



Introduction to Etienne Charles. 2:06 min. Interview: Raymond Elman. Post-Production: Lee Skye. Music: Etienne Charles. **Recorded via Zoom:** 4/22/2022, Miami.

Musician Etienne Charles Cannot Be Pigeon-Holed

By Elman + Skye

Trinidad born **ETIENNE CHARLES** is a performer, composer, and storyteller who is continuously searching for untold stories and sounds with which to tell them.

His lush trumpet sound, varied compositional textures, and pulsating percussive grooves enable him to invoke trance, soothing and exciting listeners while referencing touchy and sometimes controversial subjects in his music.

A 2015 Guggenheim Fellow and 2022 Creative Capital Awardee, he researches his compositions by traveling to the regions on which he is focused, meeting with musicians and cultural leaders, then observing and participating in rituals to be fully immersed into the cultures that he is studying.

As an Afro-descendant, his work is actively connecting the diaspora and drawing lines to regions at the roots of migrations. Highlighting marginalized communities and engaging with them has been his mission, evident with projects such as **“Carnival: The Sound of a People Vol. 1, San Jose Suite, Creole Soul, and Folklore.”**

A firm believer in music and performance as tools for provoking thought and dialogue, Charles’ themes speak to the status quo while drawing parallels to history. With his latest commissioned project, San Juan Hill, he goes a step further by exploring the storied New York neighborhood to bring the culture of San Juan Hill to the mainstage.

His concerts engage, enlighten, educate, and enrich audiences with energized multidisciplinary performances utilizing original composition, thematic improvisation, dance, short films, and spoken word to create a holistic experience.

In June 2012, he was written into the **US Congressional Record** for his musical contributions to **Trinidad & Tobago and the World**. In 2013, his album Creole Soul reached #1 for three weeks on the Jazzweek chart and was eventually named #3 Jazz Album of the year by Jazzweek. Also in 2013 he received the **Caribbean Heritage Trailblazer award** from the **Institute of Caribbean Studies (Washington, DC)**.

In 2016 he was the recipient of the Michigan State University Teacher Scholar Award, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Millennial Swing award, and was a featured panelist and performer at the **White House for a Caribbean Heritage Month Briefing**. He made his debut as producer and songwriter on the album **“Petite Afrique” by Somi** (Sony/Okeh 2017) which won **Outstanding Jazz Album at the 2018 NAACP Image Awards**.

He has been featured as a bandleader at the **Newport Jazz Festival** (RI), **Monterey Jazz Festival** (CA), **Atlanta Jazz Festival** (GA), **Pittsburgh International Jazz Festival** (PA), **San Jose Jazz Festival** (CA), **Java Jazz Festival** (Indonesia), **Ottawa Jazz Festival** (Canada), **St. Lucia Jazz Festival**, **Barbados Jazz Festival**, Library of Congress (DC), Carnegie Hall (NY), and Koerner Hall (Canada).

As a sideman he has performed with and/or arranged for **Roberta Flack, Marcus Roberts, Marcus Miller, Count Basie Orchestra, Frank Foster’s Loud Minority Big Band, Monty Alexander, Gregory Porter, René Marie, Paulette McWilliams** and many others. He has been commissioned as a composer and arranger by **Lincoln Center** (2018 & 2021), Savannah Music Festival (2017), Chamber Music America (2015 & 2021), the Charleston Jazz Orchestra (2012), and the Chicago Jazz Ensemble (2011).

As an educator and conductor he has done residencies at the Juilliard School, Stanford University, Columbia College Chicago, Oakland University, Kent State University, Walnut Hills High School, Cultural Academy for Excellence, and the US Military Academy.

His dedication to the preservation of artistic traditions in his homeland inspired him to form and lead the Carnival bands **“We the People”** (2017), **“Street Party”** (2018), **“D’longtime Band”** (2019), and **“Euphoria”** (2020), which featured a full live brass band on a truck going through the streets of Woodbrook and Port of Spain playing vintage calypso and soca.

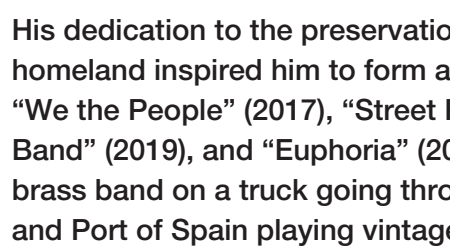
Understanding his role as Artist citizen, he sees live music as a way to uplift all peoples and is dedicated to bringing it to those who aren’t able to attend concerts. Specifically, in his homeland of Trinidad and Tobago, he has done performances and workshops at Princess Elizabeth Center, St. Dominic’s Children’s Home, St. Mary’s Children’s Home, St. Jude’s School for Girls, St. Michael’s School for Boys, St. Margaret’s School for Boys, Youth Training Center, and Maximum Security Prison.

