

Bio

Matthew Ruby Shippee

Matthew grew up in Maine and came from a large family of old-time musicians who taught him to, above all else, have fun with music.

After completing a self-designed 'Music, Culture, and Religion' major at Xavier University in New Orleans and Saint Michael's College in Vermont, Matthew spent three years touring New England as a full-time singer-songwriter. In that time his recordings were played on independent and public radio stations in the northeast. He also shared club and festival billings with bigger names like Phish, Shawn Colvin, and Ellis Paul.

The routine of life in a van and Matthew's curiosity for studying world music led him next to the University of Michigan School of Music on a Rackham Fellowship. There he did graduate work in ethnomusicology, focusing on creative consciousness in composition and performance in American popular music. One of his major projects was playing and writing about Joni Mitchell's altered tuning guitar style, getting inside her jazz influenced compositional process. That project helped clarify for Matthew that making bridges between jazz/improvisational music and popular music audiences would become a natural focus of his own music making.

Eventually, Matthew's artist side won over and he "went native", leaving UM and moving into a remote cabin in the mountains of western Maine for a year. By the time he started trekking to Boston to perform again his music had become striped with spiritual jazz, ragas, chamber rock, ambient/free improv, live looping with cello bow and mbira, Native American stories and melodies, and fragments of spoken Blake and Bukowski. Not surprisingly, after one set someone told him, "You should really check out the Amherst-Northampton scene."

Not long after moving to the Noho area, Matthew was playing at all the local venues and was selected as a WRSI song competition finalist and First Night performer. He was soon hired to create a new music program at Greenfield Community College. He is currently Professor and Music Department Chair at GCC, "one of the most special places of learning I've ever met," he says.

Matthew is active in the movement to integrate contemplative practices into higher education and was selected to attend a summer 2007 national pedagogy session sponsored by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. He continues to study world music, including a 2006 Hindustani Music Summer School at Eastman School of Music and a summer 2008 Arabic Music Retreat directed by master ud player, Simon Shaheen.