

Biography: Malcolm Braff

A Swiss jazz pianist and game designer.

Malcolm Braff was born on June 10, 1970 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

He started playing the piano at the age of five, his parents wanted him to learn a musical instrument and from the age of six he played in front of his first audience: "I played for the first time in public at the age of 6, during the concert year of the school of music where I was registered, in Dakar: All students received a prize / gift. It started with candies up to 3rd, 2nd and finally 1st prize, which was the one I received, offered by the **President of Senegal** (at that time **Léopold Sédar Senghor**). Obviously, I cried a lot for having received a book rather than candy. That said, I think the image of myself being applauded because I play the piano was thus anchored in me very early and very deeply. It's only recently that I have started to distance myself from this image and role of the pianist." The experience will be renewed more often at the age of eight: My father was a pastor, and always sung lyrical singing and gospel. As soon as I could (around 8 years old) I accompanied him to the piano during his sermons".

It was in Dakar where he had his first piano lessons (his family having moved there when he was two years old): "My first teacher was **Mr. Santos**, who ran a music school in Dakar and taught alone a dozen instruments! As he always played the pieces and exercises first before I had to try my turn, I learned to play by ear to the detriment of reading. The efforts of my later professors to reverse this trend have failed, which is the reason why even today, I read very badly but enjoy a very good musical memory. In 1983, the family of **Malcolm Braff** moved again, but this time to Switzerland ... "Having often moved since my birth in Brazil, I think I have kept a nomadic temperament, and I often dream of the meadow next door."

For two years he attended the **University of Geneva Faculty of Arts in Philosophy, Musicology and Ancient Hebrew**, with a focus on **Theology**. "The music and the stage gradually took over and I left the university before half-licensed." He continued his musical training at the **Conservatoire de Neuchâtel**, then at the **Conservatory in Geneva**.

In 1989, **Malcolm Braff** fell in love with jazz ... "It was at the **Montreux Jazz Festival**. The group that played was a quartet of Australian hard bop, which was called the '**Wizards Of Oz**'. At the beginning, I didn't like this music at all; I was especially impressed by the freedom and the interaction between the musicians. When I discovered jazz, I interrupted my classical studies at the **Conservatory in Geneva** to register for the **Jazz School of Lausanne**. I was fired a few months later, disappointed by the academicism that I found while I was fleeing that of classical music."

Since then **Malcolm Braff's** career has consisted of a dazzling accumulation of success: with more than twenty records to his credit, very often scheduled at the **Montreux Jazz Festival** and at the **Cully Jazz Festival**, the high quality and strong personality of his musical discourse made him to be applauded on stages all over the world. "I participated in several recordings, either in the position of the band leader but also as a sideman. Most of these recordings are available in mp3 on my website." **Malcolm Braff** gives about eighty concerts a year and among his best memories he quotes: [...] I discovered India and its public connoisseur of improvisation (part preponderant classical Indian music), it was a very pleasant surprise." For the **Cully Jazz Festival**, **Malcolm Braff** composed an original creation with the **Ensemble Contrechamps** of Geneva in tribute to the Hungarian composer **György Ligeti**. "Initially the project consisted in a replay **Ligeti's** piano concerto, of which I would have improvised the piano part. This project ran up against refusal of rights holders, no doubt considering that it was sacrilege, or immoral, or something like that. So I decided to compose the orchestra part myself, a challenge that I believe more than one musician wants to try."

Sometimes you have to be patient with **Malcolm Braff**, like then when he released a concert record in 2007 of a concert which was recorded back in 2000, together with **Yaya Ouattara** and **Alex Blake**, to which he added two additional solos recorded in 2000: "I met **Yaya** in 1995, during my collaboration with the whole **Fafarina**, of which he was a member. Since then, we have not stopped collaborating different projects, including my quintet **Combo** with which we published two albums on **Blue Note**. I discovered Alex in 2000 while he was with **Randy Weston**. The idea of a trio with **Alex** and **Yaya** immediately triumphed and we played and recorded together as soon as the next year. Our music was immediately fusional. The disc is the fruit of the recording of our very first concert, without any repetition, the very first meeting! We find there, I believe, the magic of this first meeting, and the shared astonishment about something which felt like a reunion between old friends after a very long time."

Malcolm Braff has directed several formations:

The trio **Braff - Oester - Rohrer**, with whom he recorded two albums, the **Malcolm Braff Trio** (with **Alex Blake** and **Yaya Ouattara**), with whom he recorded the above-mentioned album **Yele**, the **3IO Quartet** with **Patrice Moret** and **Pascal Portner**, the **BMG Post Music Trio** with **Francois Gallix** and **Francesco Miccolis**, the tintet **Malcolm Braff & TNT** and **Malcolm Braff & Ensemble Contrechamps**.

Furthermore, **Braff** works in a duo with **Samuel Blaser** and is a member of the **Erik Truffaz & Malcolm Braff Indian Project**, **Andy Scherrer's Swiss South African Jazz Quintet**, the bands of **Lisette Spinnler** and **David Brito** and **Yarnick Barman's** group **Kiku et Veto**.

Since 2017, he is a part of the international jazz band **SHIJIN** alongside **Jacques Schwarz-Bart**, **Stephane Galland** and the initiator **Laurent David**.

Besides music, he also develops various board games together with friends. The 2007 game **Jamaica**, which he co-developed with **Bruno Cathala** and **Sébastien Pauchon**, was awarded the **Essener Feder 2008**, was on the recommendation list for the **Game of the Year 2008** and was nominated for the **As d'Or - Jeu de l'Année 2009**.