

Marcus Anthony Shelby [Biography 2016](#)

Marcus Anthony Shelby is a bandleader, composer, arranger, bassist, educator, and activist who currently lives in San Francisco, California. Over the past 25 years he has built a diverse biography as a composer. His work and music has focused on sharing the history, present, and future of African American lives, on social movements in the United States of America, and on early childhood music education. In 1990, Marcus Shelby received the Charles Mingus Scholarship to attend Cal Arts and study composition with James Newton and bass with Charlie Haden. From 1990-1996, Shelby was bandleader of Columbia Records and GRP Impulse! Recording Artists Black/Note. Currently, Shelby is an artist in residence with the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival and the Artistic Director of the Marcus Shelby Orchestra. In 2013, Shelby received a MAP Fund Award and commission from the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival to compose *“Beyond the Blues: A Prison Oratorio”* an original composition for big band orchestra about the “Prison Industrial Complex,” which premiered in September 2015. Shelby was awarded a 2009 Black Metropolis Research Consortium Fellowship in Chicago for Summer 2009 to conduct research for his commission to compose *“Soul of the Movement”*—a musical suite on MLK and the Civil Rights Movement. Shelby was also a 2006 Fellow in the Resident Dialogues Program of the Committee for Black Performing Arts at Stanford University to conduct research for his commission to compose *“Harriet Tubman”*—a musical suite based on the life of freedom fighter, Harriet Tubman. Shelby has worked extensively with the Healdsburg Jazz Festival from 2011-2015 leading their Black History programs in the Healdsburg Middle Schools. He has also been the Artistic Director and conductor for the Healdsburg Jazz Festival Freedom Jazz Choir, which is a 100-person community choir created by the Healdsburg Jazz Festival and Shelby in 2012. Shelby has also worked extensively in Bay Area Theater, Film, and Dance on a range of productions, such as composing scores for Anna Deveare Smith’s new play *“Notes from the Field: Doing Time in Education”* (2014), choreographer Joanna Haigood’s dance theater work *“Dying While Black and Brown”* (2014), Margo Hall’s plays *“Bebop Baby”* (2013) and *“Sonny’s Blues”* (2008), the Oakland Ballet’s *“Ella”* (2004), Robert Moses Kin’ Dance Company (2000), The Pacific Boy Choir (2009), The San Francisco Girls Choir (2013), The Oakland Youth Chorus (2014), and many other productions over the past 19 years in the San Francisco Bay Area. Since 2002, Shelby has worked with the Equal Justice Society and is currently commissioned to create a musical theater work with choreographer Joanna Haigood and director Stephen Anthony Jones about the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Shelby also has arranged for, toured, and conducted the Count Basie Orchestra featuring Ledisi, performed and recorded with Tom Waits, and received the City Flight Magazine 2005 award as one of the “Top Ten Most Influential African Americans in the Bay Area”. Shelby is active in music education and currently teaches at The Community Music Center, Old Adobe Elementary School, St. Paul’s Middle School, and the Stanford Jazz Workshop. Shelby has also led many of the San Francisco Jazz Festival Family Matinee Concerts, often with children’s book author Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket). In March 2013, San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee appointed Shelby to the San Francisco Arts Commission where he serves on the Community Arts Grants and Education Committee and the Street Artists Committee.