

Wray Downes

Wray Downes began twelve years of study with Anne Scott-Mumford in Toronto when he was seven years old. In 1949, he became the first Canadian to receive the British Empire (Overseas) Scholarship to the Trinity College of Music, London. He studied there with Kinloch Anderson and at the Paris Conservatory with Lazare Lévy and Henri Lauth. Turning to jazz in 1953, Downes studied harmony with **Dizzy Gillespie** and piano with **Mary Lou Williams**. He worked until 1956 in Europe with such leading US musicians as **Sidney Bechet, Buck Clayton, and Bill Coleman**. He later studied piano with **Oscar Peterson** and composition with **Neil Chotem** in Montréal, and attended Peterson's Advanced School of Contemporary Music in Toronto. His forceful, vigorously physical style allies to the Peterson influence a strong grounding in bebop and a deep feeling for the blues.

Back in Canada, Downes' career was interrupted by several periods in which he chose to work outside of music. He played 1956-8 and intermittently during the 1980s in Montréal clubs, and in 1990 began teaching at Concordia University. He was otherwise based in Toronto, save for CBC TV or hotel and nightclub assignments as music director in Halifax ("Music Hop," 1965-6), St. John's and other Newfoundland centres, and Ottawa (*Segue*, 1969). In Toronto he was music director 1966-8 in turn for CBC TV's *Show of Shows* and "Umbrella."

Wray Downes also worked extensively with Peter Appleyard, and served as a sideman to US jazz musicians at the Town Tavern (1960s), Bourbon Street (1970s, 1980s) and elsewhere. In the latter capacity he accompanied **Roy Eldridge, Coleman Hawkins, Buddy Tate, Clark Terry, Eddie (Cleanhead) Vinson, Lester Young, and Ben Webster**. He toured in the US with Terry in 1980. Downes' duo with bassist **Dave Young**, established in 1976, toured Canada several times; it was augmented on occasion by other musicians - e.g., (guitarists) **Ed Bickert** or **Reg Schwager**. Downes has also worked over the years with the **Archie Alleyne -Frank Wright Quartet, Moe Koffman, drummer Pete Magadini, and Don Thompson**.

In January, 2018, Wray Downes signed with Lunched Management and a new recording as leader is now in production with bassist **Adrian Vedady** and drummer **Jim Doxas**, for release in 2019. He performed with his trio at the Festival International de Jazz de Montreal at the Maison Symphonique on June 30, 2018, to great acclaim.

Selected Discography

Au Privave. Bickert guitar, Young double-bass. 1978-9. Sack 4003

Coleman Jazz à Pleyel. 1952. Phillips N76.006R

Magadini Bones Blues. 1977. Sack 4004

Tate *The Buddy Tate Quartet*. Also Young double-bass, Magadini drums. 1978. Sack 3027

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