

## DONAL FOX

### Selected Press Quotes

“A composer, pianist and improviser who deftly draws from jazz and classical contemporary traditions.”

—*The New York Times*

“[Fox's] innovative amalgam of Baroque and bebop (with a bit of Babalu) is unique and utterly commanding, brilliantly fusing Bach and Monk so that you can't tell where one leaves off and the other begins.”

— *The Boston Globe*

“His playing on the classics is superb, and on the pianissimo of the Dowland his fingers touch the keys with the delicacy of a butterfly alighting on a flower.”

— *The Boston Examiner*

“Ingenious artistry... Donal Fox improvises on several hundred years of musical tradition with aplomb and veracity.”

— *All About Jazz*

“Art Tatum on the right hand, Johann Sebastian Bach on the left, Donal Fox in the middle.”

— Terrance McKnight, WQXR

“[Fox] uses elements of pieces by Scarlatti, Bach, and Schumann... as fixed objects against which the music can flex its muscles... breaking it down in between into individual motivic atoms... Intricate, yet enlivened by many moments of easy recognition.”

— *All Music*

“Donal Fox is simply without peer. He is a bravura concert artist ... bracingly original... A singular presence in today's circle of serious cultural activists.”

— Howard Mandel, senior contributor to *DownBeat Magazine*

“Fox's music is unlike that of anyone else, while at the same time it evokes McCoy Tyner, Art Tatum, the intensity of Coltrane and of the blues, shades of Bach and Cuban music.”

— *Jazz Hot* (France)

“Some pianists have a big sound. Some are exciting. But rarely do I hear one whose playing, from the very first note, forces me to listen as irresistibly as Donal’s does... Rich, warm, and sensitive authority... He doesn’t have to break any barriers or prove any points. He’s completely at home in everything he does.”

— Greg Sandow, *New Music Box*

“The pianist Donal Fox has been said to blend Bach and jazz – and Bach and Thelonious Monk in particular – but that's not quite right. When Fox plays, you can hear that the music has long since been blended by his sensibility, so that words like “crossover” are brittle and unnecessary. It may be that I hear his music that way because I had the privilege of sitting next to him at a piano in Boston while he worked some variations on Bach right on the spot. But you can hear it for yourself in his “Variations on a Bach Fugue,” with quartet, or his composition “Toccata on Bach.” So put away those Jacques Loussier and Swingles Singers records and get some Bach by Fox!”

— Paul Elie, author of *Reinventing Bach*

“Fox is a brilliant technician and an exquisite magician at the keyboard. From Bach's 'Preludium' emerged a tango by Astor Piazzolla as if it were the most natural thing in the world.”

— *Mittelbayrische Zeitung* (Germany)

“Pianist-composer Donal Fox is an audacious musician. Although one would expect that his recital would be designed to show the influence of Bach on the Argentinian composer of the “new tango,” Astor Piazzolla, Fox ends up reimagining both of them... and a half dozen other composers in between.”

— Michael Ullman, *The Arts Fuse*

“He took the first number, Dowland’s “Flow My Tears” fairly straight, but here were hints of what would impress for the rest of the night: his touch, tone, and sensitivity to dynamics, his compositional attention to chord voicings, his swing (even in non-swing material)... By the time he got to Handel’s “Passacaglia in G minor,” all of Fox’s talents were on display — that rising and falling dynamic contrast, propulsive melodic variations in the right hand driven by rock-solid ostinatos in the left.”

— Jon Garelick's *Giant Steps*

### **On “Scarlatti Jazz Suite Project”:**

“Brilliant... One of the most successful classical/jazz unions in recent memory.”

— Greg Thomas, *All About Jazz* on “Scarlatti Jazz Suite Project”

“Fox’s project adds jazz improvisation to segments of Baroque pieces by classical composers Scarlatti, Bach and others. Fox’s piece “Firefly,” which evolved into a blues, is an homage based on Bach’s “Two-Part Invention in G Minor.”

This intriguing blend, in which a brief classical theme triggers spirited invention, swings mightily. The title piece, “The Scarlatti Jazz Suite,” started with and returned to Baroque underpinnings that became reference points for each improviser. It gained in intensity throughout its 20-minute exploration. Fox’s set stretched to about 90 minutes, as the audience clamored for one of the weekend’s few encores. They got it—and it was worth it—as “Italian Concerto Blues” married Bach to a New Orleans bamboola rhythm.”

— Ken Franckling, *JazzTimes* on “Scarlatti Jazz Suite Project”

“Fox’s ‘Firefly’ was driving and forceful from the beginning, with Fox demonstrating how fast and flexible his piano playing is. It switched to some 4/4 swing before [vibraphonist Warren] Wolf — a fast and fleet improviser with single mallets — played a bluesy solo that built in intensity. [Trumpeter Christian] Scott was in good form, bold and brassy with occasional burning be-bop runs. The music showed the dexterity and virtuosity of the musicians, as well as Fox’s ability to meld musical themes into a powerful overall statement that holds interest throughout.”

— R.J. Deluke, *All About Jazz* on “Scarlatti Jazz Suite Project”

“The set was brilliant. Intellectual beyond my comprehension, but fascinating. There is no way to passively listen to Fox.”

— Randy Rice, *Broadway World* on “Scarlatti Jazz Suite Project”

### **On *Peace Out* for Improvised Piano and Orchestra:**

“The blazingly scored orchestra part is fully composed. But the piano part, though well plotted, includes swaths of improvised, interactive music. The piece opens with a fitful section, all gnashing brass, spiraling strings and searing harmonic angst. Mr. Fox’s piano playing, bursting with violent, keyboard-spanning runs, drove the music. A searching middle section quotes fragments of a Charlie Parker blues tune, ‘Now’s the Time.’ After a steely solo piano cadenza, the piece concludes with a pensive finale based on a descending, and strangely haunting, four-note refrain... an arresting piece... exceptionally interesting.”

— Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times* on *Peace Out* for Improvising Piano and Orchestra

“Some of the finest composition and improvisation I’ve heard in recent memory.”

— George Grella, *The Big City* on *Peace Out* for Improvising Piano and Orchestra

**On “Spirituals Reimagined” at Carnegie Hall with the Albany Symphony Orchestra:**

“My favorite by far was Donal Fox’s “Hear De Lambs A-Cryin’.” Perhaps because Mr. Fox is a jazz pianist, he carefully avoided anything like jazz, but created a tragic song, starting with a remote simulated “cryin’,” continuing with a low brass repeated line below Mr. Myer’s singing.”

— Harry Rolnick, *ConcertoNet* on *Hear De Lambs A-Cryin’* for Baritone and Orchestra