

WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA

THE MAGAZINE

plus

Tammy Kernodle

Enid Farber

Tatiana Gorilovsky

Monika S Jakubowska

Zoe Rahman

Charlotta Kerbs

Isabel Marquez

Kim Cypher

Maddalena Ghezzi

Evie Asio

Nicky Schrire

Sandra Booker

Paulette Jackson

Sarah Brown

Susan Brink

Angie Wells

Isabelle Hiseman

Cecilia Sanchietti

Germana Stella La Sorsa

Migdalia Van Der Hoven

and so much more!



BRANDEE YOUNGER

JULY 2023

Cover Photo: Brandee Younger by Monika S Jakubowska

THE WOMEN IN THIS EDITION:

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Adi Oasis	Joan Cartwright	Wendy Kirkland
Alice Coltrane	Jo Harrop	Yaya Bey
Ana Gracey	Jordannah Elizabeth	Zoe Rahman
Angie Wells	Judi Jackson Kait Dunton	
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JULY 2023 MAGAZINE TEAM

Sandra Booker, Isabel Marquez, Monika S Jakubowska, Paulette Jackson, Tatiana Gorilovsky, Germana Stella La Sorsa, Kim Cypher, Fiona Ross and Fiona McTaggart

Click on the image for information about our magazine team



OUR GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

We are always grateful to our many partners that support our work and would like to give special thanks to our guest contributors for this edition:

Enid Farber, Nick Lea, Kind of Jazz, Warren Woodcraft, Martin Hummel, Darius Brubeck and special shout out to Dr Bradley Stone who is fast becoming honorary member of the team!

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Hailey Brinnel

Patricia Julien

Erica Seguine

Esthesis

Marina Pacowski

Cecilia Smith

Artemis

Ellie Martin

Gaia Wilmer

Melissa Pipe

Kait Dunton

Tammy McCann

Welcome to our July 2023 Women in Jazz Media Magazine. 254 pages of incredible women. As always, our magazine is free for everyone and full of links for you to find out more about everyone involved in the magazine. Fully accessible, our magazine can also be downloaded. Available on all devices, we recommend you access our magazine on an ipad or large screen - a phone just doesn't do the photos justice.

Women in Jazz Media is a not for profit organization created to help support and create an equal, diverse, safe and healthy Jazz Industry and we are all very grateful to everyone who has been part of this edition and for the continual support of our work. We couldn't do it without you.

[Do visit our website here to find out more about our work](#)

Photo by Monika S Jakubowska



BRANDEE YOUNGER





Photo by Monika S Jakubowska

BRANDEE YOUNGER

BRINGING NEW LIFE TO THE HARP

The award-winning composer, harpist and educator Brandee Younger has been kicking down doors since her first release *Prelude* in 2011. Six albums later, she was the first black woman to be Grammy nominated for best instrumental composition and inspired by the work of Dorothy Ashby and Alice Coltrane, Brandee has brought the harp to new audiences and is showing the world what the harp can do – and some.

Here at Women in Jazz Media, we often focus on female instrumentalists, giving a platform to those perceived unicorns – female drummers, female guitarists etc. – areas where women are often not seen, but as is often the case, women have been there all along, they have just not been given the attention and respect they deserve. The jazz harp certainly comes under that category although in some ways, it feels that the harp is having some sort of movement, moments of power where there are far more harpists platformed than ever before. The two great harpists, Dorothy Ashby and Alice Coltrane, most people, I hope are now aware of, were not given the platforms they deserved at the time and arguably it is only now that their work is truly valued, respected and celebrated and this is in no small way due to the work of artists such as Brandee Younger.

I am always honoured to spend time speaking to incredible women and I use the word inspirational often and it is the perfect word to use while I am here

writing about Brandee Younger - an incredible woman who is indeed inspiring. It was wonderful to talk to Brandee and she was everything and more than I thought she would be. Like her music, she exudes passion, energy, strength, inspiration, motivation, power, excitement - and so much fun!

With only a few jazz harpists being platformed and with the size of the instrument, harp is not the obvious choice as a starting point in music and so I began with an obvious question, by asking Brandee how she found the jazz harp.

The harp in general was first introduced to me by a woman who played harp as a hobby and I would go over to her house, play flute and we would play duets. She's told my parents that 'if she takes lessons, she could probably get a scholarship' and that's the word that all parents need to hear... it's the only word that parents care about - scholarship! So, I pursued the harp but in terms of genre, I did what I was supposed to do, all my studies, but I would also want to play what I heard on the radio. I would show up to lessons with a CD of whatever I was listening to on the radio and my teacher was so sweet and as long as I did my studies, she would write out a lead sheet for me of whichever pop tune I felt like playing. What was important to me was that if I'm going to sit here and spend all this time practising then I want some of it to fit me and my

personality. I wasn't listening to classical music, I was listening to hip hop, I was listening to R&B, listening to whatever was popular, so it really was just a case of making the instrument fit me instead of the other way around.

Brandee has created an exciting and genre blurring new sound with flavours of hip hop, funk, soul, classical and jazz and her innovation was unsurprisingly noticed early on with artists such as Beyonce and John Legend. With very few black female jazz harpists, and being inspired by Ashby and Coltrane, developing her own sound leads to some obvious comparisons, but when Brandee was asked to perform at the Alice Coltrane Memorial concert, in May, 2007 by Ravi Coltrane, it was a turning point in not only embracing Alice's music, but using her platform to share and celebrate with others.

Really from that point on, when I started to work in this genre, I made it a point to celebrate their music in literally every performance I did. I felt that the harp world didn't appreciate Ashby and Coltrane. I wasn't so concerned about the jazz world and I was really thinking about the harp world not really embracing them.

Brandee's latest album, the brilliant Brand New Life is defined as 'tribute to the enduring legacy of Dorothy Ashby' and includes original works by Brandee along with some Dorothy Ashby tracks that have never been recorded with Brandee's unique and inspirational voice. Recorded in Chicago because Brandee wanted 'that Chicago grease on it' there are several special guests including the mighty Meshell N'degeocello. The album is stunning.

I have my own music, I write my own music, have my own style but with this record I didn't really want it to be a tribute but I've been sitting on this for years



Alice Coltrane by Enid Farber, 2002

and this was my opportunity. Wax and Wane, that I recorded a few years ago, was literally a Dorothy Ashby tribute - her music and one clear concept but this album is a little different because it has music no one's ever heard before and stylistically it's me. Over time my style has cemented more so instead of me playing a certain way, this time around I could really play this music through my lens. There are couple originals on there and it is clear that these are not Dorothy Ashby but that clarity and that distinction? I'm secure in that.

Despite the feeling of some sort of jazz harp movement (Tara Minton and Alina Bzhezhska immediately spring to my mind) there are still very few harpists and



Photo by Monika S Jakubowska

in fact, Brandee recently won the Jazz Journalists award for 'player of instruments rare in jazz' and in DownBeat Magazine's Critic's Poll she won under 'miscellaneous'. I asked Brandee for her thoughts on any jazz harp movements.

I don't feel that even when Alice and Dorothy were working in harp there was any kind of harp movement because if you look at it, they were women and jazz - red flag - they were black women on harp - red flag - and then harp in jazz - red flag. Because of that time in history, I'm sure this contributed to why they were really under celebrated, those three things. If you look at their body of work, Ashby's body of

work is crazy, both as a leader and a side person and then Alice Coltrane was always in the shadow of John Coltrane...just like an extra layer that some people felt it was just because of John Coltrane but I look at it as her being stuck in the shadow as Coltrane's wife.

In a rare female dominated field and in fact a white female dominated field, representation and the perception of the harp is key and I asked Brandee what needed to change.

I think it's about feeling like it's inaccessible and feeling like it's something that you can't do you know? When you're young and you don't see yourself and all you see are images of a white woman playing

harp. If I'm a little black boy or I'm a little Puerto Rican boy, I don't see that. I don't see a black man or a Puerto Rican man playing harp so I may not think that's for me. So, I do think what's most important is that people know that is for them if they want it. Whatever you see, you might see the white woman in an orchestra and that's fine but that doesn't mean that you can't be the black man and know the skies the limit. I think that's really the most important part, that there are no limitations and you don't let what you see most often cloud your judgement.

Brandee's work in education is significant. She is currently on the faculty at The New York University Steinhart and The New School College of Performing Arts and has taught at Adelphi University, Nassau Community College, University of Hartford and residencies and masterclasses include The Royal Conservatory of Music, University of Birmingham, Howard University, Princeton University, Tulane University, Trinity College and Berklee College of Music. Brandee is also the Symphonic and Jazz Harp Artist in Residence at the Cicely L. Tyson Community School of Performing and Fine Arts. With this vast experience in an educational environment, I asked her if she thought the landscape was changing for the harp.

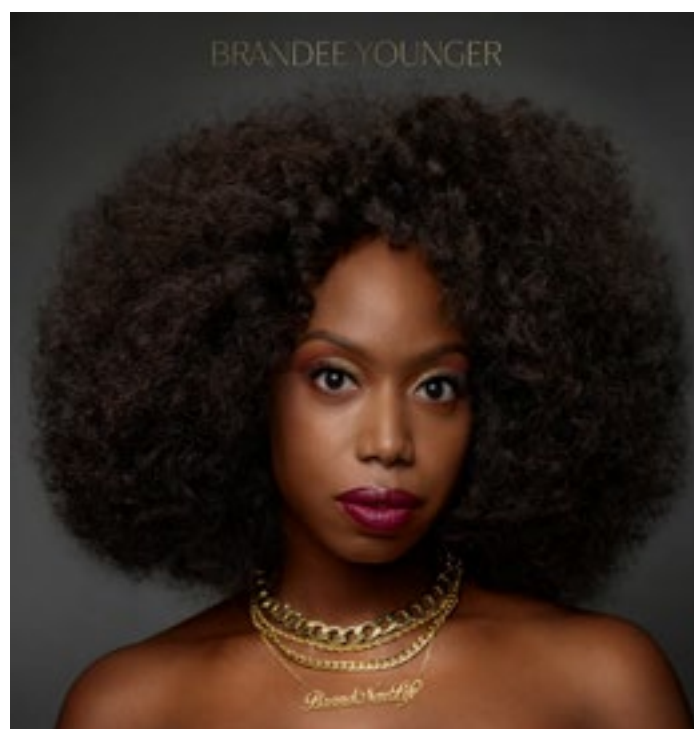
There are tons of harp students, tons! There are students but what we're trying to do is diversify, we want to see diversity. In classical music you tend to see only white and Asian so we're just really trying to diversify and that's not just the people, but the style of music.

Brandee is quite solitary in her field and understands the power of role models and representation and I am going to have to quote Spider Man here 'with great power comes great responsibility'. I asked her if she ever felt any pressure.

