

## **Brien Henderson, composer**

### **Full Bio**

Born in Oceanside, CA on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, 25 October 1977, Brien Henderson grew up in the greater Los Angeles area after his father's discharge from the USMC. He spent most of his formative years in Fontana, CA. At the age of ten, he began the saxophone in the Covina public school band program. He attended Etiwanda High School, a public school in Fontana known for having an above-average music program.

Although he did not receive private saxophone instruction, he developed his musicianship at Etiwanda High playing in concert and jazz bands. He also took up the guitar at 15, first playing in a Metallica cover band, and by his senior year forming a folk-rock duo where he was the principal singer and songwriter. All record of this has since been destroyed.

His interests turned to creative writing by high school graduation (1995), and feeling that he had plateaued musically, he gave up music and began higher education at Fullerton College, a community college, pursuing a literary path. He dropped out after a couple years, but continued to write short stories and started work on a strongly autobiographical novel. In working on this novel, he discovered his own voice telling him to return to music, and he did so by picking up the saxophone again. His first return to performance was in Frank Falupa (formerly The Frank Falupa Trio), a band formed by his friends Brandon Floerke, Daniel Johns, and Bob Lexin in 1999, which Brien joined that same year.

He later returned to formal education at Fullerton College, this time in the music department, where he first studied music theory, counterpoint, ear training, music history, and joined jazz combos and big bands. He spent a few more years only playing in these groups, and not pursuing a path toward a degree. But, he moved in 2005 to San Francisco, where he joined various bands with styles ranging from soul to latin jazz fusion and completed more coursework at City College San Francisco, finally transferring to San Francisco State University in 2007, where he completed his Bachelor's (2011) and Master's (2013) degrees in music composition.

He studied composition with Richard Festinger, Christopher Wendell Jones, and Benjamin Sabey at SFSU, and saxophone with Andrew Speight. During this time, he also studied composition with Robert Beaser at the European American Musical Alliance summer course in Paris (2008) and his performance activities shifted to classical saxophone, playing in the SFSU Wind Ensemble, later forming the Mission Saxophone Quartet with Loren Gilmore, Steven Goldin, and Barry Capiaux (2010-2012), and performing solo classical saxophone repertoire. He also expanded his performance activity to singing in the SFSU Chamber Singers and later joining Ut Re Mi, a choir specializing in Renaissance repertoire (2013-15).

Brien is presently completing a PhD in composition at the University at Buffalo, studying principally with David Felder, additional studies with Jeffrey Stadelman and Jonathan Golove. He has participated in the June in Buffalo festival twice (2013 and 2016), and has received composition masterclasses from Hans Abrahamsen, Raphaël Cendo, Hanna Eimermacher, Brian Ferneyhough, Joshua Fineberg, Josh Levine, Eric Moe, Hilda Paredes, Bernard Rands, Augusta Read Thomas, Chinary Ung, and Yehudi Wyner.

His music has been performed by Court-Circuit, Ensemble Dal Niente, the Hausmann String Quartet, Ensemble Linea, Ensemble Signal, and Sotto Voce Vocal Collective. Though he doesn't play much saxophone anymore, Brien is still active as a singer in the Sotto Voce Vocal Collective, a vocal group dedicated to new music.