

Keith Copeland

Internationally-renowned percussionist, composer, arranger and educator Keith Copeland was born in New York City and grew up in Jamaica Queens.

The son of trumpet player Ray Copeland, he knew he wanted to play drums for as long as he can remember. "I started taking lessons when I was 10," says Copeland. "My father finally gave in to my harrassment - but he wouldn't let me have a whole set. He got me a snare drum, a practice pad and a teacher and told me if I did well, I'd get a new piece of equipment every six months or so. In three years I had a full set."

At age 15, Keith had his union card and was playing the wedding and Bar Mitzvah circuit. At 16 he was sitting in at Mintons Playhouse in Harlem with Barry Harris, Charles McPherson and the like. A love for aviation and his desire to play in a band led to his enlisting in the Air Force in 1963 at the age of 17, but instead of playing music, he found himself working in telecommunications and cryptography, first in Greenland, then in Germany at Ramstein Air Base

Four years later, after a short stay in New York, Copeland used his GI Bill to attend Berklee College in Boston. He toured with Stevie Wonder for 7 months, and as part of the Maggi Scott Trio, backed up such celebrities as Billy Eckstine, Cab Calloway, Helen O'Connell, Tony Martin and Eartha Kitt.

In 1975 Copeland was offered a teaching position at Berklee, continuing the parallel career as a music educator that now finds him in demand as a clinician in Canada, Ireland and Northern Ireland, the U.S., Asia and Europe. After teaching at Berklee for three years, Copeland returned to New York, where he worked with Sam Jones and joined Johnny Griffin on his triumphant return to the United States after several years in Europe. Later that year, he joined the Heath Brothers and stayed with them for 18 months before getting the call to work with pianist Billy Taylor's trio, an association that lasted five years. "I went on my own in 1984 and I've been on my own ever since", says Copeland. "In '86 I started working off and on with Hank Jones. I've made six records with him and he's one of the greatest musicians I have ever played with."

Copelands's list of performing and recording credits is extensive and includes engagements with such luminaries as George Russell, Frank Foster, Slide Hampton, Milt Jackson, Jo Anne Brackeen, John Dankworth, Rory Stuart, Stanley Cowell, Paul Bley, Howard Alden, Chris Connor, Stan Getz, Ray Anderson, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Tom Harrell, Phil Woods, Roger Kellaway, Stephane Grappelli, Teddy Edwards, Sir Roland Hanna, Sonny Fortune and countless others.

From the mid '80s to 1992, Copeland taught at Rutgers University, Queens College, Long Island University and the New School University in New York.

In 1992, he became a Professor of jazz percussion at the Hochschule Für Musik Köln in Germany. In 1993 he also accepted a teaching position at the Hochschule Für Musik Mannheim-Heidelberg. In 1996 he became a Professor of jazz percussion at the Hochschule für Musik Mannheim-Heidelberg in Mannheim, Germany, where he

remained for 2 ½ more years and was the only drum set professor holding two professorships in Germany during this time.

Other teaching credits include Summer sessions at the Eastman School of Music Jazz Workshop (1979-'93), the Vermont Jazz Center Putney, Vermont (1990 -'92), Montclair State College, Montclair, N.J. (1991-'93), the Banff Centre for the Arts Jazz Workshop in Banff, Alberta, Canada (1991-'94) and the University of Ulster at Jordantown in Northern Ireland (1992-'98).

His first book, Creative Coordination for the Performing Drummer is published by Carl Fischer.

In 1992 and 1994 he was a guest instructor at the Interlaken Jazz Workshop in Interlaken Switzerland. In 1997 he was also a guest instructor at The Berklee in Germany Workshop held in Heek, Germany.

(Keith and Ute's wedding in Las Vegas, June 2, 1994)

In 1998 he was invited to participate as a clinician at the 25th anniversary of the Banff Center Of The Arts, Jazz workshop.

As a sideman, Copeland has over 100 recordings to his credit, including such rare treasures as Johnny Griffin's Return of the Griffin (Galaxy) and the following 3 Grammy-Nominated CD's - Once in Every Life with Johnny Hartman (Bee Hive), The African Game with George Russell (Blue Note) and All My Life with Charles Brown.

His first recording as a leader, "On Target" (Jazzmania), features former Rutgers colleagues Kenny Barron (piano) and Mark Kirk (saxophones) with Mike Richmond (bass), was released in the spring of 1993 to enthusiastic reviews.

He has since recorded three more CD's as leader on the Steeplechase label and one more on the Jazz Focus label with worldwide distribution.

The Steeplechase CD's are entitled "The Irish Connection", "Round Trip", and „Live in Limerick“ and they feature Tommy Halferty on guitar and Ronan Guilfoyle on electric bass guitar.

The Jazz Focus CD is entitled "Postcard From Vancouver" and features Miles Black on piano and Rick Kilburn on bass.

In the last twelve years since relocating to Germany, Copeland has performed many tours in Europe and the U.S. with Karl Heinz Steffens, David Gazarov, Tony Lakatos, Jimmy Woode, Ann Malcolm, Jürgen Seefelder, Sonny Fortune, Ernie Watts, Jesper Lundgaard's Copenhagen Repertory Quartet, Bill Molenhof, Sigurd Ulveseth, Ulf Radelius, Dusko Goykovich, Piero Odorici, Antonio Ciacca, Niels Jürgen Steen's A-Team, Marko Tamborini, Dado Maroni, Ray Mantilla, Joan Faulkner, Jeannie Bryson, Shann Monteiro, Joshua Breakstone, Rory Stuart, Armen Donelian, Benny Golson, Houston Person, Jimmy Heath, Roger Menillo, John Tchicai, Cross-Talk featuring Michael Arlt and Jean Yves Jung, Maggy Scott Duo and with Percussion Ensemble, Markus Fleischer, Natascha Roth, Claudia Carbo, Deborah Brown, Joaquin Chacon, Massive Groove, Larry Vuckovic, Stiepmo Gut, Eric Alexander, One For All, Jim

Rotundi, David Hazeltine, Charles Brown, Fritz Krisse, Leonid Ptashka, Phillip Catherine, Frank Haunschild, Charlie Wood, Nicole Metzger, Wesley G. and the Keith Copeland Trio, featuring Tommy Halferty and Ronan Guilfoyle.

In November 2003 a new DVD was released on Inakustic Records entitled "The Go Jazz Allstars in Concert" featuring Ben Sidran, Georgie Fame, Bob Rockwell, Charlie Wood and Keith Copeland. This DVD was recorded live in Baden-Baden for the TV-Show "Ohne Filter" in July 1998.

In January 2004 a new CD and DVD was released on Rounder Records entitled "A Life in the Blues" featuring the late legendary singer and piano virtuoso Charles Brown, which was recorded live in 1990 at the Lonestar Roadhouse in New York and features Danny Caron, Earl May and Keith Copeland.

In November 2004 Keith Copeland introduced a new trio which featured Lars Dueppler, a graduate of the Hochschule für Musik in Köln and Fedor Ruskuc, a current student of the Hochschule für Musik in Köln. This trio made its very successful debut at the Novi Sad Jazz Festival in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Professor Copeland continues to teach at the Hochschule Für Musik Köln, record and make appearances in Europe, the U.S., and Canada from his home base in Frankfurt, Germany.