

Andy Milne – Pianist /Composer • Bio Release



For more than 30 years, two-time Juno Award winning pianist/composer Andy Milne has demonstrated boundless versatility, collaborating with dancers, film makers, authors, visual artists, poets and musicians spanning multiple genres. He has released 13 recordings as a leader or co-leader, actively composing for orchestra, chamber ensembles, and scoring for film and television. A fearless improviser and respected voice at the heart of New York's creative jazz scene, Milne has recorded and toured throughout the world with Ravi Coltrane, Ralph Alessi, Carlos Ward, Carla Cook and Steve Coleman, and has collaborated with a range of artists including Joe Lovano, Andrew Cyrille, Sekou Sundiata, Avery Brooks, Bruce Cockburn, Fred Hersch, Ben Monder, Dianne Reeves, Jen Shyu, Tyshawn Sorey and Jamie Baum.

Aligning with Milne's mid-career crescendo as a composer, he received the 2026 *Commission of the Year* award from Chamber Music America, honoring the piano quintet commissioned by the Banff international String Quartet Competition and premiered by Milne alongside the Isidore String Quartet. In 2026, the award-winning Elmer Iseler Singers premiered Milne's first commissioned choral work, *Try to Fly*, set for chorus, piano and percussion. Milne's score for *True North*, the latest film from Emmy winning director Michele Stephenson, earned him a 2026 Canadian Screen Music Award nomination. The film premiered at TIFF2025 and received its broadcast debut on PBS's Independent Lens in 2026. This follows the success of his score for Stephenson's episode of the CBC Television documentary series *Black Life – Untold Stories* which was also nominated for a Canadian Screen Music Award in 2024.

The *John Coltrane: Legacy for Orchestra* project, as part of the Coltrane 100 celebrations, commissioned Milne to create several orchestral arrangements, which premiered with The Toronto Symphony and saxophonist Joe Lovano in 2024. These works continue to be performed, including performances by the BBC Concert Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Nashville Symphony, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and The Philadelphia Orchestra. In 2023, Milne was hired as musical director/arranger and a cast member for the Emmy nominated Showtime series *Fellow Travelers*. This built upon his career scoring for film and tv which began in 2011 when he scored *The Captains* and six additional Star Trek themed documentaries for acclaimed actor/director William Shatner. It was during this period that Milne's journey composing for orchestra would blossom. He was selected to attend the Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute at UCLA under the direction of George Lewis in 2012; and then invited to compose for the 2013 American Composers Orchestra JCOI New Music Readings.

Early in his development, Milne was a former student of Oscar Peterson. He later earned the piano chair in the center of the M-BASE Collective as a core member of saxophonist Steve Coleman's bands in the 1990s, performing frequently with Cassandra Wilson and Greg Osby. After a formative apprenticeship with Coleman, Milne stepped out to conquer his own musical frontiers. For the next two decades, he created multiple inspired projects, including his longstanding quintet Dapp Theory.

In 2017, enriched with creative insights from his multiple projects, Milne formed his latest group, UNISON, to return to his first love: exploring the intimacy of the piano trio. The synchronistic relationship Milne enjoys with his bandmates represents the complimentary threads within the fabric of Milne's piano trio philosophy -- the intersection of texture and groove. Unison's 2024 Sunnyside Records release *Time Will Tell* was nominated for a 2025 Juno Award and was included on numerous "best of 2024" lists. Their 2020 debut, *The reMission*, won the 2021 JUNO Award for Jazz Album of the Year: Group and received widespread media praise.

In 2014, with support from The Japan Foundation and New Music USA, Milne premiered *Strings & Serpents* at Lincoln Center. The interdisciplinary collaboration combines two pianos and two kotos with animation depicting The Rainbow Serpent mythology. A synthesis of Japanese and Western structures in terms of melody, form, improvisational language and rhythm, the work merges musical and visual forms into a unified experience.

One of Milne's most ambitious projects, *The Seasons of Being*, showcased a 10-piece ensemble featuring Dapp Theory, plus five distinguished guest improvisers. Commissioned by Chamber Music America's New Jazz Works, the music explores the body, spirit and mind on music, using the diagnostic principles of homeopathy to harness the emotional characterization of each soloist. It premiered at Millersville University and Jazz at Lincoln Center in 2015. The recording, released on Sunnyside Records in 2018, was awarded the 2019 Juno Award for Jazz Album of the Year: Group. This special project followed the dynamic 2014 Dapp Theory release, *Forward in all Directions*, produced by multi-Grammy winner, Jimmy Haslip.

Milne's early Dapp Theory recordings helped forge a foundation for the creative diversity he would explore in subsequent projects. Forming Dapp Theory in 1998, Milne cited his desire to "*tell passionate stories, promote peace and inspire collective responsibility towards uplifting the human spiritual condition.*" He used rhythm to bend listeners' minds and bodies, mixing R&B, jazz, rock, pop and hip-hop influences, and incorporating free-style and composed lyrics to promote a profound sense of social commentary within the music. One of the most compelling expressions of these ingredients was Milne's ambitious collaboration with Canadian folk-rock icon Bruce Cockburn on the 2003 Concord Records release, *Y'all Just Don't Know*.

In 2008, Milne was awarded the French-America Jazz Exchange from Chamber Music America and formed Crystal Magnets, a duo piano collaboration with French pianist Benoît Delbecq. Inspired by the 5.0 surround sound format, Milne set out to compose for the medium and capture sound in harmony with that environment. During their recording residency at The Banff Centre, Milne and Delbecq exploited the unique potential for placing specific compositional elements in distinct regions of the surround sound mix. In 2009, Songlines Recordings released *Where is Pannonica?*, which The New York Times lauded as a "*strangely beautiful new album*" [from two] "*resourcefully contemporary pianists, both drawn to quixotic interrogations of harmony and timbre.*"

Milne released two unique piano recordings in 2007. Both CDs received wide critical acclaim, presenting complementary reflections of his expanding musical personality. *Dreams and False Alarms* [SongLines] featured deeply considered reworkings of long-remembered pop/rock/folk/reggae classics, reaffirming and expanding Milne's creative process as a jazz improviser. *Scenarios* [Obliqsound] presented a more textural, almost cinematic series of intimate duo encounters with harmonica virtuoso Grégoire Maret. Their duo developed naturally during Maret's four years as a member of Dapp Theory. Also in 2007, Milne collaborated with tap dancer/choreographer Heather Cornell to create *Finding Synesthesia*, which premiered that year at the London Jazz Festival. Together they combined a wide and unexpected range of sounds and influences, integrally weaving tap into the texture and sound of the orchestration.

Milne is both a Yamaha Piano and Steinberg Artist, and sought-after educator. He is a tenured associate professor of music at The University of Michigan and the Gala Concert Artist for the 2026 Michigan Music Teachers Association Conference. He has received numerous awards and commissions, including the prestigious Civitella Fellowship in Italy.

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