I do think about that especially because I teach at the university but to be honest,

I can only be myself. And what I mean when I say that, is anyone that knows me, knows I am a clown. People that that don't know me, they don't know I'm a clown, but I'm not going to hide who I am, and I am probably going to post something really stupid...I'm not going to post something inappropriate but something stupid? Yes! But that's my personality and that's important to me, that I can be myself. That is what works for me, that I don't put on a persona, and I am very much flawed. When you grow up playing classical music everything must be perfect, all the time... you cannot make mistakes and that's real pressure. I can only be sincere and being sincere includes flaws. When I got rid of needing to be perfect all the time, things started to flow more naturally.

And that is in fact Brandee's superpower. Brandee being Brandee in everything she does. All those attributes I listed at the beginning, her passion, energy, strength, humour partnered with her incredible virtuosic playing and composing and of course her knowledge of her instrument is truly inspirational, motivational, powerful and so very exciting.



Interview by Fiona Ross

Photos of Brandee Younger taken by Monika S Jakubowska at Ronnie Scotts, London 2022.

Photo of Alice Coltrane taken by Enid Farber in 2002 at Joe's Pub in New York

[Click here for Brandee Younger links](#)

NPR Music celebrated Black Music Month with some brilliant live 'Tiny Desk' concerts.

'Together, these artists represent the past, present and future of Black music and these carefully curated shows are a celebration of Black artists expressing themselves in ways we've never seen before'

Enjoy this brilliant performance by Brandee Younger:

SARAH BROWN



Photo by Ruby Gaunt



NOT JUST A BACKING SINGER: IN CONVERSATION WITH SARAH BROWN

BY ISABEL MARQUEZ

A note for Sarah: You incredible soul, thank you so much for letting me share your story with the world. You will never be 'just a backing singer'!

My first interaction with Sarah Brown was wonderfully charming, backstage at the Cheltenham Jazz Festival. Sitting in a security cabin to the side of The Jazz Arena, Sarah seemed nervous, anticipating her evening performance and first gig of the tour. Through her tribute to Mahalia Jackson ('Sarah Brown Sings Mahalia Jackson'), Sarah was making her debut as a solo artist, shifting away from her career solely as a background vocalist. She spoke about taking that 6ft leap from the backing microphones to standing front and centre, a step that is never easy to prepare for. Our conversation was brief, but I was fascinated by Sarah's story and couldn't help but get her contact details to speak further, a few days after the show.

Sarah began to open up about her feelings, when on stage and at the album signing which followed. The sense of pride that came with sharing Mahalia's music with the Cheltenham Jazz Festival was huge - but this came with the fear of wholeheartedly putting herself into the spotlight, whilst still carrying the troubles of her past.

It was difficult. I was extremely nervous. I was becoming overly conscious about whether I was reaching the audience... whether they liked it or not. I struggled to connect as I couldn't hear myself very well and I felt pre-occupied with my thoughts...

Mahalia is why I did this. I faced my fear. The fear was created by various sources - born and sewn in me - I was in a volatile home and became a fearful child. My family life was in a drought with a fear for me. My mother was very caring and showed such kindness and love. My father was at times happy, dancing and partying but he would get angry... I carried this fear throughout my life...

Sarah Brown has been labelled as one of the 'most prolific and in-demand vocalists in the world', with appearances on records with Pink Floyd, George Michael, Stevie Wonder, Quincy Jones, Duran Duran and Simple Minds. She received her vocal training from a young age, from within the church, singing along to the likes of Sister Rosetta Tharpe and of course, Mahalia Jackson. Sarah was later invited to join The Inspirational Choir of the Pentecostal First Born Church of the Living God, commencing her career as a touring vocalist. The choir was the first ever to be signed to a major label, CBS Records, where they released their debut album in 1985, 'Sweet Inspiration', and went on to sing for the Queen and different venues around the world.

The very important skill that I learned from the choir was just knowing how to listen to the voice you're working with and placing my tone with their tone.

It was compelling to hear about this move from learning to sing with others, blending



Photo by Andrew Cotterill

comes with being on the front line, you have to deal with it.

There is less support for women to become solo artists. I've been singing for thirty-five to forty years, and it's always been a male-dominated industry: male-dominated studio sessions, male producers, sound engineers, studio staff... Many of them had an ego about them.

With a career extending across multiple industries and genres, Sarah detected slight differences in how she was treated as a female backing vocalist by other musical professionals. These seemingly misogynistic attitudes developed at each juncture of her career, becoming more intense at points.

In the pop world, people seemed more arrogant. In jazz, they can be very pretentious. But there was a friendliness that came with the blues. I guess different attitudes come with each genre.

It has been a difficult journey. I haven't felt completely encouraged as a backing singer as your creativity at points feels invalid. I've been patronised and talked down to, those antagonistic attitudes don't even give you a chance. I've been told that I'm 'just a backing singer'... And it's not always the artist that makes me feel this way, but the team around them.

At points, it feels very unsafe... I've seen other backing singers being manhandled in sound check. The tour bus has been an uncomfortable environment too. Once, I was one of two women on a bus of twelve men. I've walked in on pornography playing on the TV in the kitchen... I felt trapped at points and my bunk felt like a coffin.

into the background and not sticking out, to finding her own unique voice. The way a musician approaches performing changes when they have to lead the show which can result in additional anxiety.

The pressure changes from impressing the main vocalist to now having to impress the audience... It's a big step at a later stage of my career, but I had to make it happen. I call it 'stepping into the fear'. A big fear surrounds women in the industry and a lot of stereotyping comes with it. Feeling this pressure leads to my anxiety and gets in the way of me fully engaging with this whole journey. My nervousness becomes heightened by being a woman in this industry. Whatever



Photo by Andrew Cotterill

Being hit on by main artists put me in a difficult position. There was that fear that you will lose your job by responding in any way. I felt like the artist had power over me. As a female, I felt frightened and easily disposable.

Perhaps this feeling of being easily disposable does not only come with being a woman in the industry but a backing singer where the threat of being replaced on a job is always present.

I was one of two backing singers in the studio, recording an album. The musicians in the band negotiated a good deal for themselves on how much they were getting paid for the session. There was no talk of how much the backing singers would earn. We got someone to represent us and ask about the money. Us two singers were reprimanded, and I was shouted at: 'Don't you ever compare yourself to one of these musicians. You're just a backing singer! Get out of the studio!' I was screamed at in front of all my colleagues.

I didn't feel safe to venture out of the box. Every experience was one of trepidation.

As well as the challenges posed by misogynistic and hostile attitudes, Sarah discussed how she found herself coming up against her female colleagues on a regular basis. This competitive nature can further corrupt the way women experience these industries, discouraging cooperation and kindness, and encouraging an 'every person for themselves' approach.

As women, our biggest challenge can be ourselves. Feeling put up against other women in the industry because it seems that there aren't as many of us.

But it was clear that Sarah noticed a definitive change in her musical spirit

since going solo. One thing she mentioned was her sense of control over her own career and musical decisions, something that can positively establish an artist.

I feel like I have to be the sexy backing singer. Just being a good singer didn't feel like enough. Now it's about the singing first! I am so grateful for all the musicians I have around me, particularly Colin Goode. He encouraged me to do the album. Before I was blocked out by fear and for years I didn't approach him. I also really acknowledge the male support that I've had, it's like the other side of what we know to be true. Simple Minds have been nothing but wonderful to me, allowing me to feature all the time. It's what I needed! They're always telling me: 'Sarah you're a singer, not just a backing singer.'

After facing up to my fear, I'm singing the best I've ever sung. It's the best present I could've ever given to myself. The album became more beautiful when I accepted all the things that held me back. My touring experience is so much better.

I don't want to do something just to make money. I walk away from this first solo album with a sense of integrity. And now I feel safe, in control, doing my own thing. I can be honest with the people around me. I feel like I'm able to do this because of Mahalia Jackson.

[Click here for Sarah Brown links](#)

[Click here for Isabel Marquez links](#)

Mahalia Jackson in concert,
Concertgebouw Amsterdam 23 April 1961,
courtesy of ETH-Bibliothek Zürich





BEHIND THE LENS

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

You will find stunning photography throughout this magazine and we are hugely grateful for the inspiring photographers that allow us to publish their work and truly bring our magazines to life. In this edition we are proud to feature the following photographers:

Monika S Jakubowska

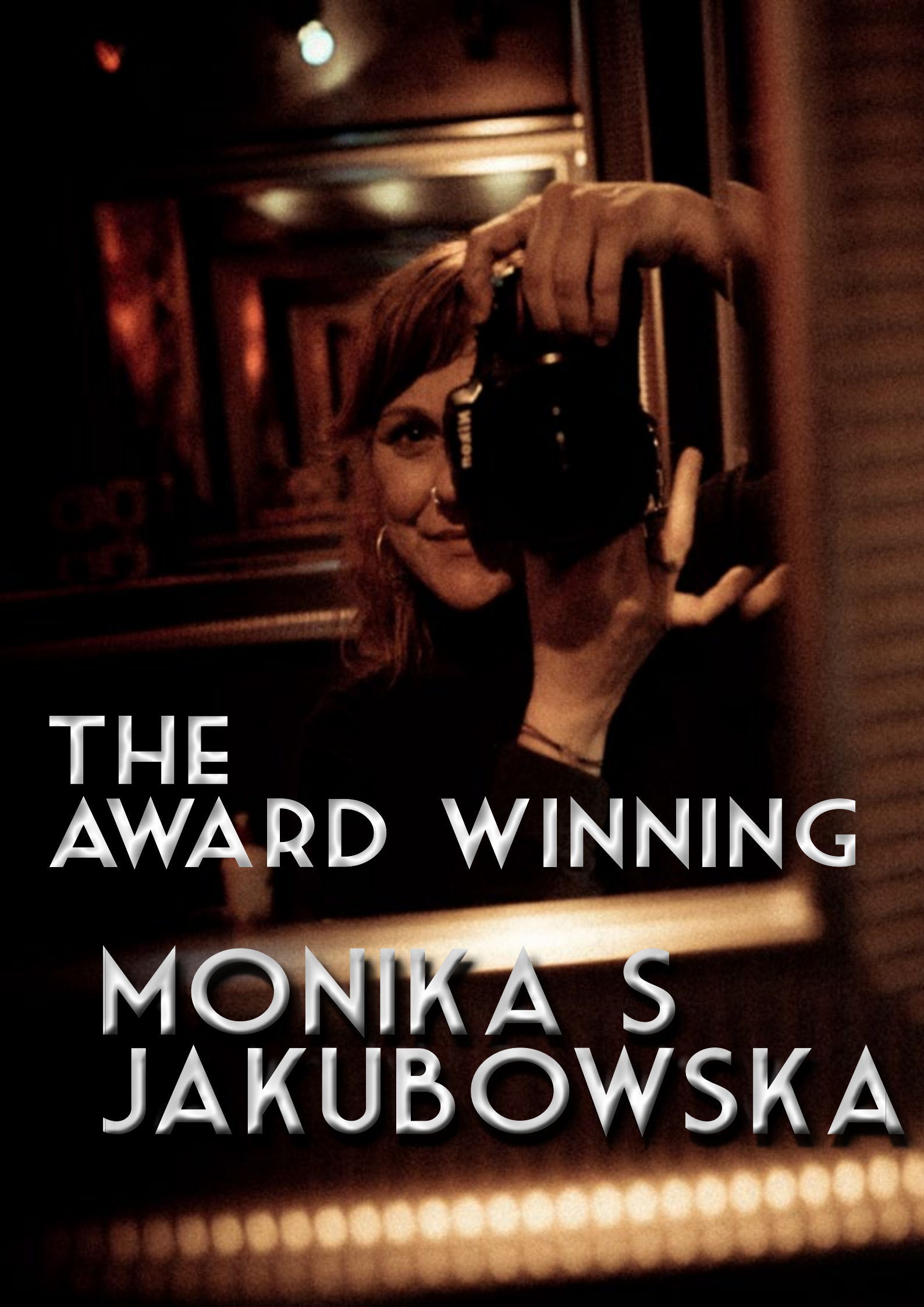
Tatiana Gorilovsky

Enid Farber

Warren Woodcraft

Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky





THE
AWARD WINNING
MONIKA S
JAKUBOWSKA



THE AWARD-WINNING MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

Monika S Jakubowska is one of the most beautiful artists it is my honour to know.

