

An ebullient pianist, a graceful vocalist and a blooming composer, Dawn Clement has gained the respect and adoration of critics, fans and musicians on both coasts and abroad. Her range of expression is unfettered and is bolstered by a ninja-like mastery of her instruments. Fueled by an uncanny musicality, Dawn is comfortable in a multitude of terrains—soloing over a straight-ahead standard, navigating complicated arrangements with challenging meters or gently phrasing the softest of ballads. While her faculty is exceptional, she wields it judiciously, playing with intention, spaciousness and great care. The result is an original sound that is joyful and mesmerizing. In the words of Alexander Stern (*All About Jazz*), Dawn “seems to have everything going for her.” It is no wonder she is one of the most sought after musicians working today.

Dawn Clement is an adjunct instructor at Cornish College of the Arts, where she also received her Bachelors of Music. She is currently working on her Masters of Composition at the Vermont College of Fine Arts. Throughout her dazzling career, Dawn has played with some of the brightest luminaries in contemporary jazz and has appeared at prestigious venues across the globe. Her accolades have been numerous. Highlights include invitations to play at the Mary Lou Williams Piano Competition at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC and the International Martial Solal Jazz Piano Competition in Paris; being selected for the International Association of Jazz Educators’ first “Sisters in Jazz” quintet; touring the U.S. with the Sabella Consort and the Rubin/Clement Piano Dialogues; performing in Peru with the Johnaye Kendrick Quartet; teaching at the Centrum Jazz Workshop in Port Townsend and winning three Golden Ear Awards from Seattle’s Earshot Jazz, as well as being a featured profile in Earshot magazine. She has also released five

CDs to date: “hush,” “Break,” “Christmas with Dawn,” “Turn Me Again” and “Tempest Cobalt.”

With her most recent release “Tempest Cobalt,” Dawn expands her creative reach into contemporary pop and steps into the light as a songwriter. Charlie Smith, who produced and played on the album, describes it as “Ahmad Jamal playing duets with Blossom Dearie except they’re in modern-day Brooklyn having drinks with Dirty Projectors and Sufjan Stevens.” Shortly after the release, Dawn formed “Tempest,” a spirited modern music collective that features Johnaye Kendrick, Isaac Castillo, Jacques Willis and Ryan Burns. Inspired by music from “Tempest Cobalt,” the band’s live performances feature bold and playful interpretations of the songs from this recording, as well as new works in progress.

As a composer, Dawn takes her inspiration from a variety of sources- a melody, a chord progression, a riff from an improvisation, her young sons. “My kids inspire me constantly,” she says, “No rules, fresh ideas, no judgment.” And then there is life itself with its giddy moments, disappointments and mysteries. “These songs are about where I’m at or where I’ve been,” she says, “But writing can also be about someone else’s pain or heartache or joy, living it through their shoes as it were.” She is particularly amazed at how the meaning of a lyric can change over time. As such, songs are both a snapshot and an ongoing reflection on the human experience.

Dawn began playing the piano when she was 10-years old. Her first lessons were with a ragtime pianist Keith Taylor, who was also the organist at the church her family attended. He taught her to read her first notes and from there they worked through the John Thompson books. Keith held recitals and concerts in his home. “Everyone would play a rag,” Dawn recalls, “It

was ridiculously cool.” Dawn was a diligent student and practiced daily on the family piano, an old upright player with the felts worn off. Although her family moved around some when she was a child—eventually landing in Vancouver, WA—music was a constant for Dawn. She played everything from ragtime to classical and studied with several teachers. Although their expertise and styles were very different, each had an impact on Dawn’s development. When Dawn was 15-years old, she joined the high school jazz band. She also started sitting in at Portland area jam sessions. Playing alongside high-level musicians like the legendary drummer Ron Steen, Dawn was able to hone her jazz chops and learn from veteran players. Several of these sessions are still going strong today and Dawn is often a featured guest when she is in town.

Dawn holds high regard for the many artists who have influenced her throughout the years. Among them are Jerome Gray, Hadley Caliman, Julian Priester, Jane Ira Bloom, Ingrid Jensen, Jon Solo, Nancy King, Matt Wilson, George Cables, Jay Clayton; Diane Moser, Jonathan Bailey Holland and the rest of the faculty at the Vermont College of Fine Arts, as well as her many colleagues at Cornish. Dawn is also inspired by the numerous musicians in Seattle with whom she has the privilege of playing with on a regular and “not so regular” basis: "I feel the scene itself is vibrant and growing. I love discovering someone, young or old, whom I haven’t heard before. It happens often. My students at Cornish are constantly teaching and inspiring me. The attitude of the musicians, who are so committed to what they do, is infectious. It really bolsters and fosters such a supportive community. I thrive on it. It invigorates my ideas and overall concepts. I also love playing with people I’ve played with for years like Byron Vannoy, Geoff Harper, Mark Taylor, Chuck Deardorf, Jose Martinez and others. The level of trust and communication is high but the element of surprise is still there."

To see and hear Dawn Clement play is to witness a story in motion. It begins with a beguiling glance across the bandstand, followed by an enthusiastic nod to her musicians. Wide-eyed and expectant, she approaches with a sense of wonder. It's as if each note were brand-new and she were hearing it for the very first time. Yet she flows through the music with an unassuming finesse that reflects a deeper genius. Be it a perfectly articulated bebop line or the delicate delivery of an original lyric, she puts a virtuosic stamp on everything she does. With each song, she seems to be seizing her next great adventure. The allure is impossible to resist.