

IF YOU BELIEVE - BIOS (in alphabetical order)



ROBIN CLAXTON

Robin Claxton www.robinclaxton.com

Robin is a freelance drummer based out of Toronto. He graduated from the University of Toronto, with a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Performance where he studied with legendary Canadian jazz drummer Terry Clarke. Through his studies and performances with a wide variety of ensembles, Robin has become an extremely versatile musician, with tremendous fluidity in all genres of music. Robin has performed with iconic music figures such as JP Saxe, Kira Isabella, Matt Dusk, Louis Pitre, and many others. He has recorded on numerous albums and is the touring drummer for award winning Canadian blues vocalist icon; Shakura S'Aida.



THOMAS FRANCIS

Thomas Francis is one of Toronto's leading pianists and is well-known for his extensive background in jazz and soul-based musics. He can be seen working in a variety of genres such Pop music with Dan Talevski, Jazz with Kellylee Evans, Country music with Emily Reid or The Reklaws, or R&B/Soul with Elise LeGrow. He completed his diploma in Jazz Performance at Humber College, and Bachelor of Fine Arts at York University. Most recently, he completed his Masters in Composition at York where his work focused on the relationship between Jazz and Hip-Hop musics.

Thomas Francis is one of Toronto's leading pianists and is well-known for his extensive background in jazz and soul-based musics. Thomas played with Canadian artists such as Juno award-winning music icon and Jazz vocalist Kellylee Evans, Alexis Baro (Juno nominated Jazz artist), Dan Talevski (MMVA nominated), Melanie Durrant (Juno nominated R&B artist), KC Roberts & The Live Revolution (Toronto Funk band), The Reklaws (CCMA-winning country duo), George St. Kitts (Juno nominated Toronto Soul icon), and many more. Thomas completed his diploma in Jazz Performance at Humber College, and Bachelor of Fine Arts at York University. In 2017, he completed his Masters in Composition at York where his work focused on the relationship between Jazz and Hip-Hop histories and musics, works that were awarded

grants such as the 2019 Special Projects grant by the Toronto Jazz Festival, the 2021 Ontario Arts Council, and a new breadth course he created titled “Hip Hop: A Study of Blackness.” Additionally, he is well-known for his musicianship skills in writing and arranging for strings, having established his own contemporary string ensemble, The Four Strings. Thomas is the host of “The Jazz Gene”, a weekly one-hour show on Toronto’s online Jazz radio platform, Jazzcast.ca. Thomas has spent the last five years working as a Professor of Music at Centennial College and has joined Humber College’s music program as a full-time faculty member. Thomas’ band members this evening are JT Kim, bass and Robin Claxton, drums.



DARRYL JOSEPH-DENNIE

Born October 5th, 1989, Darryl showed interest in music at a very early age. By the time he was three years old, he had already taught himself how to play all of the demos on the family's keyboard at home and was attempting to teach other family members how to do so as well.

At 4 years of age, Darryl embarked on a 13 year journey of studying classical, jazz and theory at the renowned Merriam School of Music, where he is now currently positioned as a music education specialist. During those 13 years, Darryl was accepted into Merriam's Keyboard Ensemble and Enriched programs for students showing exceptional potential. Darryl also participated in numerous Festivals and competitions winning multiple first place awards and scholarships.

After attending Humber College for Jazz and Contemporary music in Toronto, Darryl then furthered his musical development by joining the music ministry at a local church. It was there that he learned how to fuse the precision of classical, the harmony of jazz and the functionality of gospel music to create his own unique voice on the piano. Darryl, later, spent four years as the lead pianist for The Church on the Queensway's Christmas and Easter musicals which also included a run of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.

In 2016, Darryl headlined the Toronto Beaches Jazz festival's opening night as part of the band Really Big World (formerly 7Sould). In 2017, Darryl performed and recorded with Designer during Spotify's I'm With the Banned sessions. In 2019, Darryl Toured Trinidad and Tobago for the international Carifesta Festival.

Darryl also operates as the producer, music director, arranger and keyboardist for various churches and groups within the GTA including JUNO award winner; Carlos Morgan and Vocal coach for The Launch, Lorraine Lawson.



