



Band Biographies & Performance Highlights

One-line Bios (see full bios below)

DAVID BUCHBINDER (*trumpet, fluegelhorn, composition*): a wildly creative cultural inventor, powerhouse trumpeter and a uniquely expressive composer.

HILARIO DURAN (*piano/composition*): “an unparalleled pianist, as well as being a composer and arranger of the first order...one of the greatest!” - *Chucho Valdes* (Arturo Sandoval, Paquito d’Rivera)

ROBERTO OCCHIPINTI (*bass, CD producer*) a double threat: bassist extraordinaire and award-winning producer. (Jane Bunnet, Gorillaz, Dafnis Prieto)

ALEKSANDAR GAJIC (*violin*) a first-call musical chamelon (classical/Latin/Jewish/Serbian/jazz) who plays with fire and wit. (Serbian Radio Television Symphony Orchestra, Beyond the Pale)

JOHN JOHNSON (*clarinet/saxophones*) the first-call reed player for everyone from Aretha Franklin to the Boss Brass and everyone in-between (Holly Cole, Diane Krall, Peabo Bryson)

MARK KELSO (*drums*) one of the best drummer’s you’ll every hear, in any style. No matter the context Mark makes the music dance! (Gino Vannelli, Peter Murphy, Michael Brecker)

JOAQUIN NUNEZ HIDALGO (*percussion*) an AfroCuban percussion master who has branched out to meet the musical and cultural mosaic that is Toronto.

MARYEM HASSAN TOLLAR (*vocals*) a singer blessed by an astounding natural talent, a rich, amazing sound and a storyteller’s gift for communication. (Gryphon Trio)

Performance Highlights

Banff Centre for the Arts	Banff, Canada
Drom	New York City
Washington Jewish Music Festival	Washington, D.C.
Eugene & Elinor Friend Center for the Arts	San Francisco, CA
Berkeley Jewish Music Festival	Berkeley, CA
Rose Kennedy Festival	Boston, MA
Chutzpah! Festival	Vancouver, B.C.
Ashkenaz Festival	Toronto, Canada
Toronto Jazz Festival	Toronto, Canada
Halifax Jazz Festival	Halifax, Canada

Detailed Bios

DAVID BUCHBINDER (*trumpet, fluegelhorn, composition, leader*) is an award-winning trumpeter, composer and cultural inventor. He leads numerous music groups, composes for concert, theatre, film and television, presents large-scale performance projects and has toured extensively in North America & Europe. He has been involved in World music and Jazz since 1987 and has earned a reputation as one of its compositional and instrumental leading lights, through the **Flying Bulgars**, his eponymous **Jazz Ensemble** and, most recently, his **Odessa/Havana** project (released on John Zorn's Tzadik label). For this work he has received two JUNO Awards and one Canadian Folk Music Award as well as 4 JUNO and two National Jazz Award nominations. He was the creator and first artistic director of the world-renowned **Ashkenaz Festival**, leading it through its first three iterations. He is also the creator/producer of multidisciplinary performances **Shurum Burum Jazz Circus**, the **Jerusalem Salon**, **Tumbling Into Light** and **Andalusia to Toronto**, which was commissioned by Koerner Hall to open its 2011/12 season. David was one of the inaugural Resident Artists at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts and is the founder and CEO/Artistic Director of the creativity-based urban transformation organization Diasporic Genius.

HILARIO DURAN (*piano/composition*) Best Latin Jazz Artist of the Year 2006 by The National Jazz Award, JUNO winner 2005, and JUNO nominated 2002 (Havana Remembered CD), Hilario Duran, is the latest virtuoso Jazz pianist emerges from Havana, Cuba. After several years working with Arturo Sandoval, touring at major Jazz Festivals around the world, and sharing stages with legendary musicians such the late Dizzy Gillespie, and Composer/Arranger Michael Legrand, Hilario formed his own band "Perspectiva." Following a successful European tour (1995), Duran decided the time was now right for him to pursue his solo career, allowing him more scope to follow the many different areas of his musical interests. Since his move to Canada, Hilario Duran has become an integral and important part of the Canadian music scene, and he is an invaluable member of the Jazz Faculty at Humber College, acting as both an adjunct Piano Professor and Ensemble Director. Hilario Duran last recording "From the Heart," is a tribute to all great Cubans conductors, in this CD Hilario can suddenly switch from a percussive Latin piano pattern to a stride style, but most interesting is how seamlessly he can merge various jazz and traditional Cuban styles.

ROBERTO OCCHIPINTI (*bass, CD producer*) is one of Canada's premier bassists, comfortable in a wide variety of musical contexts. He toured and recorded with Blue Note recording artist Jane Bunnett, including the Grammy nominated disc Alma de Santiago and the Juno winning Ritmo Y Soul. In addition, Roberto toured with Juno award winning group NOJO, performing at Canadian jazz festivals with the legendary saxophonist Sam Rivers. Roberto has recorded 3 albums with Cuban piano virtuoso Hilario Durán including 2005 Juno award winning Album New Danzon which he produced and performed. As producer, he's currently working on 3 projects for Quartetto Gelato, Soul Stew and Hilario Durán next album, recorded in Havana . He has also completed Christos Hatzis's "Constantinople" for the Gryphon Trio, David Buchbinder ensemble, "Shurum Burum " Jazz Circus and his own disc for Alma/Universal "Yemaya" recorded in Toronto, Havana and Moscow. As a composer, Roberto Occhipinti has written for Television, Radio and Film ,most notable the Award winning PBS series George Shrinks and for YTV series George and Martha. As a classical musician, Roberto Occhipinti has been a member of the Winnipeg Symphony, Hamilton Philharmonic and Canadian Opera Company Orchestras. He has performed with virtually every classical music ensemble in Toronto and recent performances include the St. Lawrence Quartet, The Gryphon Trio and Via Salzburg.

