

Ben Turner (b. 1997) grew up in the New Jersey suburbs of Philadelphia. Through Ben's first mentor, guitarist Ian Macaulay, Ben developed a passion for Black American Music, eventually venturing into Philadelphia to pursue the artform. During this period, Ben began studying with saxophonist Larry McKenna and bassist Anthony Tidd through local music programs. He would go on to audition successfully for regional and all-state jazz ensembles, in time receiving a merit award from the YoungArts Foundation, all before the end of highschool.

Ben would go on to complete his undergraduate degree (BM '20) in jazz studies from Temple University under the tutelage of Terell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Dick Oatts, Peter Bernstein, Jesse van Ruller (while on exchange with the Conservatorium van Amsterdam), and David Wong. While there, he formed deep connections within Philadelphia's music community and found a central pillar of his cultural identity. Ben quickly began to perform around the city, gaining on the bandstand mentorship from Mike Boone, Behn Gillece, Bill Goodwin, Byron Landham, and Matthew Parrish.

Ben completed his graduate studies (MM '23) at Michigan State University as a graduate assistant under the guidance of Rodney Whitaker and Randy Napoleon. While in Michigan, Ben received significant performance and mentorship opportunities through musicians such as Dwight Adams, Michael Dease, Sean Dobbins, Marcus Elliot, Paul Keller, Jeff Pedraz, Rick Roe, and Rodney Whitaker. Musicians from Detroit and Philadelphia often remark how the two cities are sister cities, and Ben's life experience surely represents these commonalities.

The musical legacies of these two cities left an indelible impact on Ben, helping him form his musical concept; one that is characterized by the blues and swing, an emphasis on a beautiful sound and touch, and a command of jazz vocabulary.

Ben has led bands at the Summer Solstice Jazz Festival, the Pinelands Jazz Festival, and Temple University's Rite of Swing series. He has also performed at the Detroit Jazz Festival, the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival, the Telluride Jazz Festival, the Kennedy Center, the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, and venues around the Midwest, Northeast, and Europe.

Ben has been selected for programs such as the Gathering Orchestra as a Geri Allen Fellow (2023-2024), Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead, JAS Academy, and the Mid-Atlantic Collegiate Jazz Orchestra. Ben has also received awards from the ASCAP Foundation, BMI Foundation, and Downbeat Magazine as both a performer and composer. He won the 2022 U.S. Army Blues Solo Competition (Collegiate Division) and was a semi-finalist in the 2022 UNISA International Strings Competition and 2019 Wilson Center Jazz Guitar Competition.

Ben is an active composer and arranger, having written for Michael Dease, the US Army Blues, and the Philadelphia Ambassador Big Band.

Ben has a passion for education and has taught at local music schools, all while maintaining a private studio. Ben has taught improvisation and ensemble courses at Michigan State University, in addition to joining the faculty at Interlochen Arts Academy as adjunct instructor of jazz guitar for the 2022-2023 school year.