Thom Bennett

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**Education**: 1999-2001- Graduated with Honours from the Jazz Performance Diploma Program at Grant MacEwan College.

1997-1999- Completed two years of Arts Programs at the University of Alberta.

**Teaching**: 2007-2009 Keyano College in Fort McMurray as visiting faculty Professor of Percussion.

2001-2010 at Brandenburg Music in Edmonton.

I regularly give private clinics for Alberta College as well as for Edmonton and area public school boards and I’ve given business of music clinics and drum masterclasses to a variety of post-secondary institutions and high schools around the province.

I have been hired as an adjudicator for Jazzworks and the the Keyano College Jazz Festival. I’ve also worked with many disabled students (blindness, OCD, Autism, MS, Tourette’s syndrome, Rasmussen syndrome) as well as with physical therapists to improve their ability to offer music related therapies.

**Performing:** I have performed and/or recorded and/or toured with the following artists among many others: NYC musicians Harry Allen (saxophone), Brad Shepik (guitar), Tom Beckham (vibraphone), Juno Award winning musicians Mike Murley, Brad Turner, Mike Downes, Mike Rud, WCMA nominated group A/B trio, international singer-songwriter Ann Vriend, celtic artist Lizzy Hoyt, Maple Blues Award nominated artist Paul Reddick, harpist Terry McDade, punk-swing artist Big Rude Jake, afro-pop artist Garth Prince, reggae group Souljah Fyah, country artist Brett Kissel, Shumka Dance, Brian Webb Dance company, R + B artist Christina, vocalist Martin Kerr, showband MIXTAPE, folk mainstay Ben Sures, The Dave Babcock Jazz Orchestra, guitarist Mo Lefever, Ukrainian group the Kubasonics, jazz-pop pianist Jesse Peters, corporate funk outfit The Retrofitz, saxophonist Jeremiah McDade, vocal ensemble Kokopelli, jazz choir Form, the EKOS singers, the Edmonton Metropolitan Chorus, and many, many others.

I’ve been fortunate enough to have toured extensively throughout Canada, the United States, France and Ukraine and I’ve shared stages with soul legend Aaron Neville, senator Tommy Banks, jazz vocalist Mark Murphy, roots artist Kathleen Edwards and Canadian soul giants Jacksoul among others.

I’ve also played numerous times at the following notable Western Canadian venues: the Winspear Centre, the Citadel Theatre, Banff Centre for the Arts, the Shaw Conference Centre, Rexall Place, the Jubilee Auditorium, the Yardbird Suite, MacEwan Hall in Calgary, Festival Place in Sherwood Park, the Sidetrack Café, the Calgary Folk Festival, the West End Cultural Centre in Winnipeg as well as the Harbourfront and Bloor Street Festivals in Toronto and endless corporate, club and coffeehouse gigs.

**Producing/Engineering:** I have produced and recorded albums over 40 studio and live albums since 2006 in Edmonton for artists such as Toronto jazz drummer Morgan Childs, vocalist Lorna Lampman, El Salvadoran latin pianist William Ramirez, classical percussionist Stephen Stone, avant-garde jazzers The Parkers, Ukrainian folk duo M + M, among many others. Music that I have been a part of has been featured frequently on radio stations CBC (locally and nationally), CKUA, Jazz FM and across Canada on over 35 campus and local radio stations.

**Accompanying:** I have been employed as a ballet and modern dance accompanist for the last 10 years at the University of Alberta, for the last 4 years at Concordia University College of Alberta and for the last 3 years at MacEwan University. I have also collaborated with a who’s who of Edmonton’s dance community most notably the Brian Webb Dance Company on four of his recent projects.

**Musicals:** I have accompanied numerous musicals including two sold-out, extended-run Edmonton Fringe theatre productions, as well as River City Shakespeare’s musical debut (Two Gentlemen of Verona), and two productions at the Citadel. I’ve performed as drummer/percussionist in Oliver, Rent, West Side Story, Thoroughly Modern Millie, Grease, Cabaret, Oklahoma, Pippin, Billy Elliott, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Guys and Dolls, Young Frankenstein, and Fiddler On The Roof among many others.

**Studio:** I have had the good fortune of recording at the following studios as a session musician and/or producer: Beta Sound Studios, Homestead Recorders, Turnkey Studios, Damon Studios/The Audio Department, EdmonTone, Blackbox Studios, The Bird Shop, The Norwood Studio, The Compound, RiverdaleRecorders, Sound Extractor Studios, Sanctuary Studios, 1000 Decibels and many others.

**Other:** I have co-written music with numerous songwriters, for a variety of jazz groups, three dance pieces, a short film and an animated short.

I was fortunate enough to be given a grant from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts in the summer of 2008 to immerse myself in the musical milieu of New York City for a month to improve my playing and compositional skills by studying with Ari Hoenig, Greg Ritchie and Owen Howard.

**Non-Musical Accomplishments:** I am fluently bilingual (reading, writing, speaking) in French.

I volunteer for a chartitable organization called Homeless Connect which provides much needed care directly to the homeless and those at risk.

**2.2**  I’m very thankful that my involvement in Edmonton’s artistic community is broad and far-reaching. Every week that passes presents a completely different schedule and set of musical obstacles to negotiate and I really love the challenge and the hustle of my job. I’ve been lucky enough to make a living solely by being active in Edmonton’s music community for over a dozen years. I’ve traveled to NYC to study, to Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver to perform, I’ve toured throughout France, Ukarine and the United States, and I continue to make Edmonton my home base because of the high level of artistry present in my field and the opportunities that I have here to remain creative.