GERMAINE KONJI

Germaine Konji (she/they) is a Kenyan-Canadian actor, singer, writer and activist. Her artistry lives where the theatrical, cultural, and political intersect. They're co-founder of The And, Stage Company, a not-for-profit creating opportunities for women and members of the trans community.

Training: 2020 graduate, Sheridan Music Theatre Performance Program **Awards:** 2020 Musical Stage Company Banks Prize, 2020 Outstanding Contribution to the Canadian Music Theatre Project-Sheridan College, 2019 Highest

Achievement in Acting Performance-Sheridan College, **Writing credits:** *After the Reckoning*, Centaur theatre 2020. *The Rising*, 2021 Confederation Centre of the Arts Young Company, *The Lobster Who Cried Person*, Bad Hats Theatre 2021, *The Smearing of Silent Blood*, Stratford Festival- Finally There's Sun



BEN MACDONALD

Ben MacDonald is a professional musician based in Toronto. Plays tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute, piano, and sings. Plays freelance and ongoing in jazz bands, wedding bands, African bands, reggae bands, sings in professional and community choirs including the Nathaniel Dett Chorale (Afrocentric chorale based in Toronto), and tenor lead at St. Paul's Bloor Street, and First Unitarian Congregation. Has played and sung in studio in many capacities including Yuka, Nhapi Thapi (Zimbabwean group), Nathaniel Dett Chorale.



CARLOS MORGAN

Solroc Music recording artist **Carlos Morgan**; a multi award winning talented singer, songwriter, vocalist and producer is poised to break out on a global level.

“Feelin’ Alright”, Morgan’s debut album, showcased the diversity of Morgan’s sultry singing style with seductive ballads like **“Forever For You”** and **“When Two Become One”** to the upbeat R&B tracks **“Give It To You”** and **“Baby C’Mon”**. Originally recorded as an independent release for **DTone Records**, it quickly became one of Canada’s hottest selling independent albums. **“Feeling Alright”** topped the charts at #3 on **“The Records Independent Charts”** after two weeks of releasing.

Morgan’s sophomore CD, **“The Compilation”**, which was released on his own label, **Solroc Music**, showcases not only Morgan’s vocal diversity but also his maturity as a singer, songwriter, vocalist and producer.

“Feelin’ Alright” went on to garner the **Juno Award**, **2x Canadian Urban Music Award**, **MuchMusic Video Award**, **SOCAN Music Award**, **2x Canadian Who’s Who** and **2x Caribbean Cultural Committee Award Recipient**.

Morgan was inducted into the **“2001 & 2002 Canadian Who’s Who”**. Individuals are inducted into the Who’s Who publication based on their contribution to life in Canada.

In 2013, Morgan won first place for the **“John Lennon “Gots 2 Luv U” Songwriting Contest”**.

In 2014, Morgan’s album, **“The Compilation”** garnered the **“Best Male R&B Artist”** and the **“Role Model Certificate of Recognition” @ The “2014 Black Canadian Awards”**.

In 2015, Morgan won the **“Best R&B/Soul Song & Video” @ The “2015 Akademia Music Awards”** for his song, **“Just Jane”**

In 2016, Morgan received the **“Gold Medal Male Vocalist Award”** from **“The Global Music Awards”** for his song, **“Sweet As You Are”**.

In 2017, Morgan was honored with the **“Myseum Music Award”** by the **City of Toronto** for his musical contributions to Toronto.

Morgan recorded and released his rendition of the classic Pop song, **“Sunglasses At Night”**.

Produced by Morgan, he infuses high energy production and his signature vocal stylings to this classic song. After hearing Morgan’s rendition of his song, the songwriter and original recording artist, Corey Hart, is quoted, *“Nice version. I like the way you do the choruses. I’m flattered with your cover”*.

“Sunglasses At Night” has a personal message for me”, Morgan states. Throughout my life, I’ve been running and hiding from personal truth, responsibility and accountability, masquerading for acceptance, deceiving myself and others, perpetuating my insecurities and always being on the

run. For me, this song highlights that we may run and hide from others but we can't run and hide from ourselves". – Carlos Morgan

Morgan's latest release; the passionate, sensual and erotic Portuguese Spoken Word song, "Escrava De Teu Amore" Ft. N.V. & Pavlo, shows Morgan's versatility as a singer and songwriter.