Her biography will tell you she was born in Poland into an artistic family and was 'clearly destined to be an artist' and Art has always been embedded in her life. Her father, a bassist, painter and photographer and her mother, a singer, told stories of Monika taking her first photos when she was 4, with one of her father camera's.

She initially wanted to become a photojournalist or war photographer driven by her desire to make the world a better place '**giving voice to those who suffer the most but remain unheard**'. Monika does make the world a better place. Capturing unheard voices is her superpower. She sees what we don't see and gives us a window to connect with those voices. She connects with beauty in a way no one else can. She sees vulnerabilities that are laid bare and elevates them into strength. She sees love and she sees light. And of course, she found jazz or maybe jazz found her. Jazz is the home of unheard voices, the place to explore freedom, hope, pain, love and community.





Many of you may be familiar with her work, as the in-house photographer for London venues, Ronnie Scott's and Kings Place, or you may have seen her work in a number of publications including *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Financial Times* and *Jazzwise*. Monika was also the first female photographer to be included in the National Jazz Archive in the UK, along with Tatiana Gorilovsky. She has created countless album covers, working for independent artists as well as labels such as Ubuntu and she is the photographer of choice by many artists including Darius Brubeck who included one of her photos in his foreword to the brilliant book *Sight Readings: Photographers and American Jazz*.

As with many great artists, especially photographers, Monika is happiest in the shadows, moving around like a ninja avoiding the light while finding it in others, but having just won the All Parliamentary Award for Jazz Photography, we must shine a light on her artistry.

Enjoy

Fiona Ross

Laura Mvula
by Monika S Jakubowska

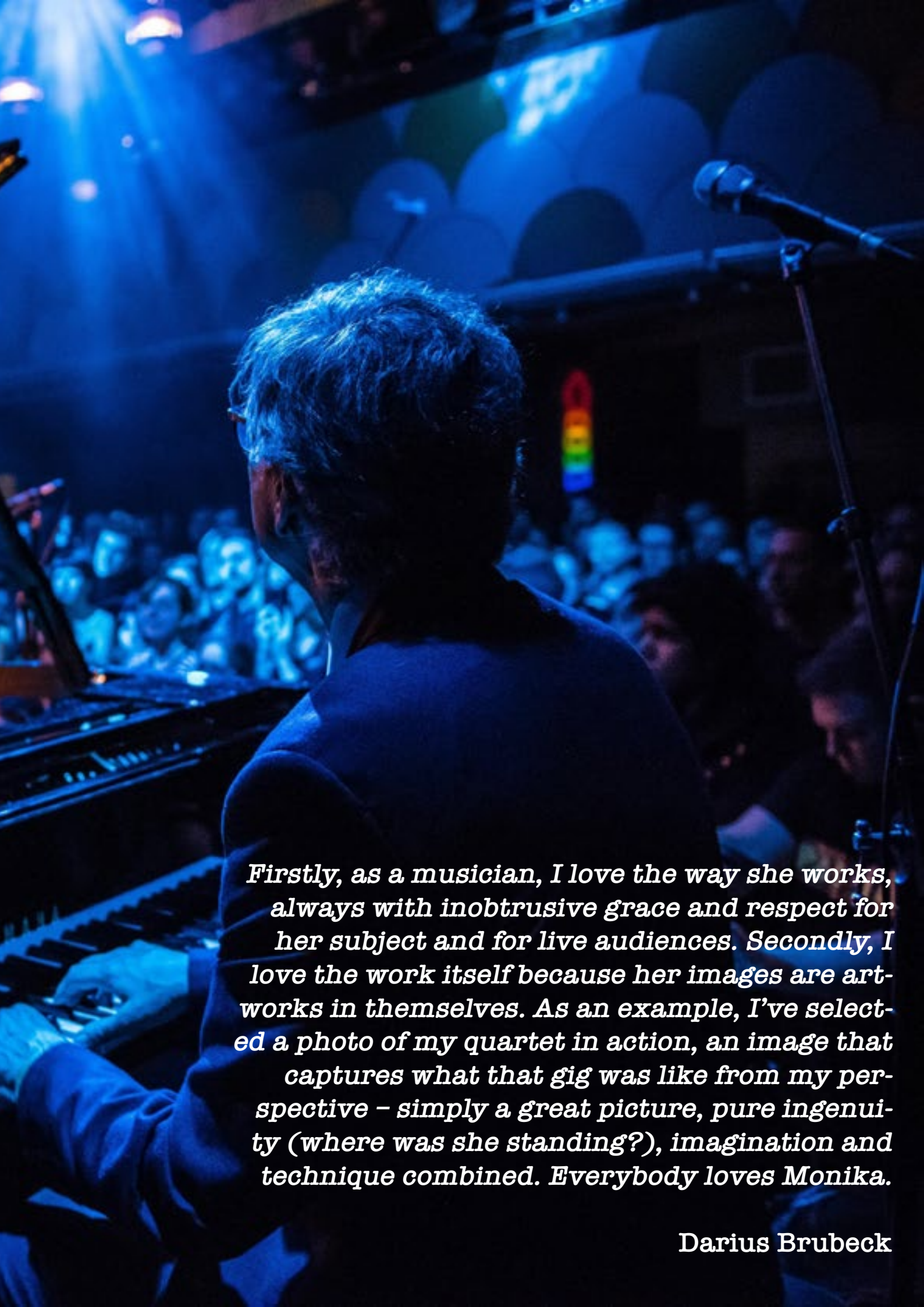
Macy Gray
by Monika S Jakubowska





Darius Brubeck
by Monika S Jakubowska





Firstly, as a musician, I love the way she works, always with inobtrusive grace and respect for her subject and for live audiences. Secondly, I love the work itself because her images are artworks in themselves. As an example, I've selected a photo of my quartet in action, an image that captures what that gig was like from my perspective – simply a great picture, pure ingenuity (where was she standing?), imagination and technique combined. Everybody loves Monika.

Darius Brubeck

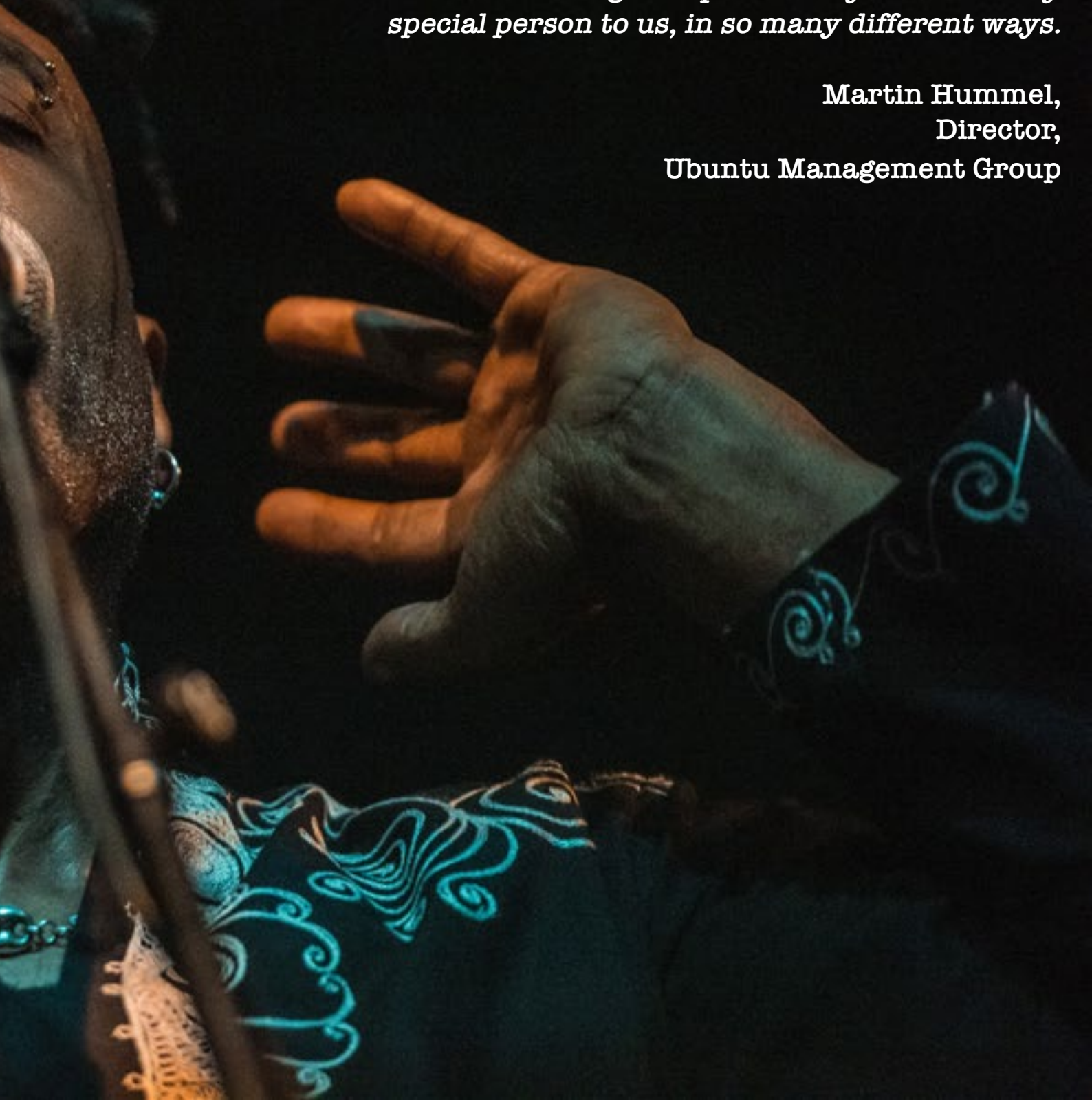
Omar

by Monika S Jakubowska




I was first introduced to Monika by London Jazz News' Sebastian Scotney, which must be at least six years ago. Shortly thereafter, we hired Monika to cover a concert featuring pianist Andrew McCormack at Kings Place (London). I was immediately impressed with the quality of Monika's work, her professionalism and the discrete manner in which she operated. This was the start of what has become a solid, loving and supportive partnership. Monika has covered many live performances for us, along with studio sessions and even our daughter's recent engagement party! She's a permanent part of the Ubuntu Music Family and we are most grateful for her wonderful work and her delightful personality. She is a very special person to us, in so many different ways.

