

**Michael Malis**  
**Official Bio**  
**October 2023**

**Shorter (~200 words)**

Michael Malis is a composer, pianist, and music educator based in Detroit, Michigan. A multi-faceted musical artist, he works across genres in improvisational, concert music, and interdisciplinary settings. As a recording artist, he has 11 releases as a leader or co-leader. 2022's *From Darkness We Awaken*, featuring chamber-improvising ensemble Virago (who commissioned the piece) was released on Brisbane Australia-based MADE NOW MUSIC, and was called “transfixing” with a “disarming intensity” (All About Jazz). His duo project with saxophonist Marcus Elliot, Balance, has been praised as “contemporary jazz of the highest order, a benchmark for where the genre can go” (Detroit Metro Times.)

As a composer, Malis has been commissioned by Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, Chamber Music Society of Detroit, Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Detroit Composers' Project, Virago, Hole in the Floor, and others. As a pianist, he has shared the stage with such luminaries as Marcus Belgrave, Gerald Cleaver, Jaribu Shahid, John Lindberg, William Hooker, A. Spencer Barefield, Tyshawn Sorey, Brandee Younger, J.D. Allen, and Marion Hayden.

Malis studied with legendary pianist Geri Allen at the University of Michigan. He currently serves as Visiting Instructor of Jazz Piano at Interlochen Arts Academy.

**Medium (~400 words)**

Michael Malis is a composer, pianist, and music educator based in Detroit MI. Noted for his “jaw dropping display of improvisational power” (All About Jazz), Malis is a multi-faceted artist, performing as a jazz musician, composing for the concert stage, and spearheading multidisciplinary collaborations.

As a recording artist, he has 11 releases as a leader or co-leader. 2022's *From Darkness We Awaken*, featuring chamber-improvising ensemble Virago (who commissioned the piece) was released on Brisbane Australia-based MADE NOW MUSIC. Called “transfixing” with a “disarming intensity” (All About Jazz), it was premiered in an “arresting” and “ambitious” concert at the Detroit Institute of Arts (I Dig Jazz) in August 2022, alongside a new solo piano work *Hold Tightly To Your Vision of How Things Could Be* and a new ensemble arrangement of his *Imperfect Intervals* suite, featuring video projections by visual artist Zara Teicher.

As a composer, Malis has been commissioned by Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, Chamber Music Society of Detroit, Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Detroit Composers' Project, Virago, Hole in the Floor, and others. His piece for piano and cello, *Coda*, was premiered by Detroit Symphony Orchestra principle cellist Wei Yu in 2018.

Malis and saxophonist Marcus Elliot join forces as the duo “Balance.” Called “among the most compelling Detroit jazz musicians of their generation,” Elliot and Malis’ “intuitive improvisations” stand on the threshold of composed and improvised music. Their 2022

sophomore album, *Conjure*, was called “one of the best contemporary jazz records to come out of Detroit in quite some time” (Hour Detroit Magazine.) In 2019 they devised I Got to Keep Moving, a collaborative performance piece with Guggenheim-award winning author Bill Harris and master drummer Gerald Cleaver, which premiered at the Detroit Public Library.

As a pianist, Malis has shared the stage with a diverse array of musicians, including Marcus Belgrave, Gerald Cleaver, Jaribu Shahid, John Lindberg, William Hooker, A. Spencer Barefield, Tyshawn Sorey, Brandee Younger, J.D. Allen, and Marion Hayden. He has performed at the Yokohama Jazz Promenade (Yokohama, Japan), the Kennedy Center, Birdland (NYC), and The Stone (NYC).

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### **Longer (~600 words)**

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His 2020 album, *Dualisms*, was premiered at New Music Detroit’s 12th annual Strange Beautiful Music Festival. All About Jazz praised *Dualisms*, which featured writings, artwork, and videos alongside the music, as “an extraordinary multimedia project.”

Malis and saxophonist Marcus Elliot join forces as the duo “Balance.” Called “among the most compelling Detroit jazz musicians of their generation,” Elliot and Malis’ “intuitive improvisations” stand on the threshold of composed and improvised music. Their 2022 sophomore album, *Conjure*, was called “one of the best contemporary jazz records to come out of Detroit in quite some time” (Hour Detroit Magazine.) In 2017, they released their eponymous debut record, which was praised by the Detroit Metro Times as “contemporary jazz of the highest order, a benchmark for where the genre can go.”

In addition to their two acclaimed albums, Balance has performed at some of Detroit’s most stalwart cultural institutions. In 2020, they made their Orchestra Hall debut, performing as a part of Mark Stryker’s Jazz From Detroit salon concert series. In 2019 they devised I Got to Keep Moving, a collaborative performance piece with Guggenheim-award winning author Bill Harris and master drummer Gerald Cleaver, which premiered at the Detroit Public Library. Also in 2019, they were commissioned by Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings to compose new pieces

for themselves and a string quartet of Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians. In 2018, their Expansions show at the Detroit Institute of arts expanded their duet vocabulary to include J.D. Allen, Spencer Barefield, and John Lindberg in ensemble settings. They were named Artist-in-Residence at Chamber Music Detroit for their 2017-2018 season, where they premiered new pieces for themselves and expanded ensembles.

In July of 2015, Malis' self-released debut album as a leader, *Lifted from the No of All Nothing*, was called by The Detroit Free Press "an uncommonly mature and distinctive debut." It was described by Hot House Jazz Guide (NYC) as "cover[ing] a broad range of free expression. [Malis] bridges the gap between original composed, complex material and the spontaneity of improvisation." In September 2016, his trio made their debut at the Detroit International Jazz Festival.

As a composer, Malis has been commissioned by Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, Chamber Music Society of Detroit, Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Detroit Composers' Project, Virago, Hole in the Floor, and others. His piece for piano and cello, *Coda*, was premiered by Detroit Symphony Orchestra principle cellist Wei Yu in 2018. His scores for theater have been performed at the Cleveland Public Theater, the Galway Fringe Festival, and Detroit PuppetART Theater.

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