



Blair Mackay, Percussionnist

An accomplished artist, Juno Award winner (Hall of Fame) and inductee into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame, Blair Mackay is a performer and artistic director who has collaborated with renowned composers and musicians such as Frank Zappa, Aretha Franklin, The Who, Breen LeBoeuf, Jeff Smallwood, Didier Chasteau, Roger Mann, Kim Richardson, Francine Raymond, and many more.

Most recently, last February, he was the percussionist for *Clowns* (Montreal Opera, Place des Arts), Ana Sokolovic's new opera.

Throughout his illustrious career, Blair Mackay has presented concerts and tours in Nova Scotia, France, England, Portugal, the United States, Germany, Japan, and Indonesia, to name just a few.

Blair Mackay's numerous performance selections include the Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan (ECCG) 40th Anniversary Concert, October 2024, Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan and Sixtrum Ensemble, Montreal and Toronto, new works, 2022, ECCG/Société de Musique Contemporaine (SMCQ) of Quebec, Festival du Monde Arabe at Place des Arts, 2019, ECCG 35th Anniversary Concert, The Music Gallery, Toronto, 2019, Canadian Opera Company production of *Turandot*, 2019, *Origins*, Toronto Jazz Festival, 2019, ECCG, Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, 2018, Tour of China with the Esprit Orchestra, 2017, SMCQ Performance, *Works of the Soul*, Bernstein, Rea, Stravinski, Montreal, 2016, the opera *How it Storms* with the ECCG, Toronto, 2015, Tour in British Columbia with Red Sky Theatre Productions, 2014, not to mention Blair Mackay's previous performances in 2014, the presentation of his *New Solo Works*, University of Montreal, 2014, *Anything Goes*, Broadway musical, Princess of Wales Theatre, Toronto, 2013, *The Rite of Spring* with the Esprit Orchestra, Montreal New Music Festival, 2013, *The Soldier's Tale* with Arraymusic, Enwave Centre, Toronto, 2013.

Blair Mackay also presented drum masterclasses at the University of Toronto, Percussive Arts Society, Ontario, 2013.

He contributed to the soundtrack of the Oscar-winning film *Life of Pi* in 2013. He also performed with ECCG, at the Ottawa and Hudson Chamber Music Festivals, 2013. From 2009 to 2012, he made recordings and tours with *April Wine*.

Among his other performances are *Dangerous Kitchen* (music by Frank Zappa), *Copernicus Opera* (Claude Vivier) (Strasbourg, Huddersfield, Banff Centre for the Arts, Toronto). From 1990 to 2019, he was a percussionist and principal drummer in musical theatre productions: *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Ragtime*, *Showboat*, *Mamma Mia!*, *The Sound of Music*, *Anything Goes*, and others.

Blair Mackay was a member of the Array Music ensemble (percussion), Toronto, from 1996 to 2009. He also toured and recorded with the Randon Access jazz ensemble, Toronto, from 1996 to 2000. • Principal percussionist, Esprit Orchestra, Toronto, 1996-2009, member since 1986. • Tours and recordings with *April Wine*, Montreal, 2007-2012.

Since 2007, Blair Mackay has been the Artistic Director of the Hudson Music Festival.

He oversees the conception, promotion, and production of this annual 8-day event, which features public performances in various venues. He also coordinates artist outreach initiatives and youth competitions. Blair is the co-founder and driving force behind the development of this festival, which has become a must-see summer event in the Hudson region.

Blair Mackay was the Artistic Director and Executive Director of the Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan (ECCG), Toronto, from 1992 to 2025. He also led an eight-piece ensemble and developed an international repertoire. Blair Mackay has secured approximately one hundred new commissions for contemporary music, including theatre, opera, dance, world music, jazz, and popular music, as well as implementing fundraising and outreach initiatives.

Blair Mackay's ten CDs have been critically acclaimed. His performance direction has been featured in several films and documentaries. He has received private commissions worldwide.

He has been a music teacher since 1975 and continues to give private lessons in percussion, drums, piano, and general music theory. He leads masterclasses internationally for music students, in partnership with the Esprit Orchestra and the Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan, as well as at North Albion Collegiate Institute (Toronto) and Sherbrooke Academy Senior (Montreal). The courses he teaches include: string orchestra, keyboard, computer music, general music theory, steel pan ensemble, percussion ensemble, and African dance, as well as the fundamentals of performance and music theory. He is a Canada Council for the Arts grant recipient.