Martin Hummel,
Director,
Ubuntu Management Group







What I like most about working with Monika is her way of taking photographs so spontaneous and natural. She manages to create such an authentic and direct relationship with you that brings out your identity in the image. She is not only an accomplished and creative photographer, but also sincere and honest in relating with you, which makes you feel beautiful and valued just being yourself. The result is not just photos but living images that tell about you. Impossible not to love working with her and being photographed by her. She is unique...she makes everything special!

Diana Torti

Diana Torti
by Monika S Jakubowska





Monika is a fabulous photographer. Her mastery of light and composition, as well as a superb eye for complimentary and evocative colour palettes, means she consistently turns out exquisite pictures that any jobbing photographer would be proud of.


Warren Woodcraft

Luke Smith
by Monika S Jakubowska

When we see pictures of musicians, we usually think about them, not about photographers. It's probably not so important, who is behind the camera. But I'm so glad that behind Monika's pictures is a kind and cool person, my dear jazz photo sister!!!


Tatiana Gorilovsky



A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a purple long-sleeved dress with a tie-waist, is singing into a microphone on a stage. The background is dark with blue stage lights and a large circular logo with the letters 'NNO' visible.

*Monika! You paint glorious jazz
portraits of us with your lens.
Thankyou xxx*

Esther Bennett

A woman with blonde curly hair, wearing a dark sequined jacket, is sitting at a piano on stage. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. A microphone is positioned in front of her. The background is dark with some stage lights.

*I have asked Monika to
take our pictures every
time we have played at
Ronnie Scott's because
she seems to find the best
angles to bring out the
emotion in our playing
and is such a delight to
work with, she makes the
whole experience so easy
and so much fun.
We love you Monika!*

Wendy Kirkland

DR
TAMMY
KERNODLE





TAMMY KERNODLE IS AT THE TABLE

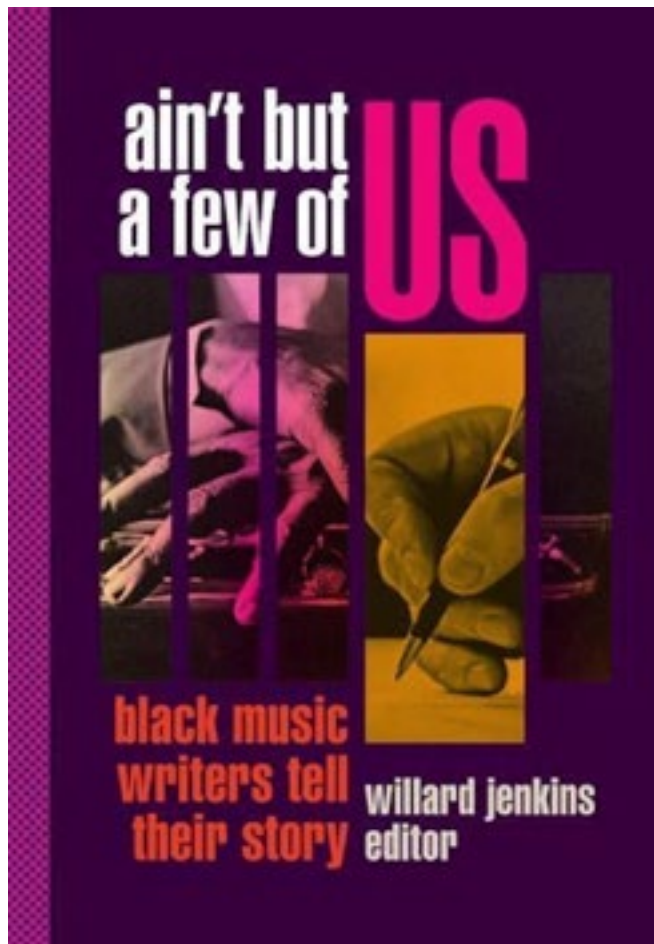
Author, educator and Professor Tammy L. Kernodle radiates inspiration. Her CV will tell you she is a professor who specialises in African American music and gender studies in music. She is also an affiliate of the American Studies Program, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Program, and the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program. The author of biography *Soul on Soul: The Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams* and her work has appeared in many journals including the *Black Music Research Journal* and the *Journal of the American Musicological Society (JAMS)*. A contributor to *The African American Lectionary Project*, the *Smithsonian Anthology of Hip Hop and Rap* and the *Carnegie Hall Digital Timeline of African American Music*, she served as Associate Editor of the three-volume *Encyclopedia of African American Music* and was also one of the Editors for the revision of the *New Grove Encyclopedia of American Music*.

But that list doesn't even touch the surface of the significance of Tammy's work and the far-reaching impact of her words, her energy, her passion. Her work is powerful. Dr Tammy Kernodle should have a place in everyone's lives. If you want to be inspired, look to Tammy. If you wonder if you'll ever get a seat at the table, look to Tammy. When you start to question yourself and think it's just all too much, look to Tammy. When you wonder if the landscape will ever change, look to Tammy. Tammy embraces you with strength, courage, knowledge, belief, love and absolute joy.

With so much that can – and should – be explored with Tammy, this is the first part of a three part interview. My starting point for this article was the recently released book *Ain't But A Few of Us* from Willard Jenkins. A collection of journeys – lived experiences – from the voices of 49 truly inspirational black writers of which Tammy is one of those voices. The book is ground-breaking. Never before has the lack of black jazz journalists been documented. Never before has such an inspirational collection of writers been given a platform to share their experiences.

Separated into chapters (The Authors, Magazine Editors and Publishers, Dispatch Contributors, Magazine Freelancers, Newspaper Writers and Columnists and The New Breed) Tammy's contribution is included within the authors section, among fellow authors including Karen Chilton, Farah Jasmine Griffin and A.B. Spellman. Having first met at an International Association for Jazz Education conference, Willard describes his first encounter with Tammy while she was delivering a presentation as 'the rare African American jazz researcher was presenting this session, in an academic domain with a narrower participation by women of colour than even jazz journalism and criticism'.

Talking to Tammy about the experiences she shared in the book gives us an insight into not only her resilience and strength, her passion for musicology



and platforming the truth of musical history, but the ever-present barriers.

In her opening paragraph, she tells us that while she was a student, the student population was 90% black, and the faculty was 2%. In her second paragraph she tells us of a profoundly disturbing statement from one of her professors. I started our conversation with those two points.

Those are actually two different events, and one happens before the other, but they were both very significant in igniting my desire to be a musicologist. The first event that I spoke of was during my student teaching experience while I was an undergrad. I was a music education major, and I had the pleasure of student teaching in a school system right outside Richmond, Virginia that had a really advanced music programme. But when you look at the overall school, what you saw was a large percentage of black students and small percentage black faculty and so I started to

notice things that typically we talk about in public schools: how are black kids policed, how are their bodies policed, how are their voices policed, how is their behaviour policed and sometimes weaponized against them. But the real question is: are they being stimulated? Is their creativity being stimulated? I was lucky enough to have a supervising teacher that got it and allowed me to stretch, and that was when I first started really engaging with the black music scholarship that was existing at that time, and trying to find ways of bringing black composers and black musicians into that classroom setting. But, as that was happening, I was also wrestling with what's my next step? I was thinking about grad school and thinking maybe I would do music ed, but then I realised the work that I was dealing with was musicology. I ended up at Ohio State for Graduate School and that's where I experienced that real resistance about bringing black music into the classroom. The program was very traditional and very much focused on traditional musicology which was all western European music and largely western European music up to the beginning of the 20th century. Well it should have been just be called the Stravinsky class... and I had a professor literally tell me no American, no black and no woman had ever contributed anything of note to music.

This overwhelmingly ridiculous statement was made in 1991, the first year of Tammy's graduate study. When I read that in the book, I doubled back, several times, as to be honest, I couldn't quite believe it and thought I had misread something. This was in 1991.

FR: Did he actually believe that was the truth?!

He actually believed that, and not only did he believe that but I encountered other people who believed that. That same year I took a research and bibliography class and we had to compile an annotated bibliography, and this is the main project for this class, an annotated bibliography based on primary sources of a musician and composer of our choice. The first meeting I had, I went in and I said I would love to do Scott Joplin please and he said you can't



My master's thesis which turned out to be all William Grant Still which came out of that research and bibliography class, because I was so determined to prove to him that black people write scores!

I actually went to the New Grove Dictionary, saw the article on William Grant Still by Barbara Garvey Jackson, went to the phone booth, got routed through to a special collection and long story short, I was sent a 100-page catalogue of all the primary materials from the William Grant Still collection. So when I went back to that class, and he was going around that room asking people with their topics were and I said I'm going to do the operas of William Grant Still and he said 'I thought I told you..' and I took that document and I put it down and POW on that table. I remember it like it was yesterday. His face... but even in that moment, he couldn't even admit 'I was wrong'. He said to me, I hope that this work will be of value to you. I won't say I wasn't discouraged but if anything, it made me want it even more. He became the reason why I was going to endure because I wanted to change what happens in the classroom, and I didn't want any other student to say I had a teacher telling me that no American and no woman ever contributed anything.

This beautiful, graceful power move, must have been truly something to behold. It is also worth noting that Tammy went on to achieve an A plus for this project and now lectures extensively on the operas of William Grant Still.

But despite this undeniably satisfying and necessary power move, changing mindsets is a long journey and I asked Tammy how she balanced that feeling of empowerment with the frustration of knowing that it didn't actually change his thinking.

That's a very good question and I recognise how his comment was also a back-handed kind of insult, but I will tell you how I deal with that now and it involves my faith, in a way.

do Scott Joplin as there's probably no primary sources on Scott Joplin and I was like OK and then I said well I would like to do William Grant Still and he said 'oh I'd doubt there's any sources'...and essentially what it came down to was he believed black people didn't write music down. His belief was that black people just performed music and it organically comes out of them and they deal in oral tradition so this wouldn't be applicable.

His mind set was the mindset of musicology at that time. Black music studies was in a different place then to feminist music studies. Feminist music studies was just about entering its second decade, but it was still under the radar; it was always a sub - unit in musicology. Black music studies was a sub - unit but it was more filtered through ethno. So, his mindset - their mindset - was really in keeping with what was typically the normal. My thinking was that I have an opportunity. For each one of those persons that said that kind of stuff to me, there was another person who, (even though they didn't do black music) said you can do this.



There's a moment where Jesus tells the disciples that when you go out to spread the gospel and people don't receive what you have to offer, and reject you, you shake the dust off your feet, and you keep going. You have to just shake the dust off your feet because not everybody is going to be able to hear and receive what you have, but when you have to, offer that in sincerity and through passion. You keep working at it and you keep moving because otherwise you waste energy.

