

## MEMBER FOCUS: FEVEN KIDANE



Feven Kidane is a trumpeter and bassist in “Vancouver”’s jazz, hip-hop, spoken word, and free improvisation scenes. Her musical path is rooted in a belief that music is in everything and everything is music, from language to silence, rhythm to resistance. She writes celebratory/contemplative/curious music for her trio(s)/quartet/quintet/sextet, as well as being a member of Dean Thiessen’s *Stranger Friends Orchestra* and Kevin Romain’s *Salience Network*, among others. Feven has had the honour of performing and/or collaborating with esteemed artists such as Snotty Nose Rez Kids, Tia Wood, Shruti Ramani, Raagaverse, Milo Johnson, Kimmortal, Missy D, and Jonny Tobin. She is currently plotting her debut record.

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*Q: How did you get your start in music? Who or what inspired you to pursue this career path?*

A: I would have to say when my parents immigrated here from Ethiopia, they came with a bunch of VHS tapes of music videos of artists from that region, so I was always watching them. There was also a harmonica laying around that my father would sometimes play, and I was fascinated by it. My father said I would be blowing on this thing for hours at 3 or 4 years old, fascinated with the noises. I wouldn't say there was any specific person or thing that inspired me to pursue this career path, but early on I had a love for making musical noise. I just wanted to keep doing it and I thought I could do something with it from a young age. It's all I wanted to do from about 4 or 5 years old. I originally said I wanted to be an electric guitarist. What inspired me was seeing how it [music] could take me somewhere and make me feel like somebody.

*Q: Can you talk a bit about The Feven Kidane Sextet and its inspiration?*

A: The sextet started because originally, I had a trio and a quartet, and then a quintet when I added a horn. I figured it would be nice to add a band member. It started with my sextet trombonist Nebyu Yohannes moving here from Toronto. We started dating so I wanted him in my ensemble. I had never had another horn in my band besides a saxophone and didn't have any confidence in being able to write three part, because I had never spent time doing it. But I did know I wanted it in my band, so that's how it started.

I am a maximalist when it comes to writing music. I really like a lot of layers and having two extra horns can really fill in space. Also, traditionally it has been upheld well by JJ Johnson and Kenny Dorham, who worked a lot with a sextet, and I think that's a huge inspiration. I also thoroughly enjoyed Max Roach six/seven piece work. You can make a super condensed orchestra out of six. Six is not the end for me, I'd really like to have more. I just have to figure out what that looks like. I always feel like the more the merrier. You know when you go to a jam and there's 10-12 people and it feels full, that's what I want eventually.

*Q: You have an electronic project under the moniker thehabeshaman. Tell us more about this project and the creative process behind it.*

A: I got a MacBook in 2020, and no computer I had before could create sound. I thought it would be nice to make music on it. I almost feel allergic to recording. It feels like such an inaccessible hurdle. I thought I could ease into it by getting a computer and tinkering around in GarageBand. I had a few tunes I had written as a youth on an organ that I had in a house I lived in. I committed those to memory and wrote down what I could. Some of them are on the very first EP I did under thehabeshaman. **cont on next page —>**

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I also like video game music. I think the music for Super Nintendo was peak. I am in love with that chip tune sound. I also love the music of Steve Reich. I like the kaleidoscopic musical patterns. That is how my process begins. I make a bunch of layers, and sometimes I will take them out when I build on the tunes, or I will make them quieter. The habeshaman is a nickname my friend gave me. As an Ethiopian person, our name for 'that' is 'habesha,' so you can say 'habesha food,' 'habesha language.' I had a huge astrology phase, so the habashaman is a nickname for that.

*Q: What does the music you compose and make primarily revolve around?*

A: Living on this big rock, I thought for the longest time that I could simplify this answer and say, 'it's about my life as a black person, or my family, or to ask questions with music,' but there is no real answer. I think it kind of depends day to day. Sometimes the name of the song does not come until later or until I play with a live band. There is no specific theme. I like to think I am an illustrator with music. If you ask an illustrator this question, it is just whatever comes to mind, whatever their felling, or if there is something they want to conjure up that's cool. But I want to go in a more relatable path. I still want to talk about myself in the music just by the way I write, even without words. I want to make something about the human experience. My music revolves around the human experience.

*Q: How do you want your music to make an audience feel physically and emotionally?*

A: I like this questions! I want them to feel open to it. I want there to be this big, warm, wet feeling in their chest. As if they are taking in a holy message. That makes me sound like I'm full of myself, but I think music is not just about playing it, it is about what the music is. Thinking of music as an entity on the side that can possess us to say certain things, I do want people to feel like they are having a holy experience, like it is baptismal. I want them to feel moved, you know? I want people to sob, because if something is really striking, you can't hold back tears. That's what I want, like a waterfall.