

Mike Freeman ZonaVibe

MUSICIAN * COMPOSER * BANDLEADER * RECORDING * ARTIST
ARRANGER * EDUCATOR * PRODUCER

The vibesman behind many notable musicians and groups, Mike Freeman brews up a heady blend of musical elements. Richly melodic and rhythmically intense, this fiery mix fuels spirited interplay among the group's top-notch musicians. From North America and Europe, to the Azores, Caribbean, and South America, his music ignites audiences at festivals, concert halls, colleges and clubs. Strong writing skills, a thoroughly developed jazz background, and a dynamic performing style underscore Mike's performances.

High-profile shows for Mike as a leader include the Trinidad & Tobago Steelpan & Jazz Festival; Festival Internacional (Terciera, Azores); Central Park's Harlem Meer concert series in New York City; and First Night celebrations. Other past performance highlights and endeavors include producing Band Together, a Hurricane Katrina Benefit Concert for Tipitinas Foundation benefiting New Orleans-area musicians and the Humane Society; the Flood Relief Concert in Des Moines, Iowa; Joslyn Art Museum's Jazz on the Green in Omaha, NE; the Berks, Rehoboth Beach, Hennessy Greenwich Village, and JVC Newport (at Saratoga) jazz festivals as well as an extensive tour of Portugal, cosponsored by the Fulbright Foundation and the American Embassy.

His recordings of original music (ranging from jazz, Latinjazz, Brazilian, fusion, and R&B) have gained national and international attention along with broad radio airplay charting on jazz, contemporary jazz, and World music radio. Mike Freeman & Spellbound's 1985 self-titled debut recording was followed by the highly successful "Street Shuffle" with Jeff Jenkins, Dave Stryker, Kip Reed, and Graham Hawthorne (now with Paul Simon). His next recording "Wiggle Stomp" reflects a deeper immersion in the Latin music scene that began in the mid-1990s. "In the Zone" takes that exploration further, displaying the range of his marimba playing—along with the vibes—and his artistry and knowledge of bringing salsa forms into a jazz context.

In addition to leading his own groups, Mike performs and records with Lucho Cueto's all-star group Black Sugar, which gave blockbuster performances for thousands of fans at the Toros Y Salsa Festival in Dax, France, and at the Festival Internacional de Salsa in Lima, Peru. The vibes behind the name, Mike has worked extensively with acclaimed percussionist Ray Mantilla's Good Vibrations Band (with Edy Martinez), which has toured Italy far and wide. "Good Vibrations" (Savant Records) was Jazzweek's top Latinjazz recording on radio, 2006. Mike is currently in production on a co-led recording project with salsa singer Julio Salgado (from the Conga Kings) and frequently works with Son Boricua (with Jose Mangual Jr. and Jimmy Sabater), which performed for large gatherings at Salsa Congresses in New York, L.A., and Atlanta. His vibe work can also be heard with Mark Holen's eclectic Latin blues band Zambomba. He performed for the Latin Legends concert at Aaron Davis Hall with the Harbor Conservatory Latin Band (directed by Louis Bauzó), and with the Spanish Harlem Orchestra (directed by Oscar Hernandez) and legendary sonero Cheo Feliciano at Madison Square Garden.

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Master classes and arranging: New York University and the Berklee College of Music, among others, have hosted Mike as a guest artist/clinician. His music arranged for big band has been a successful component of his performances with jazz department ensembles. Mike created the book for Jorge Jimenez's group Timba Vibes and wrote a series (spanning several years) of commissioned compositions and arrangements for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Percussion Scholarship Program.

Music in the family: Mike's grandfather was a drummer and leader of Ron Freeman and the Melody Masters, a popular band that was heard on the radio in the Midwest. Neal Hefti played in his band before becoming famous in California. Mike's paternal grandmother sang and played the organ and marimba. His maternal grandmother was a talented piano player in her youth. Mike's father, Harry Freeman, worked his way through college playing the saxophone.