Morgan will be releasing his new album, "We're Gonna Make It", on his own label, Solroc Music. All songs were written and produced by Morgan, along with songwriters and producers, including Colin Monroe, Renee Brown, Muzic Souljah, AKA Subliminal and RBTNE

For further information contact, **Carlos Morgan of Solroc Music & Entertainment**

<https://www.carlosmorganmusic.com>
www.instagram.com/carlosmorganmusic
www.facebook.com/carlos.morgan.562
www.twitter.com/carlosmorgan
www.soundcloud.com/carlos-morgan



COLLEEN TAFFE

At times feeling rejected and ridiculed, Colleen Taffe has used laughter as medicine to help heal the pain of life's traumas, mistakes, and disappointments. She is an energetic and passionate performer who knows that "the joy of the Lord is her strength". Whether on stage doing comedy or facilitating workshops in a classroom, Colleen is known to delivers

positive, insightful and encouraging messages of hope. She is also an actress and a playwright who has written, directed, produced and acted in the 2007 production of "Under One Roof", a hilarious stage play that follows the life of a family through their ups and downs. Her second play "Smilin' Inside Out" opened in April 2008 and spoke about the dangers of gang violence. June 2010 her third play opened "In A Perfect World" and tackled tough topics such as teenage pregnancy, abuse and suicide. In 2011 she completed production of her fourth play "My Date with Bozo". A hilarious comedy that takes you on a journey alongside some zany characters and their roller-coaster ride to find love. Colleen has also written her first Christmas play "Josiah and the Wiz Kidz" which debuted in Mississauga December 2014. In October, 2017 the play "Piece

of Mind” opened during Mental Health awareness week. It told the unbelievable journey of one man’s strength in a time of his greatest weakness. This thought provoking performance will inspire audiences to be challenged by the unforeseen world of mental illness and its damaging effects of stigma, quite tangible in the black community. This production taps into man’s aptitude for resilience and determination while demonstrating the courage and faith to survive and overcome the traumas of one’s life. In March of 2018 The love story “The Commitment” opened that told the power of LOVE through the eyes of a man desperately trying to hang on to the one his soul loves. Colleen’s latest work titled “Beauty for Ashes” is an adaptation from the book: “13 Seats The Women Who Dared to Testify”. This piece, currently touring follows the lives of 12 women whose faith during a post-apocalyptic time is tried and tested.

Colleen captures her audience with the art of story-telling that keeps a broad spectrum of audiences engaged and roaring with laughter. Her shows are free from coarse jokes and offensive language and audiences leave feeling educated, empowered and entertained.

In addition to her work on the stage, Colleen has also worked with community agencies & partners to facilitate Creative HeARTs and workshops. These HeARTs camps and workshops have been used to help youth and individuals living with mental health, additions and trauma experiences heal and bring words and meaning to their experiences.

Colleen Taffe

Playwright. Director. Producer. Emcee. Comedienne.

For booking information contact

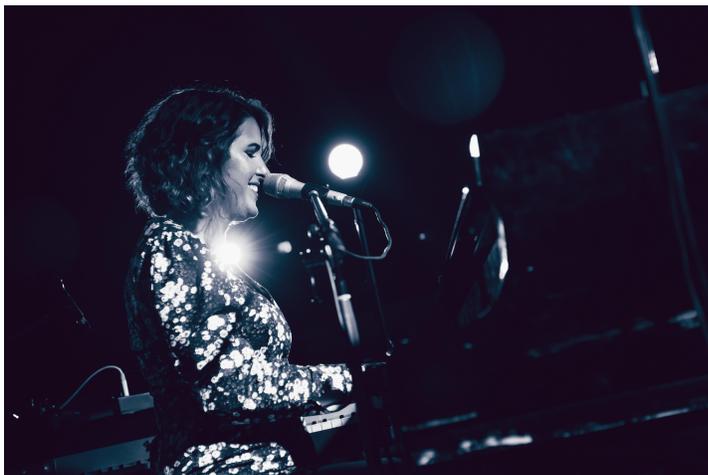
Colleen Taffe at 416-558-3860 or by email colleen@colleentaffe.com

