

Bio Ben LaMar Gay

[Ben LaMar Gay](#) is a genuine original. An imbued composer, conjurer, channeler of cosmopolitan Blues and patently eclectic artist who Jeff Parker calls "hands down, one of my favorite musicians on the planet today." Gay is a Southside Chicago native who was raised in the tutelage of the legendary [AACM](#) (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians).

With his first instrument, the cornet, and an intuitive sense of self-production, in youth he traversed the diversity of the city's music scenes (jazz, hip hop, house, electronic, rock, avant garde, salsa, latin jazz, et al) before embarking on a several-year residential relocation to Brazil. Beloved by listeners and collaborators alike for [his ability to absorb and poetically refract the sound of any context he's immersed in](#), Gay's return home to Chicago in the early 2010s marked the beginning of a compositional output that has since been referred to by *WIRE Magazine* as "Pan-Americana."

As elusive as he is prolific, across seven under-the-radar years of work Gay diligently composed, produced and recorded seven collections of original music before compiling and issuing his unreleased 'greatest hits' as a debut album – [Downtown Castles Can Never Block The Sun](#) – for International Anthem in 2018. Also in 2018 Gay composed an original score for the Tribeca award-winning short doc [The Good Fight](#). In 2019, he composed an original score for the Brazilian underground carnival profile [This Is Bate Bola](#), and debuted new music [commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago](#). Also in 2019, he composed and performed a [duet with the DuSable Bridge](#) while it was raised over the Chicago River. For Time:Spans Festival 2021, at DiMenna Center for Classical Music in New York City, Gay debuted a new composition – "[Known Better. Still Lit](#)" – that was commissioned and performed by Wet Ink Ensemble. Later in 2021, Gay released the critically-acclaimed album [Open Arms to Open Us](#) via International Anthem & Nonesuch Records. In 2022 he released [Certain Reveries](#), an album of duo compositions on International Anthem, and an accompanying film – "[Balogun](#)," in tribute to the late Eddie Harris - which he staged, directed, filmed, and scored entirely himself.

In 2023, Gay was a Mellon Foundation Archives Innovation Fellow with Theater Gates's Rebuild Foundation in Chicago. As composer in residence with The National Theater of France in 2024, Gay wrote original music for Dorothee Munyaneza's "Inconditionelles." In June 2025, Gay releases *Yowzers* via International Anthem.