

A brilliant young violinist, Ben Powell has already lived a couple of musical lifetimes during his 23 years, and in some ways he is just getting started. His recent debut CD *Light* shows just creative and swinging a jazz violinist he is at this early stage.

“Following in the footsteps of the great Stephane Grappelli, Ben Powell has developed a very personal inspired voice on the violin. His ideas flow freely with expression in every kind of music he is exploring..... - Joe Lovano

Ben Powell was born in Cheltenham, England into a musical family. His mother is a Suzuki violin teacher and his father is a cellist in the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Ben eagerly started the violin at the age of two, learning from his mother.

His talent was eminent from a very young age resulting in an invitation to solo at the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics in Japan as part of an International Suzuki celebration. In 1999 he traveled with the National Isis Strings Academy of Great Britain, performing at the Kennedy Center and on the steps of the U.S. Capitol Building. The following year at 14, he was a guest soloist on a European Suzuki tour that traveled to Germany, Belgium, Holland and France. Ben's first major orchestral experience soon followed with his successful placement into the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain at age 16. In his three years as an orchestral member, Ben played under many internationally renowned conductors such as Yan Pascal Tortelier, Sir Roger Norrington and Marin Alsop to name a few. Ben toured the major concert halls of the UK with the National Youth Orchestra, each year culminating with a televised Prom from London's Royal Albert Hall. In his third and final year in the orchestra, Ben was awarded the position of principle second violinist.

Unlike most classical musicians, Ben not only developed a strong interest in jazz but the versatility to be able to play swinging improvisations. As a young teenager, he was introduced to Stephane Grappelli's music. "I had had oral training on the violin for six or seven years, so I was open to jazz and improvising. I was able to relate to Stephane's playing quite quickly. Classical music gave me the technique in order to express myself in jazz and improvisation. In jazz, whatever I feel comes out. I did not have to change my sound or my approach at all."

From his 2001 invitation to play for jazz trumpeter Randy Brecker as part of the Cheltenham International Jazz festival, Ben has since shared the stage with greats such as Herbie Hancock, Steve Gadd, Gary Burton, Joe Lovano, Gloria Estefan, Paul Simon, Abe Laboriel, Stevie Winwood and Philip Bailey to name a few. In 2005 Ben was awarded a scholarship to study at Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he is currently finishing a degree in jazz composition. In addition to college requirements Ben enjoys playing in the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra.

As a soloist Ben has given performances all over the world in places as far ranging as Turin, Italy; Munster, Germany; San Francisco, Boston, Washington DC, Louisville, Los Angeles, Houston USA to name a few. In 2005, Ben played a solo performance in the prestigious Purcell Rooms in London's Queen Elizabeth Southbank complex. He has also had the privilege of performing for the First Lady, Laura Bush and Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan. In the summer of 2007 Ben had the honor of meeting 'The Champ' Muhammad Ali in recognition of his musical outreach efforts in the city of Louisville, Kentucky.

Light is Ben's recording debut, and it features him already as a mature jazz soloist. Some selections showcase him with a quartet also including pianist Cedric Hanriot, bassist Aaron Darrell and drummer Devin Drobka while the other songs match his violin with vibraphonist Richard Greenblatt, guitarist Jon Sosin, bassist Dave Hollender and drummer Drobka. Among the

many highlights are a swinging “How High The Moon,” an emotional “Danny Boy” (which really puts the spotlight on his beautiful tone), the bop standard “Half Nelson” and “Paradise,” plus two songs apiece by Stephane Grappelli and Florin Niculescu. “Most of the CD is full of Grappelli-type songs, the type of medium-tempo swing that he did so well. My main influences at this point are Stephane and Florin Niculescu. I’m a big believer in getting a beautiful sound, good intonation and clear articulation. There is no excuse for sacrificing the essential components to good violin playing just because one plays jazz.” There will surely be many opportunities for Ben Powell to make musical history. Light is an important early step.

Recently, Ben had the opportunity to meet both Didier Lockwood and Florin Niculescu during a visit to Paris, both of whom were happy to meet and listen to the young violinist, offering him valuable advice. Ben is enthusiastic about the future.

For more information, please visit – **www.ben-powell.com**