

SERIOUS

Jason Yarde Biography

Composer, arranger, producer, musical director and saxophonist Jason Yarde writes music that has been described as powerful, spiritual, evocative, rhapsodic, hair-raising and formidable. He composes across a variety of styles (progressive jazz, classical, hip-hop fusion, free improvisation, broken beats, R&B, reggae, soul, song writing) and for a variety of media (orchestras, chamber ensembles, big band, dance, film). His potential and originality is such that he has been nominated for the Bird Award at the North Sea Jazz Festival and the Jazz on 3 Innovation Award for the BBC Jazz Awards. He also won the inaugural award for Contemporary Jazz Composition at the 2009 British Composer Awards and in 2010 was the recipient of a prestigious Paul Hamlyn Award for Composers.

Jason Yarde began playing alto and soprano saxophones with the Jazz Warriors while still a teenager and then went on to MD this landmark orchestra and became one of the principal writers. He has a BA (Hons) in Performance Arts from Middlesex University - a degree that incorporated a year at William Paterson College in New Jersey where he studied orchestration, studio engineering, jazz performance and saxophone under Joe Lovano, Gary Smulyan and Steve Wilson. In 2006 Yarde participated in the London Symphony Orchestra's Discovery Panufnik Young Composers Scheme, which is designed to facilitate the development of orchestral writing for talented young composers, and in 2007 he was an LSO Sound Adventures Artist.

As well as composing for his own performance projects (MY Duo, Trio WAH and Acoustic Bombastic), Yarde has written for dance (JazzX-Change Music & Dance Company, Phoenix Dance Company and Jonzi-D Productions), music theatre (Jonzi-D's *Aeroplane Man*), opera (*Tête à Tête*) and TV. Highlights include the original music for *Rough Crossings*, a drama-documentary based on the Simon Schama book of the same name (BBC2); for director/choreographer Alison Murray's *Pantyhead* (C4); *Horseplay* (D4C/BBC2); and *Teenage Rampage* (C4). He is also active in the contemporary UK urban scene and writes music and lyrics for artists such as Julie Dexter and Mercury Music Prize nominees, Terri Walker and the rapper Ty. Current projects include the release of *Places & Other Spaces* (out on Edition Records on 3 October 2011), his second CD with pianist Andrew McCormack, and live work with this duo across the UK. In addition, Yarde is currently composing *Skip, Dash, Flow*, a specially commissioned 12 minute New Music 20x12 piece for next year's Cultural Olympiad. This will be performed with Welsh band Wonderbrass, with support from the PRS for Music Foundation, the BBC, The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, and Sound and Music.

Yarde is very active as a player on the UK and European jazz scenes and has appeared in the big bands of Sam Rivers, Hermeto Pascoal, McCoy Tyner, Manu Dibango Roy Ayers, Charlie Haden and Andrew Hill. He also plays in a number of projects led by US drummer Jack DeJohnette.

In 2008 Yarde premiered two new works at the BBC Proms. The first was an orchestral arrangement of Gershwin's *My Man's Gone* from *Porgy & Bess* and the second was a new work called *Rhythm & Other Fascinations* for the BBC Concert Orchestra and Gwilym Simcock Trio. Other recent works are *Soliloquies of Solace*, a piece for solo cello and electronics for Oxford Contemporary Music; *Reflections in Reverence and Remembrance*, a suite of work for the great South African mezzo Sibongile Khumalo for the 2009 Bath International Music Festival; and *Four Letter Words for Four Letters Heard* for the Voice of the North

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Jazz Orchestra. Other compositions include *Where will it take you?*, an ensemble piece with solo voice for SoundJunction (an internet and CD-ROM based resource for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music); *Blown from the Black Flag* – a Jerwood Wapping Commission; *Random Wishes & Abstract Dreams*, the Jerwood Rising Star commission for Cheltenham Jazz Festival; *All Sea All Earth – Who Knows Man's Worth?* with didgeridoo virtuoso Mark Atkins for Echoes of Freedom, a festival celebrating 150 years of democracy in Australia; *Breaking Out: Music at the Tower*, a workshop, performance and installation project with David Okumu at the Tower of London; *I Choose to Sing*, a choral work commissioned by Solid Harmony Youth Choir; *Who Knows The Beauty?*, a commission from Britten Sinfonia for alto saxophone, piano and string quintet; *Rude Awakening!*, a commission for the LSO; *A Midnight Dream of Summer* for recorder virtuoso Genevieve Lacey; *Some time after*, a new work inspired by Thelonious Monk's *Round Midnight* for Kronos Quartet; and *All Souls Seek Joy*, a concerto for South African jazz legend Hugh Masekela and the London Symphony Orchestra which premiered – alongside his arrangements of a dozen South African hits – at the Barbican Hall and had a subsequent outing in Birmingham with the CBSO in 2010.

Jason Yarde is a brilliant musical director and his highly distinctive arranging style reflects the numerous artists and ensembles that have shaped his wide musical outlook. He has arranged for Keziah Jones, Bembe Segue, Return To Roots Orchestra (South Africa), Two Banks of Four, 4-Hero, Gregory Isaacs, Alton Ellis, Dennis Brown, King Sounds, Super Blue, Shadow and Manu Dibango. He has provided orchestrations for a celebrated collaboration between Aboriginal musical force Black Arm Band and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, as well as for Hugh Masekela in collaboration with Jazz Jamaica All Stars and with the London Symphony Orchestra and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Other work in this area includes the critically acclaimed *Future Sounds of Jazz* project, which featured many of the leading lights of the British jazz scene, such as Soweto Kinch, David Okumu and Matthew Bourne, and a collaboration with Grime producer DaVinChe on the arrangements for the groundbreaking *Urban Classic*, a project which featured some of the UK's most exciting Grime artists and the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Charles Hazlewood.

In addition to composing, arranging and performing, Jason Yarde has enjoyed much success as a record producer. In 2009 he produced *MY Duo* (Andrew McCormack & Jason Yarde), the first release on his own label Joy & Ears, as well as Empirical's new album, *Out 'n' In* (Naim Label). In 2007 he produced *Perception*, the debut CD by UK jazz pianist Gwilym Simcock (Basho Records) and for many years enjoyed the role of foremost producer at UK independent jazz label Dune Records where he was responsible for *Tomorrow's Warriors presents... J-Life*, Jazz Jamaica All Stars's *Massive*, Robert Mitchell's *Voyager*, Juliet Roberts' *Beneath The Surface*, Denys Baptiste's *Let Freedom Ring!*, Soweto Kinch's *Conversations With The Unseen* (which was nominated for a Mercury Music Award) and *Jazz Warrior*, the debut recording by trumpeter Abram Wilson.

For more information:

www.joyandears.com

www.editionrecords.com/artists/mccormack-yarde-duo

www.myduomusic.com

www.myspace.com/jasonyarde

www.serious.org.uk/artists/jason-yarde