www.pieceofmindplay.com



TASH RIOT

Tash is a trained singer, dancer, and actor, having graduated Queensland (Australia) Conservatorium of Music's prestigious Bachelor of Musical Theatre program before becoming one of Toronto's freshest talents in Drag. Tash got her start in Toronto at Crews & Tangos Drag Race 2018 – she now entertains all over Toronto and the GTA from West End haunts like The Beaver, The Gladstone—every Gay Village stage including Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, is part of “Clash of the Queens” drag brunch at Lula Lounge and has performed at Y&D main stage for Pride Toronto. You can always expect Tash to deliver high energy performances and witty banter - you know she's an absolute RIOT.



MICHELLE WILLIS

Michelle Willis is a Canadian singer-songwriter and keyboard player based in Brooklyn NY. She is a contributing member of David Crosby & Sky Trails, David Crosby & Lighthouse, and the Becca Stevens Band.

As a shy kid growing up, singing and playing was a way of communication; a pathway to self expression. “I grew

up in the 90s, when the hits on the radio were women like Shawn Colvin, Lauryn Hill, Amanda

Marshall, Jann Arden, Whitney Houston, Alanis Morissette, Janet Jackson and Sarah McLachlan. These women dominated my emo-brain. They said how they felt; their songs felt deep, harmonically and lyrically. Their music was a place where all my teenage emotion could live and be perfectly expressed.”

It wasn't until later that she grew to learn the vocabulary of the 60s and 70s songwriters, a sound she has grown quite close to given her fixed position in two bands led by American songwriting folk legend David Crosby. After studying jazz in college, the art of songwriting and delivery became the new foundation she leaned on, taking cues from heavyweights like Joni Mitchell, Stevie Wonder, Carole King, Donny Hathaway, CSNY, Ray Charles, Paul Simon and The Beatles.

Since relocating to New York, Willis has cemented her place as an in-demand keyboard player and singer, touring and recording with a diverse array of artists such as the aforementioned Crosby, Becca Stevens, Zac Brown Band, Iggy Pop, Laura Mvula and Michael McDonald. Taking her unique style and adapting it to a band's sound has fed the harmonic melting pot of songwriting that defines her music.

Despite touring schedules that placed her on the road for 200+ days a year, Willis fought to finish her sophomore record which would follow her full length debut, *See Us Through* (2016). Her upcoming release, an ambitious studio record with a live and filmed concert, *Just One Voice*, will be released in April 2022 on GroundUP Music (a label founded by long-time musical comrade and four-time Grammy winner, Michael League of Snarky Puppy). The album showcases eleven new songs and features guest performances by Crosby, Michael McDonald, Grégoire Maret, Becca Stevens and Taylor Ashton.



DARYL WILLIAMS

Daryl was born from a musical family in Toronto Canada of Antiguan heritage.

He was introduced to the Steel Pan in Antigua & Barbuda by a member of one of the oldest steel orchestras in the world. He became a member of Pan Fantasy Steel Orchestra, one of Canada's top reigning steel bands to this date. winning first place in competitions in Toronto nine consecutive times from 2011 and received the people's number one choice at the 2013 New York Panorama competition in Brooklyn NY. He continued as a solo performer up to the present while working full time as a Data Communications Technician. Daryl has shared the stage with local contemporary Jazz Artists, and internationally known steel

pannists at different venues in the Toronto area. He was a regular performer at the Harlem Restaurant in Toronto when it was in operation. He also performed at the Toronto Jazz Festival,

the Pan Am Games, The Wychwood Barns, and at many other different events including , Madison Square Garden in New York NY, Brooklyn Museum Brooklyn NY, CNE, Metro Convention Center, Canada's Wonderland , Toronto Harbourfront. He also currently works with two other local bands, Smokey Grey in the Midland area North of Bariie and Music 365 in the Scarborough area of Toronto, and is a known steel pannist in the Caribbean Community in the GTA. Performance locations include : Palais Royal, Pickering Town Center, Jambana, Madison Square Garden NY, Pickering Docks, CNE, Niagara Falls / St. Catherine Music Festival. Metro Convention Center, Ajax Convention Center, Woodbine Casino, Canada's Wonderland, The Distillery.