Born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, Mike Freeman began playing professionally at the age of thirteen. He started learning drums at five and became interested in jazz music by listening to drummers Max Roach and Buddy Rich. He played in local rock bands and a big band called Resurrected Swing that's still in existence today. At twelve, he began playing the vibraphone, and by fifteen, he was a percussionist for the Omaha Symphony. He also gave lessons at the local music store. During his last year of high school, he began traveling to Chicago to study with renowned percussionist and veteran studio musician Bobby Christian. Just before entering the School of Music at DePaul University in Chicago, Mike started to concentrate on the vibraphone and composition. In college, he began leading his own groups, performing at clubs, both in Chicago and Omaha, and working as a side musician. At DePaul, he studied with jazz pianist Alan Swain and saxophonist Tom Hilliard, and received a Bachelor of Music (composition) with high honors in 1981. In New York, where he's lived and worked since 1981, Mike studied with composer/arranger Hale Rood, who wrote for Louie Bellson, and attended the BMI composers workshop.

**ZonaVibe is “...an intoxicating Latin Jazz gem”
—*Latin Jazz Corner***

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RECORDINGS AS LEADER

Mike Freeman ZonaVibe - *In The Zone*
(VOF recordings, 2007)

Added to the playlist of over 230 radio stations, 16 weeks on Jazzweek's World Music radio chart; aired on nationally syndicated Jazz After Hours and Cable-Music Choice; airplay also in Canada, Italy, Portugal, Australia, and South America

Mike Freeman - *Wiggle Stomp* (VOF recordings)

Charted on Gavin's jazz radio chart; aired on nationally syndicated Jazz After Hours. Heard on the "Joey Reynolds Show," WOR-AM radio network

Mike Freeman & Spellbound® - *Street Shuffle*
(Best Recordings)

Major U.S. distribution; Heard on over 200 radio stations; Charted Nationally: Gavin Jazz Chart, Gavin Adult Alternative Chart; Radio & Records chart; MAC Report chart; Aired on David Sanborn's nationally syndicated radio show; United Airlines in-flight playlist

Mike Freeman & Spellbound, debut recording

Performs and records with

- ★ Ray Mantilla's Good Vibrations Band
- ★ Lucho Cueto's Black Sugar
- ★ Son Boricua (with Jose Mangual Jr. and Jimmy Sabater)
- ★ Mark Holen's Zambomba
- ★ Julio Salgado

Studio sessions for

Kirsten Thien, *The Manhattan Transfer Swing*, Atlantic Records; Don Sebesky *Foxwoods, The Wonder of It All*, featuring John Pizzarelli Jr; Broadway stars Stephanie Pope, *Now's the Time to Fall in Love*, and Capathia Jenkins with Lou Rosen, *South Side Stories*; and Hale Rood among others.

Commissioned arrangements and compositions for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Percussion Scholarship Program.

Performed at Aaron Davis Hall, New York City, for the Latin Legends Tribute Concert with the Harbor Conservatory Latin Band and musical director Louis Bauzó; Weill Hall, New York City, for Kathleen Landis with Bob Parsons and Eddie Henderson; **Madison Square Garden** with the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, directed by Oscar Hernandez, and legendary sonero Cheo Feliciano.

Freelance musician and band leader in New York City since 1981

- ♦ Commissioned composer
- ♦ Producer
- ♦ Artist/Clinician Balter Mallets and formerly Musser Instrument Company

Clinics/Masterclasses/Residencies include

- ♦ New York University
- ♦ Berklee College of Music, MA
- ♦ Ithaca College, NY

Concerts as leader include

- ▶ Trinidad & Tobago Steelpan & Jazz Festival
- ▶ Festival Internacional, Terceira, Azores
- ▶ First Night Celebrations (numerous)
- ▶ IAJE International Convention, Atlanta
- ▶ Rehoboth Beach, DE, Jazz Festival
- ▶ Berks Jazz Festival
- ▶ JVC Newport Jazz Festival
- ▶ Hennessy Greenwich Village Jazz Festival
- ▶ NJ State Aquarium's Jazzin' the Deep Festival
- ▶ Penn Sate University tour
- ▶ Toured Portugal on grants from the Fulbright Foundation and the American Embassy