



BIOGRAPHY

A distinctive trait of internationally recognized jazz pianist Kevin Harris, a YAMAHA artist, is his desire to constantly grow, evolve, improve, and advance. His interest to interweave traditional and contemporary music styles, visual arts, electronic media, science, and language, is what distinguishes his music and what renders his performances unique experiences, meant to activate the audience's senses and personal curiosity.

"*Participation*," Harris says, "*is what keeps our souls alive.*" Both live and recorded performances reflect Harris's determination to capture his audience through explorative interactions that Terri Lyne Carrington describes as "***an exciting commitment to quality.***"

Harris' music education has its foundation in the degrees he has received, but equally importantly in Black Gospel and Afro-Caribbean styles of music. He possesses the unique ability to compose complex, uplifting, tempestuous, and deeply stimulating notes.

One of the captivating elements of his ensembles, from duet to orchestra setting, is the level of comfort and understanding they have with one another. Harris is known for his diving into soulfully expressive conversations and playful exchanges of ideas with his musicians, while always providing the space to improvise in the moment.

Fred Hersch talks of Harris as one who "***plays and writes with flair and real soul***" and DownBeat Magazine writes that "***Harris' compositions deal with themes of strength, love, courage, and self-awareness. It's a heavy task he's set up for himself, and he meets the challenge gracefully.***"

Among his most notable collaborations are Terri Lyne Carrington, Dayna Stephens, Ralph Peterson, Ameen Saleem, Greg Hutchinson, Greg Osby, Jerry Bergonzi, George Garzone, Curtis Lundy, Caroline Davis, Bill Pierce, Francisco Mela, Avishai Cohen, Delfeayo Marsalis, Ben Street, Jason Palmer, Rudy Royston, Frank Lacey, Etienne Charles, Eric McPherson, Neal Smith, Rufus Reid, and Sheryl Bailey.

As a composer, Harris continues in his trailblazing work. His latest symphonic work, "***Resonance: A Contemporary Symphonic Reflection Through the Courageous Lens of Steve Biko***" premiered in July 2025 at the Stellenbosch International Music Chamber Festival in South Africa. **The work's originality stretches and fosters connection** among disparate audiences by using improvised and written music, with musicians from different stylistic disciplines performing alongside each other. Another of Harris' most innovative projects is "***Roots, Water and Sunlight: A Contemporary Octet Expedition through the Expressions of James Baldwin***," where he put music and Electronic Digital Instrumentation to the renowned and significant thoughts shared by James Baldwin.

"***Pulse***", is a compelling through-composed chamber work combining improvised and fully notated music for oboe, violins, cello, acoustic bass, and piano.

As an Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's Neighborhood Salon Luminary, he released a solo piano work entitled "***Doorways***" at Calderwood Hall in the Gardner Museum. The Salon's goal is to exchange creative ideas and dialogue with some of Boston's most innovative artists while shaping Gardner Museum programming.

With his "***Griot Series***", Harris asks his audience to broaden their perception of how the role of African Griot can be reimagined from an American historical perspective. The collaborative project with trumpeter Jason Palmer, "***Upward Mothers***", aims to bring awareness about mothers who have lost children to senseless acts of violence.

As a leader, Harris has released seven albums. For his latest, "***Vitruvian Echoes***", Harris has drawn his inspiration both from Leonardo Da Vinci's insights and from the often under-recognized contributions of artists whose work exemplifies originality and human expression. Scott Haas' review defines Harris' music as "***a balance of freedom and structure***". For "***EMBERS***," Steve Elman's review quotes: "***Harris stands on the shoulders of the masters, adds a singular personal voice, and has recruited strongly individualistic players to give his music definitive interpretation.***"

Steeplechase Records has released a duet album featuring Harris and trumpeter Jason Palmer showcasing Palmer's compositions based on the artistry of Wayne Shorter.

Harris thrives on a courageously playful style of communication in music, a style, in his opinion, that requires a very special and sincere habit of listening and an equally patient endeavor to express oneself with enthusiastic curiosity. Harris is part of the exclusive Yamaha's roster of Jazz piano artists.

In demand as a clinician, lecturer, and guest artist, Harris consistently collaborates with both public and private organizations, nationally and internationally. He is currently on the faculty at Berklee College of Music where he coaches ensembles and private piano instruction. Additionally, he is part of Berklee's Mentoring Program, and he has established Berklee's Piano Club that he currently curates and organizes.

He serves as a Board member for the International Society of Jazz Arrangers & Composers, the New England Conservatory Alumni Council, and Berklee Soundboard. ■