James Weidman Biography

A valued pianist, James has been a sideman and accompanist in many settings over the past 30+ years, from Abbey Lincoln, Cassandra Wilson, Steve Coleman to Kevin Mahogany and the Grammy nominated Joe Lovano Us Five.  In addition, James has also proven to be an increasingly significant bandleader and composer/arranger. His recording on Inner Circle Music “Spiritual Impressions” featuring Ruth Naomi Floyd has garnered critical acclaim. It was selected by Cadence Magazine as one of the top ten albums of 2018. His 2023 piano trio release, “Sonic Realities” features bassist Harvie S and drummer Alvester Garnett performing original compositions and works by Charlie Parker, Kurt Weill and Hale Smith.

James began playing piano at the age of seven. He was first schooled in the elements of jazz by his father, saxophonist James Weidman, Sr., and by the time he was fourteen he was playing organ in his father’s band. James studied at Youngstown State University (from which he graduated cum laude in 1976 with a degree in applied piano and music education).

It was with this background that aided him in the development of his skilled touch as an adept soloist as well as a superior accompaniment Weidman made his inevitable move to New York City in 1978, where he worked around town as a sideman with various veterans and up-and-comers, while co-leading the band TaJa with longtime Randy Weston saxophonist TK Blue, before coming into the orbit of. Weidman’s early recordings with conceptualist Steve Coleman and the M-Base Collective colleagues Robin Eubanks, Greg Osby, Lonnie Plaxico and Cassandra Wilson, as well as other forward-thinking players like Marty Ehrlich and Jay Hoggard, signaled the development of Weidman’s personally individualistic approach to music that has been continuously evidenced on his own recordings of predominantly original compositions.

James Weidman is Assistant Professor of Jazz Piano and African American Studies at UGA.