

About Fred Hersch

(updated July 1, 2009)

Pianist and composer Fred Hersch has been called a "one of the small handful of brilliant musicians of his generation" by Downbeat and has earned a place among the foremost jazz artists in the world today. From the late 70's onward as a sideman to jazz legends including Joe Henderson, Art Farmer and Stan Getz, he has solidified a reputation as a versatile master of jazz piano, as well as a relentlessly probing composer and conceptualist. He is widely recognized for his ability to steadfastly create a unique body of original works while reinventing the standard jazz repertoire – investing time-tested classics with keen insight, fresh ideas and extraordinary technique. Whether unaccompanied, in duo, working with trios and quintets, Hersch has explored the jazz tradition to its fullest even as he opens new and undiscovered doors. Hersch's numerous accomplishments include a 2003 Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship for composition, two Grammy® nominations for Best Jazz Instrumental Performance and a Grammy® nomination for Best Instrumental Composition. He has appeared on over one hundred recordings, including more than two-dozen albums as bandleader/solo pianist.

His career as a performer has been greatly enhanced by his composing activities, a vital part of nearly all of his live concerts and recordings. In 2003, Hersch created *Leaves of Grass* (Palmetto Records), a large-scale setting of Walt Whitman's poetry for two voices (Kurt Elling and Kate McGarry) and an instrumental octet; the work was presented in March 2005 in a sold-out performance at Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall as part of a six-city US tour. Hersch has toured with concert pianist Christopher O'Riley ("Heard Fresh: Music for Two Pianos") and he has also collaborated with artists ranging from Bill Frisell, Toots Thielemans and Charlie Haden to singers Renée Fleming, Norma Winstone and Audra McDonald. He has received commissions from The Gilmore Keyboard Festival, The Doris Duke Foundation, The Miller Theatre at Columbia University, The Gramercy Trio and The Brooklyn Youth Chorus. His solo piano compositions and chamber music are published by Edition Peters. Naxos Records has released *Fred Hersch: Concert Music 2001-2006*, a disc of his through-composed "classical" works.

Hersch is considered to be the most prolific and widely-praised solo jazz pianist of his generation. 2009 saw the release of his seventh solo disc *Fred Hersch Plays Jobim* on Sunnyside, cited as "one of his deepest records" by The New York Times. In 2006, Palmetto Records released the solo CD *Fred Hersch in Amsterdam: Live at the Bimhuis*; its release led to Hersch becoming the first pianist in the 70-year history of New York's legendary Village Vanguard to play an entire week as a solo pianist shortly after the disc's release. In addition, he leads a trio, a quintet and has ongoing special collaborations with jazz and classical instrumentalists and vocalists around the world. His newest project features an unconventional line-up of piano, trumpet, voice and percussion; *The Fred Hersch Pocket Orchestra: Live at Jazz Standard* came out in April 2009 on Sunnyside Records.

Hersch has acted as a passionate spokesman and fund-raiser for AIDS services and education agencies since 1993. He has produced and performed on four benefit recordings and at numerous concerts for the charities Classical Action: Performing Arts Against AIDS and Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS that have raised over \$250,000 to date.

Hersch has been featured on *CBS Sunday Morning* with Dr. Billy Taylor and on a wide variety of National Public Radio programs including *Fresh Air*, *Jazz Set*, *Studio 360* and *Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz*. Hersch has also been awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship, grants from The National Endowment for the Arts and Meet the Composer, and six composition residencies at The MacDowell Colony. He conducted a Professional Training Workshop for Young Musicians at The Weill Institute at Carnegie Hall in 2008 and was awarded the Branigan Lectureship at Indiana University in 2004. A committed educator, Hersch was a faculty member at the New England Conservatory for ten years, and has taught at The New School and Manhattan School of Music; he is currently a visiting professor at Western Michigan University and on the Jazz Studies faculty of the New England Conservatory. www.fredhersch.com