

# Mike Freeman

Musician \* Composer \* Bandleader \* Recording Artist \* Arranger \* Educator \* Producer

Vibraphonist and composer **Mike Freeman** has been a part of the New York jazz and Latin music scene for over three decades. Dan McClaneghan of Allaboutjazz described him as "masterful" and ranked among other top names of the instrument. With spirited soulful swing, Freeman's performances have taken him from North America and Europe to the Azores, Caribbean, and South America. His seven recordings of original music have gained national and international attention with extensive radio airplay charting on jazz, contemporary jazz, and World Music radio. "Blue Tjade," a tip of the hat to Cal Tjader, followed by "Venetian Blinds," with music for El Rey Tito Puente and NEA Jazz Master Bobby Hutcherson, are the latest in a line of clave-infused recordings Mike has produced.

**A 2019 Lower Manhattan Cultural Council grant recipient** Mike produced the two concert series "Latin Music In Hell's Kitchen, A History" with guest legends Ray Mantilla and Jose Mangual Jr. performing at the Times Center. He's also produced two Band Together benefit concerts. One for musicians affected by hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria (Puerto Rico in particular) with proceeds going to the Jazz Foundation of America and the other after Hurricane Katrina, benefitting the Tipitinas Foundation and New Orleans-area musicians.

**Performance highlights** for Freeman as a leader include the Fox Jazz Festival and Riverfront Jazz Festival in WI; the Trinidad & Tobago Steelpan & Jazz Festival; Festival Internacional, Tercera, Azores; Central Park's Harlem Meer concert series in New York City; performing for Flood Relief in Des Moines, IA; Jazz on the Green in Omaha, NE; the Berks, Rehoboth Beach, Hennessy Greenwich Village, and JVC Newport (at Saratoga) jazz festivals; the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE) convention, and an extensive tour of Portugal, cosponsored by the Fulbright Foundation and the American Embassy (USIA), where he received the Medal of the City of Guarda.

**Mike is also known** for his work and recordings with several acclaimed Latin groups. The vibes behind the name, he's worked extensively with legendary percussionist Ray Mantilla's Good Vibrations Band, touring much of Italy. "Good Vibrations," Savant Records, was Jazzweek's top Latinjazz recording on radio in 2006. Mike is featured with Ray's Tres Amigos and also appears on his latest CD "High Voltage," Savant. He was part of Lucho Cueto's all-star group Black Sugar, "Estamos Azucar," which gave blockbuster performances for thousands at the Toros Y Salsa Festival in Dax, France, and at the Festival Internacional de Salsa in Lima, Peru. For fifteen years he's been a member of Jose Mangual Jr.'s Son Boricua featuring the late Jimmy Sabater (one of the architects of Boogaloo) that performed for large gatherings at salsa congresses in New York, L.A., and Atlanta. His vibe work can also be heard on recordings with Mark Holen's eclectic Latin blues band Zambomba. In the 1990s he created the book for, and performed with, Jorge Jimenez's salsa group Timba Vibes. This was followed by a fifteen-year association with salsa singer Julio Salgado. He performed with the Spanish Harlem Orchestra (directed by Oscar Hernandez) at Madison Square Garden and with Willie Villegas's Joe Cuba Sextet for New Jersey's salsa congress, both with legendary sonero Cheo Feliciano.

**Other endeavors** include writing a decade-long series of commissioned compositions and arrangements for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Percussion Scholarship Program and in 2014 was commissioned by the late drummer/educator Ed Uribe to write arrangements for a national percussion curriculum for China that were performed by members of the Shanghai Symphony at Shanghai Symphony Hall.

**Born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska,** Mike Freeman started learning drums at age five and began playing professionally at age thirteen. At twelve, he began playing the vibraphone, and by fifteen, he was a percussionist for the Omaha Symphony under conductor Thomas Briccetti. During his last year of high school, he began traveling to Chicago to study with renowned percussionist and veteran studio musician Bobby Christian. He graduated DePaul University with a Bachelor of Music in composition with high honors in 1981. In New York, where he's lived and worked since, he studied with composer/arranger Hale Rood (who wrote for Louie Bellson).

**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 and clarinet.

[Mike endorses Mike Balter Mallets](#)

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## SEVEN RECORDINGS AS LEADER

Mike's recordings of original music, from 1985 to 2018, include tributes to Tito Puente, Bobby Hutcherson, and Cal Tjader. His recordings have appeared on numerous radio charts, syndicated radio programs (WOR radio network, Jazz after Hours, David Sanborn, Music Choice, United Airlines), received outstanding reviews, have been both Grammy and Latin Grammy entries.

## 2019 LOWER MANHATTAN CULTURAL COUNCIL GRANT RECIPIENT

Mike produced the two concert series *Latin Music In Hell's Kitchen*, *A History* with guest legends Ray Mantilla and Jose Mangual Jr. performing at the Times Center, NYC.

## CONCERTS AS LEADER

- ▶ Fox Jazz Festival
- ▶ Riverfront Jazz Festival
- ▶ Harlem Meer, Central Park, NYC
- ▶ Trinidad & Tobago Steelpan & Jazz Festival
- ▶ Festival Internacional, Terceira, Azores
- ▶ Jazz on the Green, Omaha
- ▶ First Night Celebrations (various cities)
- ▶ 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 (USIA)

## Groups:

- ★ Mike Freeman ZonaVibe
- ★ Mike Freeman Vibe Caliente
- ★ Mike Freeman & Spellbound®

## Associated groups:

- ★ Ray Mantilla Good Vibrations Band
- ★ Lucho Cueto (Allstar) Black Sugar
- ★ Son Boricua w Jose Mangual Jr. , Jimmy Sabater
- ★ Mark Holen Zambomba
- ★ Julio Salgado
- ★ Willie Villegas' Joe Cuba Sextet
- ★ Timba Vibes

**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.

**Performed** with the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, directed by Oscar Hernandez at Madison Square Garden, and Willie Villegas Joe Cuba Sextet at NJ Salsa Congress both with legendary sonero Cheo Feliciano; Latin Legends Tribute Concert at Aaron Davis Hall with Louis Bauzó; Cuban Fantasy at Weill Hall with Kathleen Landis

## Based in New York City since 1981

†Artist/Clinician Balter Mallets and formerly Musser Instrument Company

**Commissioned arrangements and compositions** for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Percussion Scholarship Program (for over a decade) and for a national percussion curriculum for China 2014

**Produced two Band Together benefit concerts** for musicians. One following hurricane Katrina for the Tipitina's Foundation and the other after hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria for the Jazz Foundation of America.

## Clinics/Masterclasses/Residencies

Florida International University, New York University, Berklee College of Music, MA, Ithaca College, NY

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