Though I understand the desire to move to a larger city, I’ve always taken the attitude that if you don’t see the things that you want in a city, you need to make them happen for yourself. To that end, I’ve created regular gigs at numerous establishments around the city (the Bothy, Creations restaurant, among others) and in the last year have created a program called the ELM (Edmonton Live Music) Initiative involving Councillor Scott McKeen, MLA David Shepherd, EAC Executive Director Paul Moulton and Alberta Music head Chris Wynters. The pilot version of this project has been funded and will run from the fall of 2015 to the spring of 2016 in the hopes of reinvigorating Edmonton’s live music scene through an innovative economic stimulus plan that involves the AGLC. I’m lucky to have an advisory board comprised of artists from Edmonton’s music community, musicians union representatives, Tommy Banks, local talent buyers and a representative from MacEwan’s music school to help shape the program.

My group A/B trio released a recording in February of 2015 (featuring 13-time Juno award winner Mike Murley) on Chronograph Records that spent three months at #1 across the Canadian Earshot jazz charts. The disc also hit high on “indie charts” (somehow) and “overall charts” across the country as well. The biggest surprise of the discs release was hitting #28 on the CMJ charts, as this is extremely rare for a group to accomplish on Canadian support alone, regardless of genre. We’ve had two successful tours (both creatively and financially) of the disc thus far, which have both included flying Mike Murley out from Toronto to join us, and we are nominated for the WCMA for Best Jazz Recording for 2015 (awarded in late September). The group is currently in the planning stages of a two-week, late June 2016 tour of Ontario, Quebec and eastern Canada.

Another trio I’m involved in (the Ryan Davidson Group) finished tracking an album in mid-July and will be releasing the disc through a week-long tour of Alberta and Saskatchewan in January of 2016. Ryan has a Masters degree from the University of North Texas and yet, is the first call guitarist for most country artists in Western Canada when he’s not on tour with Gord Bamford. The trio’s music is informed by a seemingly incompatible variety of influences ( Brazilian bossa nova, black metal, Americana, modern jazz, funk). Excerpted from his lengthy review of the album, three-time Grammy nominee and University of Denver Professor of Music Steve Wiest had this to say: “This turns out to be another tour-de-force for Thom on the drums. I love his snare work specifically on this, and between the three of them [the musicians], I am in awe of the power this group generates.”

I pride myself on the great variety of projects that I am involved in and I think that this is due in part to my versatility and my genuine enjoyment and understanding of many kinds of music but it is also due in large part to Edmonton’s great openness and acceptance. In many larger cities, musicians are frequently pigeonholed as a “jazz guy” or an “indie rock guy” or a “classical guy” and I’ve rarely felt that sort of pigeonholing in this fair berg. I am happy to stay in Edmonton and keep working to improve my artistry and my community across a number of styles.

The following is a short summation of the many scenes in the city where I feel like I’ve made the most connections.

-Edmonton’s jazz scene is surprisingly strong for a city of our size and I’m happy to be one of the first call drummers. I’ve played extensively with almost every major figure on the scene including Tommy Banks, Kent Sangster, Chris Andrew, Mike Lent, Bob Tildesley, Jim Head, Josh McHan, Don and Doug Berner and many others. I also work regularly with visiting artists from across the continent as a sideman.

-I’ve been intimately involved in Edmonton’s dance community since 2001, most notably working as a performer on Brian Webb’s four most recent works. I’ve also composed music for four modern dance pieces, have accompanied for most of Edmonton’s modern dancers.

-Given my bilingual background I’m heavily immersed in Edmonton’s rich francophone community having played most notably with keyboardist Jason Kodie, chanteuse Mireille Moquin, guitarist and singer Robert Walsh, French super-group Allez Ouest, violinist Daniel Gervais, singer songwriters Raphael Freynet and Ariane Lemire and others.

-I’ve recorded and/or produced over 45 recordings since the inception of my recording studio, Sanctuary Studios, in 2007. These range from classical marimba, to Ukrainian folk, to jazz quintets, to R + B artists, to world fusion groups. I am also frequently hired as a session drummer by producers, for the creative grooves that I contribute to recording sessions and my sound can be heard on more than 60 recordings to date.

-My ability to contribute sounds at a really low dynamic is appreciated by choirs and I love working with the human voice. EKOS choir, the Edmonton Metropolitan choir, Vocal Alchemy, Concordia Men’s and Women’s choirs, ABJ jazz choir, Kokopelli choir, Form, Nuf Sed and Shufty choirs have all used my services on numerous occasions.

-I’ve begun to enjoy playing more roots and country music and have been happy to be hired by The Dungarees, Matt Patershuk, Brett Kissel, Krysta Scoggins, Lisa Hewitt, Foxx Worthee and others.

-Aside from my private teaching practice, I’ve been blessed to teach as the visiting faculty head of percussion at Keyano College for 3 years, I do numerous clinics for Edmonton and area schools, I’m asked to adjudicate at jazz band festivals and I’ve volunteered as an instructor at “Horns for Hope” (an organization that provides instruments and instruction to the homeless at Hope Mission).

-My ability to read music and learn tunes quickly as a freelance musician has given me the chance to work with many touring musicians including Big Rude Jake, Harry Allen, Paul Reddick, Brad Shepik and many others. I’ve also been a percussionist for “Video Games Live” and numerous times in the concert band for the University of Alberta’s convocation ceremonies.