and legendary band leader Charles Lloyd. He currently serves as Director of Next Generation Jazz Orchestra and has served as Musical Director for Monterey Jazz Festival On Tour.

Over the years, Clayton’s playing and original works have received GRAMMY recognition for Best Improvised Jazz Solo, Best Jazz Instrumental Composition and Best Jazz Instrumental Album — a nomination he earned most recently for his debut release on Blue Note Records *Happening: Live at the Village Vanguard*.

Clayton honors the legacy of his father, bassist-composer John Clayton, and all his musical ancestors through a commitment to exploration and honesty. In 2016, he attempted to render the Piedmont Blues experience and expression in early 20th Century Durham. A Duke University commission, Clayton’s evening-length composition *Piedmont Blues* features a mixed media performance of critical acclaim. In 2019, he received a commission from Los Angeles County Museum of Art to compose a musical pendant for artist Charles White’s “5 Great American Negroes” mural. Seeking to spotlight race and racial tensions, Clayton titled the project *White Cities: A Musical Tribute to Charles White*. In January 2020, he began work on the critically-acclaimed score for Sam Pollard’s award-winning documentary *MLK/FBI*. The emotional resonance of Clayton’s score imbues the film with subtle, lingering moments of struggle and humanity, and helps capture a complex arc of an enduring subject.

Micro-bio

Six-time GRAMMY-nominated pianist, composer and band leader Gerald Clayton earned recent Recording Academy recognition for *Happening: Live at the Village Vanguard*, his debut release on Blue Note Records. Collaborating over the years with such distinctive artists as Diana Krall, Roy Hargrove, Dianne Reeves, Terence Blanchard, John Scofield, Terri Lyne Carrington, Peter Bernstein, Ambrose Akinmusire, Gretchen Parlato, Ben Wendel, the Clayton Brothers Quintet and legendary band leader Charles Lloyd, Clayton currently serves as Director of Next Generation Jazz Orchestra following service as Musical Director for Monterey Jazz Festival On Tour.

Under the instruction of Billy Childs, Clayton earned a Bachelor of Arts in Piano Performance at USC's Thornton School of Music following a year of intensive study with Kenny Barron at The Manhattan School of Music. Clayton's creative spirit honors the legacy of his father, bassist-composer John Clayton. In 2016, he received a Duke University commission to render the Piedmont Blues experience in early 20th Century Durham; *Piedmont Blues* features a mixed media performance of critical acclaim. In 2019, he received a commission from LACMA to compose a musical pendant for artist Charles White's "5 Great American Negroes" mural; Clayton titled the project *White Cities: A Musical Tribute to Charles White*. In January 2020, he began work on the critically-acclaimed score for Sam Pollard's award-winning documentary *MLK/FBI*. The emotional resonance of Clayton's score imbues the film with subtle, lingering moments of struggle and humanity, and helps capture a complex arc of an enduring subject.

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