I knew he couldn't do anything to me... It was my job to get what I could in terms of the development of my skills out of these people and keep it moving because that was not my home, I came here for one specific reason and that was to get knowledge but also to get a piece of paper because what I wanted to do, could only be validated through some people's eyes if I had that piece of paper and I had certain letters behind my name. It

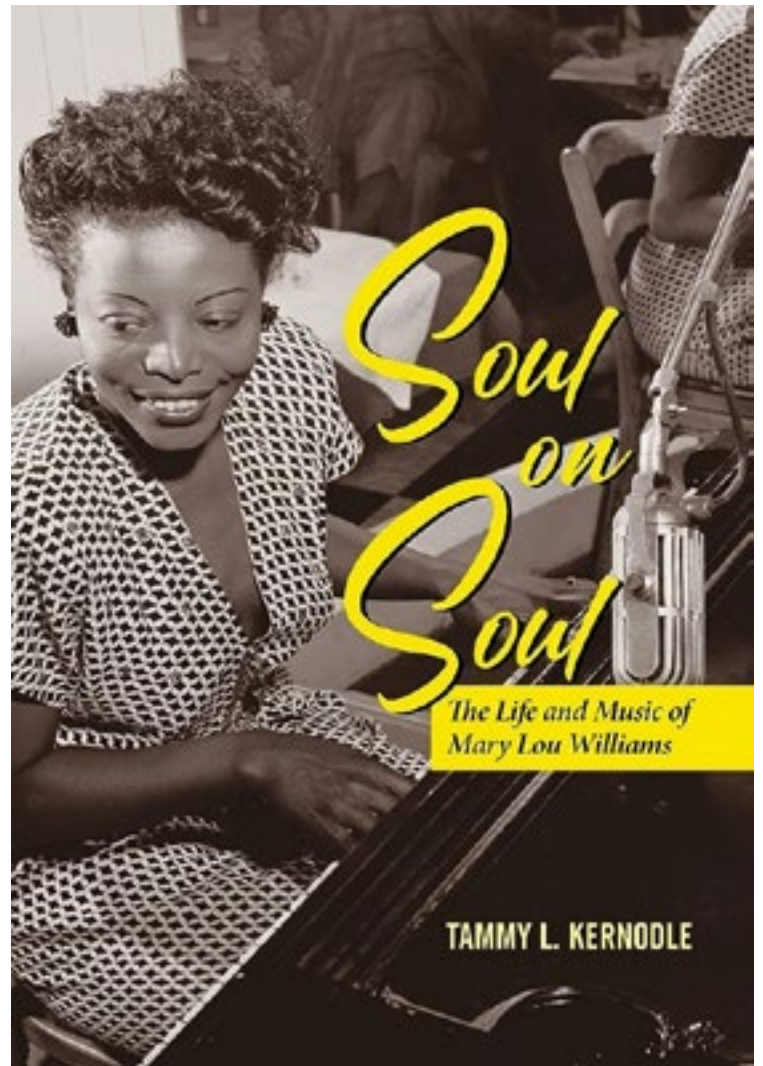
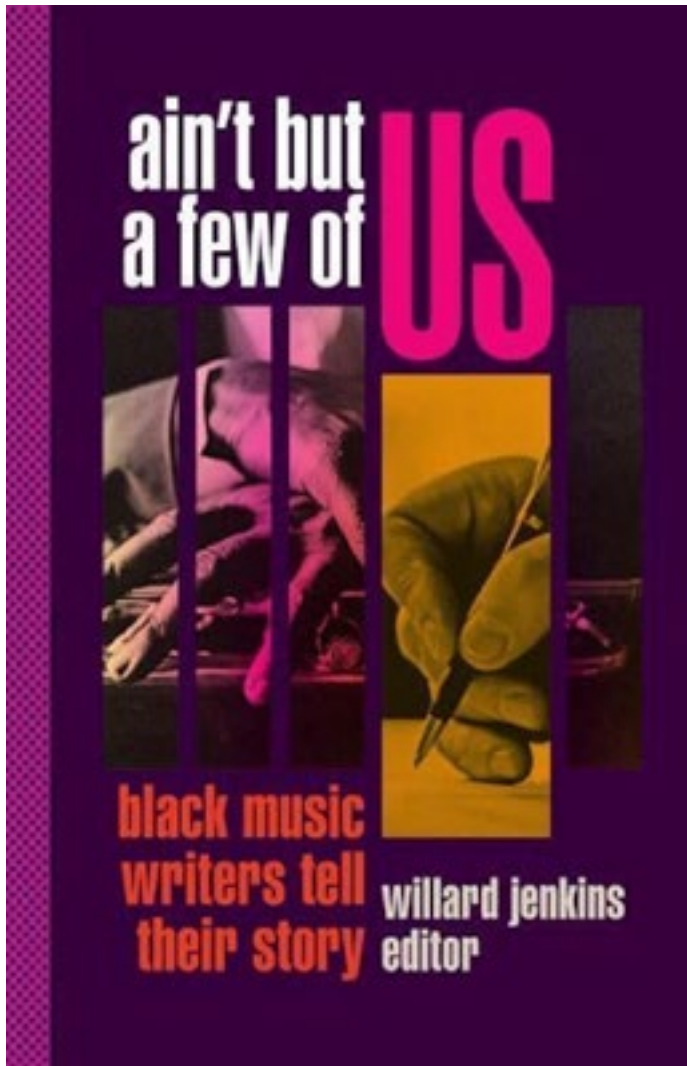
*wasn't that I was not valid but to navigate certain spaces you have to have a certain accoutrement. My job was to get this piece of paper **and then you will never shut me up.***

I learned how to engage with people like that. I developed the language and the attitude, and the temperament needed to do the work. What we do, this work, it's activism. We don't call it that, but it is activism. It is no different from the folks that have fought to dismantle, in America and abroad. You may not be marching, you may not be sitting in an establishment and disrupting the energy, but what we do when we write and we speak is disrupting that energy. That energy that has been given a house, that has been given a seat, given a table and we get to disrupt that.

All I knew was that I was going to get what I needed to get me in certain doors because you're not going to validate my voice until you see this and once I get in there, I'm going to disrupt.

With so much more to explore, this interview will be continued in our next magazine. In the meantime, there is so much of Tammy's work that must be explored, shared, valued and shouted about.

To purchase the books *Ain't But A Few of Us* and *Soul on Soul: The Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams* by Tammy Kernodle click on the images:



Photos provided by Tammy Kernodle

Do enjoy this video from the New Jersey Jazz Society: 'Soul on Soul': Dr. Kernodle presents Examining the Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams







THE PHOTOGRAPHERS:

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Rickie Lee Jones, Jazz Cafe,
2023

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2023







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2023



MIGDALIA VAN DER HOVEN

PHOTO BY STUART LEEDS







We were very proud to be one of the sponsors for the Hit Like A Girl contest this year.

A brilliant organisation, with incredible industry support including Yamaha, Zildjian, TAMA, Vic Firth and more. This year was the twelfth international contest for female drummers whose purpose is to showcase and encourage drumming and lifelong musicianship for girls, women, female-identifying and non-binary individuals, regardless of age, playing level or geographic location. The contest has had thousands of entries from many countries across the globe and has made a significant impact on the visibility of female drummers.

Women in Jazz Media team member Migdalia van Der Hoven was one of this year's judges:

"It has been a pleasure and a privilege being part of the Hit LIke A Girl UK Team and being able to see all the talent out there. The entries this year were incredible and it gives hope and pride seeing that the next generation of female drummers are taking over the world through music!"

Migdalia van der Hoven

There were two categories - under 18s and over 18s - and we wanted to find out more about the winners and are very happy to shine a light on some of them here, starting with the under 18 winners.

Meet Isobel Wood:



ISOBEL WOOD

Photo by Clarissa Debenham

When did you start drumming?

I have always been drawn to the drums ever since I was as little as one year old! My dad bought himself a drum kit because he wanted to learn how to play, but he never got round to having any lessons. However, lo and behold, I was the one who became the drummer of the house! When I was two, I got my very own little blue drum kit, which I loved playing every day. It was when I was five or six that I started taking drum lessons, and would practise at home on a Roland electric kit. As a dancer, I remember loving the similarities between tap dance and the drums – I couldn't believe that there were paradiddles in both drum rudiments and the tap syllabus! I have really benefited from both dance and drumming, as I feel they complement each other, especially when I'm trying to get complex rhythms, for example my

tap dance solo to 'Oye Cómo Va' by the legendary percussionist Tito Puente!

After I did my Grade 1 RSL exam, I was fortunate enough to be featured in a Rockschool YouTube video which demonstrated how the exam worked – that was an unforgettable experience, and a great introduction to the world of drum filming. I received my Pearl acoustic kit before doing my Grade 4 RSL exam, which I still use now! My current drum tutor is Neil Robinson – he has so much experience, having been a member of the James Taylor Quartet and having toured and played with Marty Wilde and Ian Dury, amongst others, and always keeps me inspired. He is a wealth of knowledge, and supplies me with a whole library of different pieces to play and take inspiration from. Since completing my Trinity Grade 8 exam last year, we've been looking at songs in the jazz fusion genre, but also keeping up with some rock pieces too. I always look forward to our lessons, as he always has something new to introduce me to!

What kind of music do you like to play?

I like to play a bit of everything! I enjoy playing anything from rock, to jazz fusion, a bit of funk (like the Brecker Brothers and Earth Wind and Fire), some latin, R&B (like Bruno Mars), and lots more. My favourite style of rock music to play is prog rock, as the time signature changes and intricate grooves are always so interesting, and really keep you engaged. I love playing Genesis, and I've started working out the drum parts to Tarkus by Emerson Lake & Palmer (ELP). But nothing beats the feeling of going wild on a hard rock or metal song too - it feels so good to release your energy and fit all of those fills in! For me, the artists who create music that I find the most exciting to drum to are probably Tool, Rush, and the Foo Fighters, or at the other end of the spectrum, I also enjoy playing 'My Shot' from the musical Hamilton. Sometimes, I go through old Trinity syllabi too, as some of those songs are really challenging! Back in lockdown, it was good to drum to songs by Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and Lee Fields, because I loved the chilled-out vibes. At the moment, I'm having a lot of fun focusing on some new grooves by fusion bands, such as Steely Dan, and a bit of afro-jazz.

Can you tell us who are some of your drummer role models?

OK, I have so many! There's Femi Koleoso from Ezra Collective and Gorillaz's touring band - he's just awesome! He has so much energy, and creates such interesting grooves that immediately make you want to get up and dance. The Ezra Collective's music is so uplifting and full of joy, and I've loved Gorillaz since forever! I'm inspired by Taylor Hawkins and Neil Peart, who sadly are no longer with us, and I love to rock out to their songs. My latest obsessions are Carl Palmer from ELP, and Andy Ward from Camel - I think they are just insane, and I listen to their music every day. They have this amazing fusion of jazz and rock, and of course the legendary Bill Bruford is up alongside



them as well. I aspire to be as technically virtuosic as him someday. Brian Downey from *Thin Lizzy* is amazing – I especially love his fills in the drum solos, especially in the songs ‘Chinatown’ and ‘Warriors’. Got to love a bit of Phil Collins, Stewart Copeland, Danny Carey and Chad Smith too, they’re some of the all-time greats! You might have noticed that I could be here a while reeling out a whole list of drummers...! My music mentors have also been incredible sources of inspiration, and I’m very grateful to have learnt and continue to learn from them.

What about any female drummers?

I really look up to Cindy Blackman Santana, and I’m so lucky that I’m going to be able to see her this September at the UK Drum Show! I’m also inspired by Sheila E, who recently got inducted into the Hollywood Walk Of Fame – the first female percussionist to do so, big up!

Another inspiration is Viola Smith, who I feel was a trailblazer for female drummers and musicians. I read that she made her Broadway drumming debut in ‘Cabaret’, and continued to teach and play into her hundreds! What a legend. There’s also Karen Carpenter, who was not only a famous singer, but an extremely talented drummer. As a singer and drummer myself, I admire her range of musical talent. Recently, I’ve enjoyed listening to Sharlene Goodridge, the drummer for Cat Burns, and Michel’Le Baptiste, who drums for Lizzo.

Since entering the Hit Like A Girl contest, I’ve been introduced to a whole world of female drummers, and I’m excited to discover even more now that I’m part of the online female drummer community – it’s so empowering to see how many of us there are out there, and how we can all be connected and support each other. Being a multi-instrumentalist and dancer, not only am I inspired by female drummers, but I’ve been introduced to female jazz musicians such as Nina Simone, Ella Fitzgerald, and Julie Andrews too. I love both jazz and musical theatre – *SIX The Musical* is very inspiring

as it’s motivating to see the awesome, strong female drummers performing in the West End and beyond. My favourite musicals are *42nd Street* and *Crazy For You*, so it would be a great achievement if I could one day be a part of the orchestra for those shows. The music just transports me inside the stories that they tell, and gives me a feeling of such anticipation and excitement. But I would also love to play the female lead roles too, though obviously not at the same time!

How did you find out about the ‘Hit Like A Girl’ competition?

In April, I started following Hit Like A Girl on Instagram, as I had seen it advertised a few years previously – I can’t quite remember whether it was on Drumeo or Modern Drummer’s Insta page. I had already booked in some studio time for the following week to record some videos just for fun, to mark my progress, and work on my performance, particularly in front of the camera. When I arrived at the studio, the tech guy, Talon, asked if the recording was for anything special, and I found myself saying that there was a competition I’d seen recently that I could enter! I decided to record something for Hit Like A Girl last minute – literally on the day of the deadline! The session was in the afternoon, so when Talon asked me when I needed the video for, I had to tell him I needed it for midnight that night, which only gave me time for one take, and gave about six hours to edit! I’m so grateful to him for managing to do such a good job in such a short space of time – it was a pretty superhuman task.

How did it feel to win?

It felt incredible! When I was contacted to say that I had placed, I was like, ‘Mum! I’m one of the winners for Hit Like A Girl!’ We sort of just looked at each other and went, ‘Aaaaaaaaah!’ I don’t even have the words to describe it, I’ve never experienced anything like it before – it truly felt amazing! It gave me so much confidence,

and I felt so proud of myself. I told my friends, and they said 'That's awesome!'; I told my teachers at school, and they were so supportive and very proud of me. It's just opened up so many opportunities - like, I couldn't have dreamed that I would be doing this interview right now! I've had industry professionals reach out and tell me to keep pursuing my drumming dream, and lots of family members and old friends support me too. People living as far away as Denmark, New Zealand and Japan have given me their encouragement, which seems crazy to me! I didn't expect my drumming to reach so far in the world! It's been really great being a part of such a supportive and friendly drumming community. There's just so much encouragement and positivity, and it's inspired me to keep doing what I love, as I'm heading in the right direction for where I want to be.

What are your plans now? Are you planning to perform at some gigs?

I need to start looking at universities and music conservatoires, which seems crazy! Recently, I've performed in a lot of school concerts, such as playing harpsichord in a Baroque concert (with some 20th Century John Rutter thrown in there too), percussion in my school Orchestra and Wind Band and singing in various choirs in the end-of-year concert, and tomorrow (but it won't be tomorrow by the time this article comes out, haha!), I'm going to be playing the drums in a two hour set for my school's Big Band BBQ event. We're going to be playing lots of different jazz, funk, and some latin staples. For example, songs we're performing include 'Four' by Miles Davis, 'September' by Earth, Wind and Fire, 'Green Onions' by Booker T. Jones, and 'Virtual Insanity' by Jamiroquai. I'm looking forward to doing some improvisation during the songs too, especially a drum solo in 'It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing'. Yeah, that's going to be a lot of fun!

I'm hoping to perform in some local music festivals and Christmas concerts later in the year too. I love being a part of my school

ensembles, but I would also love to do some session recording and getting together with some like-minded musicians to create some original music and get gigging to gain valuable experience. Speaking of playing live... last month, I went into a local infant school to help inspire the children to take up music lessons, and performed some pieces on the drums and the piano. I really enjoyed their enthusiasm and reaction when I started playing 'Superbad' by James Brown - there were about two hundred children with big smiles dancing and clapping along! At the end of the assembly, the students were asked, 'Who wants to take up the drums now?', and all their hands shot up! Job done! I would love to go into more schools to inspire and encourage more children in the future. Also, I have a passion for creative writing, composition, and would love to delve into music journalism some more. I'm so passionate about music, and I just want to absorb as much information and experience as possible! If you want to see where my music journey takes me next, give my account @ izirocks06 a follow!

[Click here to follow Isobel on Instagram](#)

**Now let us welcome
Maya Akerman:**

MAYA AKERMAN



Photo by Keren Akerman

When did you start drumming?

I started playing the drums when I was 14, almost 15, during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the back of my garden we have a shed that contains a 5-tom drum kit that was hardly ever touched in almost a decade. However, during the worst of the lockdown period, I wanted to teach myself something, to learn a new skill. I remember one day grabbing something from the shed for my dad, and right at the moment I walked into the shed, I realised that the lockdown period would be a great opportunity to teach myself the drums, after all, I wanted to make use of an incredible drum kit, I instantly became obsessed, I couldn't stop thinking about it. I have now been drumming for around two years, and I am currently practising for my grade 7 exam.

What kind of music do you like to play?

I have a wide variation of music I like to listen to and play on the drums. However, I love drumming to energetic and upbeat music. I love drumming along to the Foo Fighters, Blur, Queens of the Stone Age, Fuel, and others of the sort. However I also love creating beats and rhythms to house music. I just love catchy, fun and energetic music. But truly one of my favourites is Israeli music. Israeli music has had a large influence on me throughout my life. My Israeli family introduced me to Israeli music at a young age, and now I am able to feel and explore the beauty of it through the drums.

Can you tell us who are some of your drummer role models?

I love the legendary Taylor Hawkins. What an incredible drummer he was. Every time I would listen to the Foo Fighters or watch them perform on stage on You Tube, I would be in awe of his drumming speed, skill and technique. His attitude, passion and energy on stage is also something I highly admire. He is someone I really look up to.

What about any female drummers?

One of my female drummer role models is Meytal Cohen. When I first started playing drums, I was obsessed with watching her YouTube covers. She showed me the power and skill female drummers have and the achievements they can accomplish by fulfilling what they love to do. I also love my drumming teacher Samantha. Sam is someone who has motivated me and pushed me to my limits musically, she believed in me the minute I started drumming with her. Her attitude and dedication towards music, and drumming specifically, is something I really appreciate.

How did you find out about the 'Hit Like A Girl' competition?

My drumming teacher Samantha told me about the competition during one of our lessons. I was really looking forward to perform and showcase my drumming more publicly, so when Sam told me about a drumming competition for girls, I straight away decided I wanted to take part. As my first competition, I thoroughly enjoyed the process and the competitiveness, and I also loved watching the other talented entries.

How did it feel to win?

As I have only been drumming for about two years, it felt amazing to be the runner-up in the UK for my age category. I definitely did not expect to come so far in the competition, however when I saw that I got through to the final round, I felt as though my confidence built up, and I was able to appreciate and to believe in my skill and musical ability. Even though my parents told me from the beginning that I was able to achieve anything, this win really helped me understand that if I put my mind to something, I am able to succeed in it.

What are your plans now? Are you planning to perform at some gigs?

As mentioned prior, I am currently practising for my grade 7 exam, and I would love to focus on eventually achieving a grade 8 distinction. However, I also love to be on stage, and I have loved it since I was a little girl. One of my aspirations is to perform at gigs, concerts and hopefully big stages. I am currently a solo drummer, so in the future, I would also love to become part of a band, performing at different venues around the UK.



Photo by Samantha Lublin

BUNNIE GREENHALGH



Photo by Helen Okoth

Meet Bunnie Greenhalgh!

When did you start drumming?

From a young age I have always been passionate about music, however when I turned 8 I decided to take playing drums more seriously. When I began my music journey, I experimented with African percussion, South American samba and many more styles, but as soon as I picked up a pair of drumsticks and sat down at a drum kit I knew it was for me!

What kind of music do you like to play?

When I started playing, I often stayed in my comfort zone; playing mainly rock songs on drum kit. But in the last few years, I have loved trying other genres: Latin American, musical theatre numbers, and jazz! After growing up playing mainly rock songs, exploring the world of jazz drumming was a huge challenge, however the limitless aspects make it one of my favourite and free styles to play.

Can you tell us who are some of your drummer role models?

I have always been fascinated watching drummers like Dave Weckl and Steve Gadd and have really been inspired by their technicality. Also, I really look up to Matt Helders, who is the drummer in my favourite band (Arctic Monkeys).

What about any female drummers?

In such a male dominated industry, the female drummers are a huge inspiration to me, as I feel I can relate better, and easily visualise myself in their position one day. One of my favourite female drummers is Cherisse Osei, as her energy whilst playing is incredible. Also, I was inspired by my female relatives. For example, both my mum and my cousin helped me on my musical journey.

How did you find out about the 'Hit Like A Girl' competition?

I first found out about Hit Like A Girl through my drum teacher, Danny Pearson, as he had seen advertisements online. I then researched the competition and thought it would be worth submitting a video, mainly just to get my name out there, and to encourage more female drummers to get involved in amazing events like this.

How did it feel to win?

After I found out that I was a weekly winner of HLAG, I was over the moon, let alone winning 1st place in the <18 category in the UK! It has been an incredible experience taking part, and also I have made contact with other talented female drummers and it feels amazing to talk to people with the same musical interests.

What are your plans now? Are you planning to perform at some gigs?

At my secondary school, (years 7-11 in the UK), it has been hard to commit to a band, as exams and other hobbies of mine have taken over, so I have mostly been depping for bands that need a drummer last minute for gigs, and also playing as part of a big band that is put together as a part of the Hampshire County Youth Orchestra, on our annual residential. When I start college (years 12-13), I would love to play with more bands, to share my ideas, and to also promote young female musicians to aim towards their goals, because who knows what could happen!

**And now for two of the over 18s winners,
starting with Megan McGuinness**

**Can you tell us a little bit about you and
how long you have been playing the drums?**

My name is Megan McGuinness and I'm 20 years old and I have always had a passion for music ever since I was little. I started playing the drums when I was around 14 years old and have been learning/playing ever since. For the first 4/5 years I was self taught, learning how to play by ear and watching people play at live shows as well as reading a few books. However, in the last year or so I have found myself a drum tutor who is helping me with my technique and I have seen a drastic improvement since he has been teaching me.

**Historically, there have not been many fe-
male drummers - of all the instruments to
choose from, what was it about the kit that
spoke to you?**

I have always had a passion for music ever since I was little. My dad started teaching me to play the guitar when I was around 8 years old and I remember we'd sit in the

front room singing and playing along to songs together. However after a couple of years of playing guitar I realised that I wanted to try and learn the drums, as I would always find myself drawn to them every time I would watch a live gig or see recorded festival sets on the tv.

**How did you find out about the Hit Like
A Girl competition and how important do
you feel this type of platform is?**

I found out about the Hit Like A Girl competition through the drummer Lina Anderberg, as she posted that she was going to be a judge for the competition a couple of years ago. I feel that this type of platform is so important as female drummers don't really get as much recognition as male drummers, and competitions like this give us the opportunity to show people that there are actually lots of talented female drummers out there and allows us to boost our platforms.

**Can you tell us some of the female drum-
mers that have inspired you?**

Some of the female drummers that have



Photo by The Captured Gallery



Photo by The Captured Gallery

inspired me are Taylor Gordon (the Pocket Queen), Lina Anderberg, Vanessa Dominique and Affy Green.

Let's get technical! Can you tell us about your kit and sticks of choice?

The sticks that I use are the Vic Firth American Classic 5A's. The kit that I am using at the minute is the Gretsch new classic kit with a Tama hand hammered steel 12" snare drum and my Roland Spd-sx pad. When practising I hook my Gretsch new classic kit up to the Yamaha ead10 so that I can have my practice pads on, but still hear the sound of a real kit in my earphones. This is how I record most of my videos for Instagram and YouTube as well.

Can you tell us about your current projects – any gigs or recordings we should know about?

At the moment I do not have any current projects. I am hoping to get out gigging again this year, however I am just waiting for some opportunities to come through. In the mean

time I will be posting as regularly as possible on my Instagram page.

Do you have any words of wisdom for other female drummers out there?

The main piece of advice that I have is to always believe in yourself and have fun!!

[You can follow Megan on her Instagram page here](#)

And last but not least, Abbie Finn

Can you tell us a little bit about you and how long you have been playing the drums?

I've been playing drums since I was 10, so almost 18 years now. I started learning in my final year of primary school and I'm still learning today! I have released 3 albums with my jazz trio and am due to release the 4th next year. I perform regularly with my bands – the Abbie Finn Trio and the Finntet, as well as drumming for other artists' projects. Some of these are the Harry Keeble Quartet, Stu Collingwood Organ Trio, Sanaz Lavasani Quartet, Alice Grace Quartet and more. I am based in the North-East and am frequently called to be in the house band for visiting artists such as Andrea Vicari, Alan Barnes and Greg Abate.

Historically, there have not been many female drummers – of all the instruments to choose from, what was it about the kit that spoke to you?

I always thought the drums were the coolest instrument in any band, I was just drawn to them from the off. I would find myself looking at drummers on gigs in amazement with how fast they could move their sticks and how great the instrument sounded – this was back in my days of loving rock music. I wanted to be a cool rock drummer, but I ended up doing jazz...which in my opinion is even cooler.

How did you find out about the Hit Like A Girl competition and how important do you feel this type of platform is?

I can't remember how I initially came across Hit Like A Girl. I've done submissions for a few years now and always thought it was a great initiative. It's a really good way of celebrating and showcasing female drummers. I may have come across it on Facebook, but I can't be sure, either that or I was searching for female drummers! I

think it's super important to have a platform like this, because it allows us to support each other's music and show everyone what we can do. It feels very inclusive, in that it allows all genres of music and it's very easy to make a submission. If it had been around when I was a young drummer, I'd have loved to show people a drumming video of myself and other awesome female drummers. It would have allowed me to show people that there are more of us and we're not such a rarity.

Can you tell us some of the female musicians that you like?

I recently found out about Viola Smith, who was one of the first professional female drummers. She was quite a pioneer and I saw a video of her playing with an all-female band, which I thought was really great. Then there's more recent players such as Terri Lyne Carrington who is a fantastic drummer who has performed with Dizzy Gillespie, Wayne Shorter, Al Jarreau and many more. Other female musicians I like include Ingrid Jensen, Maria Schneider, Emma Rawicz and Nikki Iles. These ladies also compose their own music, which I think is very important. Maria of course, has her amazing orchestra who she composes and arranges for. I'm a big fan of larger ensembles and I actually set up and ran my own big band whilst studying in Leeds.

Let's get technical! Can you tell us about your kit and sticks of choice?

I have been using Vic Firth - Peter Erskine Ride sticks for quite a few years. I used to go in and out of sticks, but I've stuck with these ones for a while now.

My main kit is a custom made kit from Liberty Drums that I got to design myself. I'm incredibly lucky that they are based only 5 miles from my home town and I know the owner who is lovely. He let me mess around with different wood



types in the factory so I could create my perfect kit. I have a few other snares that I sometimes use, including a lovely, one of a kind deep Premier One snare.

I have a few cymbals that I use including Istanbul Agop, Istanbul Mehmet, Zildjian and Meinl. I like variation and quite often swap them around, although I have a 21” Mel Lewis Istanbul Agop ride that never gets swapped out, it is a thing of beauty. I heard my previous drum teacher using one and I knew instantly that I needed to get one.

Can you tell us about your current projects – any gigs or recordings we should know about?

You can check out my bandcamp [here](#) You’ll find music from my trio. Our latest album ‘On Pink Lane’, our live album ‘Live at the 2021 Newcastle Jazz Festival’ and our debut album ‘Northern Perspective’. I’m currently rehearsing for our latest album which is due to be recorded in September and is being funded by the Ronnie Scott’s Foundation. I’ve also played on the upcoming album by the Harry Keeble Quartet, that’s definitely one to check out and completely different

to the trio.

You can keep up to date with my gigs [here](#). I have quite a lot coming up with my Trio and the Finntet (my hardbop quintet) and more. I’m very excited to play with American saxophonist Greg Abate on 5th Nov at the Globe, Newcastle for Jazz North East.

Do you have any words of wisdom for other female drummers out there?

Go out there and do your thing, play the music that you love, not music that other people tell you, you should play. Make sure you practise and get playing with other people as soon as you can, it will accelerate your playing.

There is no greater feeling than performing in front of people. It can be quite daunting at first, but as your confidence builds, you will love it. Stay true to what you like, there’s been so many occasions where people have told me I should be playing a different genre of music or sub-genre of jazz, but I play what I enjoy, it’s what drives me. If things go wrong, that’s part of the learning process. I once had a car-crash of

Photo by Ken Drew



of a performance at school and it was my first solo piece. I couldn't hear the backing track and went really out of time and had to stop half way. One of the older boys laughed at me when I came off stage and I was very upset about it all. I practised, I made sure the backing track was loud enough next time and I nailed the next one. Don't worry, these things happen!

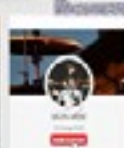
Thanks to all the drummers for talking to us! More in our next magazine!

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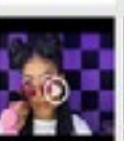
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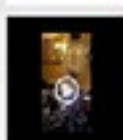
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THE ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: ANGIE WELLS

BY SANDRA BOOKER

Angie Wells is a veteran singer/songwriter based in Los Angeles who sits down to talk to Sandra Booker about her 25+ year career, the inspiration for her latest recording, *Truth Be Told*, the importance of creative authenticity, and the role of music as a tool to address social injustice and inequality.

SB: What is your name, and where did you grow up?

AW: My name is Angie Wells. I grew up in Philadelphia, “the west side of Philly,” home of rapper Will Smith.

SB What was it like for you?

AW: I actually had a nice childhood. We had neighborhoods in West Philly. You knew your neighbors, and all the families knew each other. There was a strong sense of community as well. We weren't wealthy by any means, but it was a lovely environment and a nice place where you rode your bike up and down the street—a fun place to be a kid. My family is all there, and I grew up surrounded by them. I had a really good childhood. I was fortunate.

SB: Tell me what inspires you to become a jazz musician.

AW: My love of jazz came from my Dad. That's where the organic roots of my interests and appreciation came from. He was a barber and whatnot. Sundays would be his first day off. My Dad was not a churchgoer, but my mother played in the church, and I sang in the choir. And so basically, when

we came home from church, my Dad would sit and play his albums. That was the activity for Sunday afternoons, and he played jazz. It started when I was around the age of three or four. I'd sit on the couch with my father and listen to jazz and blues on vinyl while my mom was cooking dinner. Jazz on vinyl was just the name of what I called spending time with my father.

SB: How did time spent with your Dad listening to jazz become part of your artistic evolution and influence your pursuit of music as a career?

AW: It wasn't something I considered early on as a career. My family and my generation were the first ones with the opportunity to go to college, and the older relatives stressed the importance of going to school and getting a good job. It wasn't an artistic job, and nobody was thinking about anything in the arts. It was about having the skills to work a nine-to-five to get a pension and a gold watch. So, they emphasized that kind of life. The arts weren't promoted, nor something that I thought of as a career until my adult life.

SB: What did you pursue as a vocation or career?

AW: I have a degree in business and marketing. I also have a cosmetology license and am a certified image consultant. I gravitated to things that circled business and beauty. I took piano lessons-music lessons from twelve to fourteen years old, but that was it. I don't play an instrument; I leave that to others; I use my vocal cords.

SB: Where did you attend college?

AW: I went to college in Philadelphia. It was called the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science. It is now Philadelphia University. They changed the name of the college 12 years after I graduated. It was a good experience for me.

SB You have a new release entitled Truth Be Told that includes 16 tracks, four of which are your original compositions. What was your motivation for creating this project with a social conscience theme?

AW: Well, in the summer of 2020, we were dealing with Covid, but on May 25, unfortunately, we witnessed a black man being murdered right before our eyes. It shook me in a way that I hadn't realized until - I mean, it hurt - but I didn't know how deeply it affected me until one day I was riding in my car just taking a clear my head drive because at that point we weren't supposed to be going anywhere and everyone was on lockdown. Suddenly, these words and this melody started bubbling up in me. The phrase truth I told kept repeating itself to me. Honestly, it was like I could hear our ancestors sounding this to me because it wouldn't go away. And so, I wrote the song Truth Be Told, the first song I wrote for the album. That's when I decided I wanted the album to be about various truths, not only in my life but in general. That's how the album was conceived.

SB: You work with some of the most recognized names in the



Los Angeles jazz community on this project, including legendary bassist and co-leader of the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, John Clayton, and the much-in-demand pianist and arranger Josh Nelson and some other established players: What was it about these particular musicians that made you want to create this project with them?

