

April 26, 2021

To Whom it May Concern,

It gives me great pleasure to write this letter in support of drummer, composer and bandleader Stich Wynston and his nomination for the Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts.

I have known and worked with Stich for almost twenty years through my work as a member of The Shuffle Demons, an internationally recognized band of which Stich is a founding member.

Stich has an immediately recognizable sound and approach on the drums. This uniqueness also carries over into his concept as a composer and improviser. Anyone who has witnessed a Shuffle Demons performance can attest not only to Stich's world class drumming, but also to his gifts as a dynamic and engaging performer. He is always exploring and searching for fresh ways to communicate his ideas and to create an excitement that inspires his fellow artists and keeps audiences on the edge of their seat.

For almost twenty years, I have had the good fortune of recording and performing around the world with The Shuffle Demons, due in large part to Stich's tireless efforts in seeking out performing opportunities for the band. In so doing, Stich has greatly contributed to Canadian culture and has without question created more awareness of our culture on a global scale.

I have an enormous amount of admiration and respect for Stich and am constantly inspired by his unrelenting commitment to artistic integrity.

Stich Wynston's outstanding contributions as a drummer, composer and bandleader continues to make a huge impact on music and art in Canada, and I can think of no one more deserving of this prize than him.

I will close by saying that I am proud to call Stich a colleague and a friend and look forward to collaborating with him for many years to come.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelly Jefferson', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Kelly Jefferson

saxophonist - composer - educator

Multiple Juno award-winning saxophonist, composer and educator Kelly Jefferson has been a leading figure in the Canadian jazz community and beyond for over twenty-five years. He has performed with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Maria Schneider, Christian McBride, Kenny Werner, Phil Woods, Clark Terry, Al Jarreau, Michel LeGrand, Brian Blade, Randy Brecker, Renee Rosnes, Russell Malone and Joey DeFrancesco.

Mr. Jefferson is currently a faculty member at both the University of Toronto and York University, has adjudicated at music festivals, and has given numerous clinics and workshops throughout North America.

Richard Underhill
saxophonist, composer, arranger, band leader
23 Wales Ave., Toronto, Ontario M5T 1J2

April 18/2021

To the Walter Carsen Prize Jury:

I am writing this letter in support of drummer, composer, band leader, manager and distinctive creative artist Stich Wynston.

I have had the pleasure of working with Stich for over 35 years and so feel very qualified to recommend him for this prestigious award. I know Stich in many of his roles but for me Stich stands out most notably as a drummer and composer with a unique style, prodigious creativity and uncompromising artistic vision. He is incredibly passionate about his musical vision and pushes against stylistic and artificial commercial barriers to create a truly original, effortlessly musical approach. His distinctive artistic voice is integral to the sound of the Shuffle Demons and his powerfully expressive and communicative artistic concept has helped to propel this group from a 1980s street band to a world traveling phenomenon often described as Canada's musical ambassadors.

Stich brings the same passion and drive to leading the Shuffle Demons as he brings to his performances. I knew that he had had success booking his creative jazz and improvised music group 'Modern Surfaces' at festivals in Europe, but when he took over booking the Shuffle Demons in 2005, my expectations were shattered by the fearlessness, vision and drive that he brought to the table. Within just over a year, he had booked the band on tours to China, India and Europe, a feat that he kept duplicating year after year as the band toured around the world performing at festivals in Japan, India, Thailand, S. Korea, China, Europe, South and Central America, the USA, Mexico, the Caribbean, Australia, New Zealand and Africa. Stich collaborated with Canadian Embassies and High Commissions all over the world to help promote Canadian culture through the Shuffle Demons international touring activities. His incredible drive, foresight and persistence is rewarded by quality performances at world renowned festivals. His hard work and skill is always in service of artistic excellence and his desire to bring a unique musical viewpoint to the people of the world.

When not performing on prestigious festival stages, Stich works with the best dance teachers and choreographers from around the world as a top call musical accompanist for dance in Toronto at such renowned institutions as the School of Toronto Dance Theatre, Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre, Dancemakers, Ballet Creole, National Ballet of Canada School, Walter Carsen Dance Studios, York University Dance Department, Ryerson University Dance Department and the George Brown College Dance Department. His intricate and precise knowledge of rhythm from around the world and impeccable performing ability have been marvellous assets to the Toronto dance community for 25 years.

In short, given the breadth and depth of Stich Wynston's accomplishments from outstandingly creative performer and composer to accompanist and manager par excellence, there are not very many musicians who have this kind of pedigree and skill set and I am proud to recommend Stich for the Walter Carsen Prize in Excellence for the Performing Arts.

Sincerely,



Richard Underhill



THE SCHOOL
of Toronto Dance Theatre

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established in 1968

Patricia Fraser
Artistic Director

Michelle Yeung, CFRE
Managing Director

Board of Directors

Gail Lilley
President

Ama Hysi
Treasurer

Marie Gadula
Secretary

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Past-President

Allison Bone
Steven Del Degan
Lorne Fox
Christina Giannelia

April 30, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am delighted to support the nomination of Stich Wynston for the Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts. Stich has been a masterful accompanist for dance classes at our School for 25 years, and has made an exceptional contribution as an artistic collaborator. He is an immensely loyal colleague and faculty member. His many years of touring with the Shuffle Demons, and performing with other exceptional musicians and musical groups, have given him an incredible background of artistic ideas and influences that he brings to his experience with our teachers and students.

Stich's expertise in hand-drumming is inspiring; his rhythms are ideally adaptable for movement, and he is always completely engaged and supportive when he plays for classes. He has the ability to intuit what the teacher needs, and also what the students need, and he is a vital support for both. He has the ability to make his contribution musically simple or superbly complex, in order to best support both the young dancers and the teachers.

In addition to his brilliant accompaniment for movement classes, he has been my first choice as the musician supporting our Pedagogy course, where our students learn how to teach dance with an accompanist. In these classes, Stich is always very insightful in guiding the young dancers who are practice-teaching; he has the ability to help them understand that the musician is an integral partner in the class; that a dance class with an accompanist is a collaboration between artists. He is always very thoughtful and straightforward with his advice and guidance to student-teachers; advice offered with an open heart. As well as playing for our Pedagogy course and dance classes at our School, Stich has been a highly valued participant in our many outreach activities with diverse communities within the local school system.

Stich's musical gifts have enriched the activities of our school, as well as numerous others in Toronto including Ballet Creole, Canada's National Ballet School, Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre, Dancemakers, Walter Carsen Dance Studios, the Dance Departments of George Brown College and Ryerson and York Universities, for many years. Several generations of dance artists, teachers, and students have benefitted from his talent, his artistic sensibility, his generosity, and his unwavering engagement. The Walter Carsen Prize would be a wonderful acknowledgement and recognition of his outstanding musical artistry and his contribution to the art form of contemporary dance.

Respectfully,

Artistic Director