ALEKSANDAR GAJIC (*violin*) has most recently performed in concert as a first violin with Oshawa Durham Symphony Orchestra, Windsor Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Philharmonia, Sinfonia Toronto, Canadian Sinfonietta, Gould String Quartet, and has also become a member of Beyond The Pale-World music ensemble. He participated in the founding of the String Quartet Bellotti. During seven years of work with this quartet, he took part in over 400 concerts both in the country and abroad. Bellotti made 4 CDs in the production of the national recording house PGP RTS and music for the movie White suite (Yugoslavian candidate for OSKAR Award 2000). They also taped a great

number of TV and radio broadcasts. Aleksandar Gajic also appeared as a soloist with the Serbian Radio Television Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra.

JOHN JOHNSON (clarinet/saxophones) A Toronto native, John Johnson studied music at Humber College and began his professional career in 1979. Within four years he established himself as a force on the Toronto music scene. His strong, emotional playing and versatility was desired by many groups and he became an integral part of diverse groups such as Manteca and The Boss Brass, Holly Cole, . John's soaring, passionate musical phrases emanate from the most visceral part of the human soul. This attribute has made him a first call player for many producers and contractors and John is featured on numerous television and film soundtracks, records and jingles. He has also played with Molly Johnson, Holly Cole, Diane Krall, Aretha Franklin, Roberta Flack, Dionne Warwick, Peabo Bryson, Cal Dodd, Dianne Reeves, Bill Mays, the Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band, as well as guest spots with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra on a number of occasions.

MARK KELSO (drums) Mark's ability to play a wide variety of musical styles has helped him become one of Canada's most sought after drummers. An all around player, Mark has worked with Gino Vannelli, Pete Townsend, Holly Cole, Peter Murphy (Bauhaus) Amanda Marshall, Amy Sky, Randy Brecker, Michael Brecker, Donny Osmond, Shirley Eikhard, Hilario Duran, Paquito D'Rivera, Michel Cusson, The Montuno Police, Brian Hughes, Jane Bunnett, Soul Stew, Carol Welsman, Gordie Sampson, Mary Jane Lamond, Joe Sealy, John-Allen Cameron, Marc Jordan, Bruce Guthro, Jane Siberry and Shania Twain. His new CD entitled "Lost Kingdoms" is an exciting blend of African, Brazilian, Celtic and Pop influences. Featuring 12 original compositions of instrumental and vocal tunes, there is also some fine playing by some of Canada's finest musicians. Currently, Mark is Head of the Percussion Department at Humber College's School of Music in Toronto.

JOAQUIN NUNEZ HIDALGO (percussion) was born and raised in Cuba where he benefited from the musical instruction of his father, Porfirio Nunez, a member of the renowned Cuban orchestra "Brisas de Nipe". As a professional artist, he has had a very successful music career in Cuba; performing in multiple music events and festivals. While in Cuba, he was accredited as a Master Percussionist in both classic and contemporary genres at the National Art School (El Yarey). In Canada since 1999, Joaquin Nunez Hidalgo has performed, with acclaim, in a multitude of international and local music events. A brief synopsis of live performances include: The Canadian Tenors Tour; 2011 Vancouver Olympic Games – World Performance Stage with Hilario Duran and Jane Bunnett (Latin Jazz Big Band); Montreal International Jazz Festival; and Japan Tour – Alexcuba Band. Toronto prestigious events such as: Luminato Festival; Downtown Jazz Festival and Beaches Jazz Festival. Joaquin has generously supported community and multicultural events such as: Muhtadi International Drum Festival and Afrofest; and theatre productions of the Rose Theatre and the Markham Theatre for the Performing Arts (please visit: rumberos.ca/performances). From television to musical theater, Joaquin has contributed his expertise and musicality to great success. An example of appearances include: PBS special – Canadian Tenors, David Foster, Sarah McLachlan and CBC Holy Days Special with Canadian Tenors, with special guest Paul Anka. Joaquin also performed in highly popular musicals such as; Ross Petty production of "Beauty and the Beast" and Mirvish production of "Dirty Dancing".

MARYEM HASSAN TOLLAR (vocals) Over the last decade and more, Maryem Tollar has built a reputation as a singer who can live and thrive in a variety of musical milieus. She was born in Egypt and raised in Canada with frequent sojourns in the Middle East. She has toured across Canada several times with a variety of projects including her own ensemble; Christos Hatzis' multimedia project, "Constantinople" and his large scale work "Sepulcher of Life". She premiered a new work by Christos Hatzis commissioned by Tafelmusik in March 2008. Maryem has sung on several film and television scores including the theme music for CBC Television's "Little Mosque on the Prairie" and A.R.Rahman's hit "Mayya Mayya" in the Bollywood movie "Guru". Her 2008 performances include a concert in the Toronto Downtown Jazz Festival with guest master musicians Alfred Gamil (violin, oud) and Mohamed Aly (vocals, violin, oud) from Egypt, and Bassam Bishara (vocals, oud) from Toronto/Palestine; as well as a concert at the Calgary Folk Festival and at the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival.