

## BIO OF **OLAYEMI OGUNDOLA**

As a narrator and conceptualists, Olayemi's music is a reflection of his spirituality, cultural identity, and it's prophetic significance to humanity. Driven to explore the streams of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, a prophetic sound of Edification, Exhortation and Comfort.

Olayemi Ogundola born in Oyo town, Oyo State, Nigeria is an alto saxophonist, percussionist, performer, composer, and educator, born as the second of four children into a musically prone family on April 25 1992. Driven by a need to get quality education for his children, Olayemi's father took him through four primary schools till the final one; Lord's Kiddies Collage, Ilora, Oyo. Within this period, I was exposed to various styles of music, predominantly from West Africa, from a very early age beginning with the church choir and Yoruba traditional music performance.

My secondary school at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education Model High School, Oyo State had me taking recorder lessons from music teacher, learning the talking drum from the fine art teacher and joining the traditional group (winning a couple of awards with the group), representing the school in music competitions, rising to become the band prefect. I was introduced to classical singing by his father who is a choir master in Methodist Church. I received my first lesson on music theory from a neighbor at age 16. My father forced me to stop my music lesson while in high school because he wanted me to be an engineer, but I would sneak out with two of my friends for music lessons before returning home from school. Not long after this, I got my first taste of jazz music at 18 after buying a CD titled "All My Tomorrows" by Grover Washington Jr and became very interested in the concept of improvisation and on the music of jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker and John Coltrane. Ever since then, it had become a genre I ardently pursued and constantly sought to get better in.

I got admitted to Obafemi Awolowo Univesity to study but could not afford to buy a saxophone. I would borrow from a friend to practice over the night before resuming classes. In 2011, my mum bought my first saxophone and attended the Nigerian Baptist Music Workshop where I met Olumide Shobowale, the Nigerian Representative at London College of Music who is also a saxophonist. I enrolled in his saxophone lesson and set me on the right path musically. I was later faced with challenges and couldn't conclude his program at the university.

Undeterred by this turn of events, I moved to Lagos in 2015 where was exposed to a broader music scene of the country. I was later introduced to the practical exam Associated Board of the Royal School of Music where I had my first academic/career breakthrough. I got a scholarship to study with the Music Society of Nigeria where I joined the big band, orchestra and choir. I studied classical saxophone performance with Late Lt.Rtd. Abayomi Odujobi and Imoleayo Balogun. I obtained Diploma in Music and was able to attempt the Grade 8 practical exam on Alto saxophone with a merit and advanced choral singing with distinction.

My time at the MUSON brought me further exposure to deeper expressions of my art. I also joined and performed with the big band, orchestra, and choir. At MUSON, Olayemi's classmates included Tombrapade Roberts, Raphael Lasisi, Temidayo Balogun, Tobi Stephens and Timothy Ogunbiyi. During his time in Muson, I was listed among the musicians as alto saxophonist to perform with Jo Kunnuji and his Experiment at the MUSON festival. I was involved in the Music exchange and workshop program in May 2016, where I performed with Max Weissenfeldt and The Polyversal souls band from Germany featuring The Invisible Joy Orchestra. I also performed with the MUSON orchestra and choir under the tutelage of the German Cellist and Conductor, Walter-Michael Vollhardt. I performed and had an apprenticeship in African Music with Tunde Jegede (composer and multi- instrumentalist in contemporary classical, African and pop music) while in Muson in 2017. I also performed and worked with Nigerian composers/artist such as 2face Idibia, Falz, Timi Dakolo, Seun Owoaje, Olumide Shobowale, Imoleayo Balogun.

In 2020, I moved to the USA for my graduate degree at Longy School of Music where he studies with Noah Preminger, concentrating on jazz and contemporary music performance.

I have been privileged to work with many Nigerian artists which includes my father. I began recording with his father at the age of 10. I have recorded 6 albums with my father, where I played the saxophone and sang. This experience is part of what shaped my performing skills. I project a warm and fierce sound on the saxophone and have been regarded many times as an ensemble conceptualizer. The traditional music across Nigeria and jazz has been a major influence and process to finding my own voice after being exposed to learning Yoruba musical instruments such as Dundun, Agbe, Bata drum, Sakara, Gudugudu, Omele Bata and several others. In 2014, I worked as a recording studio assistant in Bigwig studio at Ibadan, Nigeria. In 2018, I joined a band named ÌRÓ, an Afrofuturistic group where I composed and arranged music for the band, I also served as a saxophonist and singer. I was involved in performances and tours in Lagos music festival and also worked with the group in recording sessions. As a member of ÌRÓ band that came second in the Yamaha E band competition in 2018, I bagged the award of the best keyboardist. I was actively involved in performing with Seun Owoaje, the famous Nigerian pianist and composer. We had myriads of performances in Lagos and Ibadan where we explored the Yoruba and African art. Olayemi is excited to announce his debut album release in the coming days.