He currently serves as Associate Professor of Studio Music and Jazz at the University of Miami Patricia L. Frost School of Music.

– **Etienne Charles website**

Editor’s Note: *In 2022, **Dranoff 2 Piano** presented internationally acclaimed musicians, **Etienne Charles** and the **Creole Soul band**, and **Weedie Braimah**, master of the djembe drum and African beats. Attendees enjoyed two days of first-class Caribbean, African and American artists exploring their Black African musical heritage in performances at the **Black Archives Historic Lyric Theater in historic Overtown**.*

ETIENNE CHARLES | JAB MOLASSIE LIVE: 3:00 min.



Composed by Etienne Charles (SESAC). Etienne Charles – trumpet / cajon. Godwin Louis – soprano sax. James Francies – piano. Alex Wintz – guitar. Jonathan Michel – bass. Obed Calvaire – drums. Steffano Marciano & Andrew Nicholas – Blue Devils. Recorded January 14, 2018, Queen’s Hall, Trinidad. © 2018 Culture Shock Music Inc. All rights reserved.

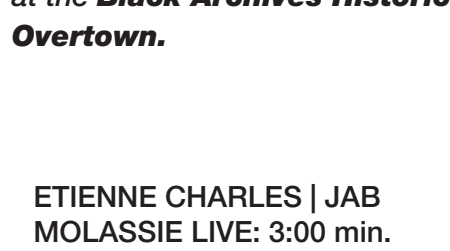
The videos below were **recorded via Zoom**, are organized by Success Factor, and run between 50 seconds and 6 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 1:09 min.



Where did you grow up and what was your first awareness of art of any discipline?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 3:32 min.



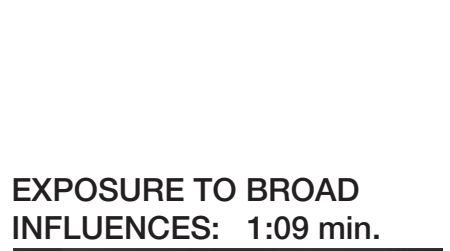
How did moving to the United States impact you?

CRITICAL THINKING: 1:02 min.



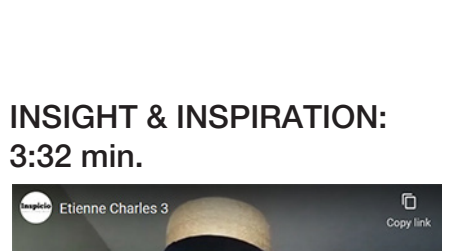
I know a woman from Ethiopia who moved to Washington, DC, and was shocked to see the negative impact of American culture on her son.

VALUES FIRST-RATE EDUCATION: 6:27 min.



You went to great schools like Juilliard and Berklee College of Music. What did you learn that still informs you today?

VALUES FIRST-RATE EDUCATION: 2:25 min.



When I interviewed Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, in 2016, he said, “Education without arts education is malpractice.”

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 2:07 min.



Tell us about your performance schedule in the Spring of 2022.

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 4:26 min.



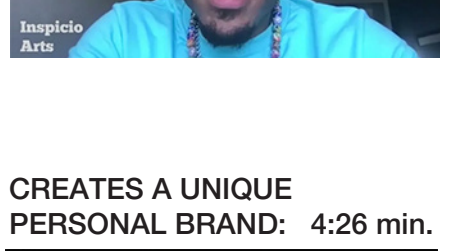
Talk about the way you use video during your performances.

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 1:02 min.



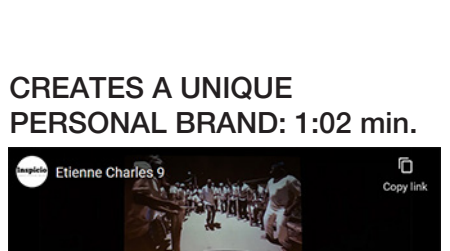
When you incorporate videos of other musicians into your live performances, is the video audio on or off?

CRITICAL THINKING: 3:01 min.



Talk about some of the highlights of the arc of your professional career after Juilliard.

VALUES FIRST-RATE EDUCATION: 3:54 min



What is your approach to teaching?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 3:41 min.



You are doing so many things simultaneously. If you could attain perfection, what would it look like?

COLLABORATION: 5:02 min.



I have witnessed the explosions of Miami's diverse art communities over the past 20 years, but there don't seem to be strong bridges between the communities. What is the status of Miami's music community?

OVERCOMES CHALLENGES TO SUCCEED: 2:53 min



What are the challenges for the kind of music you want to make?