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BEN KONO

woodwinds/composition/educator

BIO

Since moving to New York City in 1999, woodwind specialist and educator Ben Kono has been attracting attention as a singular emerging voice in cutting-edge groups like Darcy James Argue's *Secret Society*, the *John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble* and the *Ted Nash Big Band*. With the release of his critically acclaimed *CROSSING* on Nineteen-Eight Records and as a recipient of the Chamber Music America New Jazz Works Commissioning and Ensemble Development grant he has come into his own light as a leader and composer of note.

Kono's music is informed both by the rich diversity of classical, folk and jazz music present in his childhood hometown of Brattleboro, Vermont, and by the breathtaking natural beauty of the region. Fostered by his parent's strong advocacy of the arts and spurred on by a community rich in culture, live music, and arts awareness, he pursued degrees from the Eastman School of Music and the University of North Texas where he met future musical collaborators John Hollenbeck, Henry Hey and Pete McCann, and studied with jazz greats David Liebman, Jerry Bergonzi, Bill Dobbins and Gary Cambell.

Following a five-year hitch with the U.S.Army's elite touring group the *Jazz Ambassadors*, Kono's broad musical training and experience naturally led him to the infinitely varied musical landscape of New York City. Equally skilled on oboe, english horn, flutes, clarinets and saxophones, his wide range of skills and prowess as an improviser quickly garnered high demand as a sideman. He has performed and recorded with, among many others, Michael Brecker, Wynton Marsalis, David Liebman, Bob Berg, Kenny Wheeler, Toots Thielmans, Michel LeGrand, Ted Nash, Joel Harrison, Andrew Rathbun, Manuel Valera and Christian McBride; with superstars Patti Austin, Deborah Gibson, Hugh Jackman and Liza Minelli; and he is a member of the John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble, the Ed Palermo Big Band, Gotham Winds, the BMI Jazz Composers Orchestra, the New York Jazzharmonic, the Ted Nash Big Band, and the Jersey Boys Orchestra on Broadway. The eloquent sounds of his woodwinds have graced the stages of Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, and he can often be heard tearing up a solo at elite jazz venues like the Blue Note, the Jazz Standard, Birdland, and Le Poisson Rouge. As a leader he has led his own band *The Ben Kono Group* at venues throughout New York City and the Hudson Valley region including the Bryant Park New Music Festival, the Hopper House Museum, Cornelia Street Cafe, and an appearance at the 2016 Chamber Music America National Conference in NYC.

. Kono places an emphasis on melody, and is a real craftsman, shifting his lovely lines through different textures and harmonies, combining sections that seem like bits of songs into larger forms and never losing track of where he has come from and where he is going."--The Big City Blog

"This potent sextet outing by composer and multi-instrumentalist Ben Kono unfolds like separate chapters of a novel, each revealing something about it's author...An overpoweringly great record!"--Bill Milkowski, *Jazz Times*, April 2011

"I was knocked out by Kono. Subtle, deep, challenging yet connecting with the listener."--Lynda Yohn, *WEMU Radio*, Detroit

"Mr. Kono, a versatile woodwinds specialist — he'll play tenor saxophone, clarinets, flutes and oboe here, along with English horn — has a gleaming new album, "Crossing" (Nineteen-Eight), that establishes his style as a bandleader-composer: cosmopolitan and unflappable, with a feel for rallying his sidemen."--Nate Chinen, *The New York Times*, Feb.17, 2011

SHORT BIO

A native of Brattleboro, Vermont, Ben Kono's woodwinds have graced the recordings and performances of jazz legends Bob Berg, Michael Brecker, Wynton Marsalis and David Liebman, and he leads his own critically acclaimed ensemble The Ben Kono Group. He is a member of the John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble, BMI Jazz Composers Orchestra, Andrew Rathbun Big Band, Ed Palermo Big Band, Joel Harrison 19, the 'Jersey Boys' Orchestra on Broadway. As an educator he has been on faculty at University of North Texas, Morgan State University, Queens College, and is currently a teaching artist for the New York Pops.