AW: Well, I had worked with Josh right before the pandemic. I had done two gigs with him, and then everything shut down, but it was magical working with him for me. I wanted to do the project with him because he enjoyed working with me as a vocalist. We, as singers, know when someone is just working with us for the paycheck as opposed to, they like working with vocalists. Josh covered both bases because he enjoyed working with me and working with vocalists. He's very supportive of you, and right there for you, so I knew I wanted to do the recording with him. So, I approached him, and he was on board, and then we started talking about writing together. I wrote the lyrics and melodies for the songs, and Josh helped me get everything on paper and made the arrangements.

As far as John [Clayton], he has been my mentor for five to seven years, and he is such a special person; he has such an amazing ear and is so talented, and he's legendary. I reached out to him and asked would be part of this project. Of course, I was a bit nervous when I reached out

to him, but he has always been very ingratiating, warm, and open to helping me to learn. Still, I wasn't sure if he would say yes or even want to, and I was really in my head about asking because he is so prolific and quite busy, but he said "yes" and asked me who else would be on the album. I told John I had talked to bassist Trevor Ware and drummer Clayton Cameron but that I needed additional players, and he and Josh helped me find the other players that would be good for the music I wanted to do, and that's how it came about.

SB: What do you aspire to say with your work and this recording specifically?

AW: With this work, I wanted to tell a story. I tried to weave this musical journey through life, which was this project's focus. I sang how I wanted, so I decided not to worry about staying in any genre box.

SB: How would you describe this project? Would you consider this a transgenre project due to galvanizing various genres to create your narrative to reflect and represent your culture and background?

AW: Absolutely! I love the term and describe this project as transgenre. The project is jazz-forward, but there are other elements and styles: roots blues, gospel, funky underlining of R&B, and definitely, the soul. Soul was at the core of this process for me. I wanted to embrace my blackness and my roots in the music. I didn't want the sterility of the formal jazz approach to be the focus. I liked the feeling of the music from the late 60s to the early 70s and the social consciousness that was such a strong foundation for it. One of the albums I found so inspirational in the last few years was Jon Batiste's album "We Are," which won Album of the Year at the 64th Grammy. It took me on a ride, and it combined so many different genres, and after listening to the recording, I thought it was such a fun journey, and I wanted to bring that sense of freedom to my work. There was such a range of emotions. I was tapping my feet one minute, shaking my booty the next, or crying or raising my hands, and it stemmed from making good music sans any specific labels. That

inspired me to create a musical gumbo.

SB: You have a unique vocal sound and a keen sense of style as an award-nominated makeup artist. Where does your musical autonomy come from?

AW: I've gotten more self-assured as my career has gone on. (Pauses) That's a good one, Sandra. I have to give that some thought. When I first started singing, I tried to fit into the jazz box to connect with people I admired and to sing to win their respect. A lot of the people I admired at that time are no longer alive, but as I began singing in LA, people like Sam Hirsh, Dwight Treble, Jacques Lesure, Bili Redd and Barbara Morrison were people I hoped would say, "Okay, she's doing something good, something that's respectable," if they heard my music. Barbara was so soulful; she did her own thing, didn't give a dang what anybody thought, and was very true to herself. I wanted to be respected by straight-ahead artists because I had so much respect for the music itself. I had no formal education in this music besides my piano lessons as a kid, but it wasn't jazz but Classical. So, I was coming from a place that was way behind the curve, so I almost desperately wanted to be respected by certain people.

I admired one person from afar who was on a completely different level —singer Rene Marie. She is a very authentic and soulful singer as well. She started her career later in life, but she was not deterred. Like her, I didn't start my musical journey as a kid; I started as a grown woman without a formal musical background. I admired where she took her career, considering the age she started and just her style. I was fortunate enough to attend one of John Clayton's summer music camps in Port Townsend, Washington, and I went in 2019. Rene Marie was my vocal coach, and I was just blown away. Blown away that she respected my art and what I was trying to achieve, she appreciated my work, skill, and style.

It was a great experience; she and I have even become friends. She's always offered me genuine encouragement and helped me overcome my fear of certain things. As I've grown and progressed, I'm to the point where this is who I am. I won't be for everybody, and if I'm not, oh well, but I evolved to embrace my sound, style, and approach because it's who I genuinely am, and that's what's important to me as a creative person. I'm going to sing what's organic to me because, for the first time, indeed the first time, I don't feel any constraints on myself, and I don't feel the need to do that to myself. This is what it is, musically speaking, and if you like it, great; if you don't, it's cool.

SB: You are an award-winning makeup artist and certified stylist. You've received numerous nominations for your work as such. How does that part of your life contribute to or influence your sense of style?

AW: I'm award nominated, and though I have received many nominations for my work, I have not won—yet—so I'm candid about making that distinction. Working in the beauty business, I was a hairdresser after I left college and I became a corporate trainer while I was in college, but the company did a big layoff. I decided not to return to the corporate world, so I went to cosmetology school and became a hairdresser. Shortly after that, I got my certification as an image consultant. Having that sort of background in beauty, I just fell into that part of the business. I started doing makeup as a teenager and modeled as a teenager. My agent noticed I had a natural hand so that I would help the other girls with their photoshoots, but it has played a significant role in how I put myself together.

One of the things is that when people come for a show, it's not just for their ears. Otherwise, we could do the show in complete darkness; you wouldn't need to be on stage; you could sing behind a

curtain and play the music over a loud-speaker. When they come, they're not just for an auditory experience but also a visual one. It's essential to give the audience a whole experience. Pop stars, rock stars, and R&B stars have known for many years that your stage presence and costuming excite people. I don't know where we lost that with jazz, but so much of the focus on the music is cerebral that we feel like we only need to listen and what we're wearing doesn't matter, and even though they may sound great, they're not giving me anything visual that I can connect to the music. I took from the pop and the world of Hollywood that optics and visuals are essential. For example, people love the red carpet; they want to see what you're wearing, how your hair is done, what you are made up as, what kind of lipstick or eyeshadow you wear, and whose shoes or designs you wear. The public is more visual, and the artists, especially in jazz, should consider that. And it doesn't mean what you wear has to be expensive or haute couture; there should be an effort, and that is my brand for me. My brand is "I'm going to give you a great auditory experience, but at the same time, I'm going to give you something memorable to look at."

When I'm putting together a set list, I'm considering what the venue looks like, which will help determine what I wear and what I'm going to sing. I even think about what the lighting is like. All those elements inform how I create my show. When I get onstage, I am myself. I care about the people who take the time to come and spend their money to allow me to do what I do. It's a solid symbiotic relationship because of the artist and the audience, and by the second song of my sets, I want the audience to feel I have come to give and serve.

SB: There is a lot of conversation about artificial intelligence or AI entering the mainstream as an alternative to human



Photo by Craig Allyn Cochrane

creativity. What are your thoughts on artificial intelligence and how it will influence music-making in the future?

AW: Artificial intelligence? Wow! It doesn't excite me for the future of many things. These are machines, and technology has its place in society, but there has to be a reverence for human creativity. I wouldn't say I like the concept of some computer program being able to copy the style of how someone writes or performs a song or having a database from every conceivable source and then taking things that people have worked earnestly to create from their knowledge, growth, and expertise, and not only being able to manipulate it but to then profit financially from it. So, I'm not a big proponent of it from an artistic perspective.

SB: Do you think jazz has a part to play regarding social issues based on your project inspired by the killing of George Floyd by law enforcement? Do you think jazz musicians are reluctant to tackle these issues, and why?

AW: Some are, and wading into those waters isn't for everybody.

Everybody is not of the clothes to stand up and say things that might make the public, or even colleagues and bandmates, uncomfortable, even if it is the truth. And that's okay, too, because we're all different. Everybody couldn't be Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, or Rosa Parks. Everybody can't be Isaac Hayes, the Watts Prophets, or Sista Souljah. I'm not comparing myself to them; I'm just saying those people who stood up and spoke the truth when it was tough and could have been quiet and lived a life of quiet desperation, and perhaps they wouldn't have suffered in the many ways that they did. This killing of George Floyd and others was greater than me, and I couldn't shut it up. I went through this phase, which inspired another project that is not jazz but speaks out about other social issues.

I can't say I set out to fight social injustice, but this music came to me and had to get out. I was a vessel to speak for so many who have been silenced. Music is vital in that way to highlight a message. There is a legitimate fear of losing an audience because you will likely lose some people when you take these stances in defense of the truth. To quote the great Nina Simone, she said, "We have a duty to speak to social injustice and oppression." When I think of many artists who spoke out about social issues, some people are grateful for those truths. Those who don't and only want to hear the happy may take personal offense to something that was said or sung about or a lyric because perhaps it cuts too close to home. Music is a mirror, and it's revealing. Music holds up the mirror of truth to us in a way we can't hide from it, and the reflection we get back from it, so it's easier to apply makeup than to clean your face and look at the fine lines, wrinkles, moles, and other imperfections.

It's easier to apply makeup to hide the natural face we don't want the world to see rather than the face as it truly is. I take the position that I'm going to sing the truth as I have experienced it, and if you can handle it, great, and if you can't handle it, great again, but I'm not going to let those opinions dictate to me what I create or how I present it. It is precisely how I feel about these matters.

SB: Where do you see yourself as a jazz artist in the next five years?

AW: Whew! Now I have to call it out. I would like to see myself on the stage of the Hollywood Bowl, Jazz at Marciac, Monterey Jazz Festival, and Newport Beach Jazz Festival and to level up on bigger stages with broader audiences. That's my vision for myself, and I'm working to make that vision my reality. I still enjoy performing an intimate gig in a smaller venue but I want to expand my industry presence. I love the energy of being in front of a large audience. I love it all because I love that buzz of connecting with people.

SB: I would like to ask you three questions I close all my interviews with if you want to share. What is your favorite color, your favorite flower, and your favorite word?

AW: My favorite color is white. My favorite is the Casablanca lily which happens to be a white lily that's very fragrant, and my favorite word is more of a favorite phrase, and that phrase is "thank you."

[Click here to purchase *Truth Be Told*](#)

[Click here to visit Angie Wells website](#)

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Photo by Jarrelle Lee Studios

Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky



ZOE RAHMAN



ZOE RAHMAN:

DISCOVERING HER ROOTS AND FINDING HERSELF

BY NICK LEA

Without doubt the music of Zoe Rahman has been well received whenever she has released a new album. Long heralded as one of the most important and innovative pianists and composers on the UK scene, she has hardly been prolific on the recording front, and this month sees the release of her latest album *Colour of Sound* which is perhaps her most fully realised offering to date.

Remarkably *Colour of Sound* is only her seventh album in two decades, her debut *The Cynic* was released in 2001, yet all have the hallmark of Zoe's gifts as an improviser and composer and her individual approach to the piano. So just how has she arrived at this point in time, where everything that she has worked so hard on over the years has now coalesced into an even more potent musical force? In respect of both her piano playing and composing, and also her personal journey in discovering her own roots of her English, Irish and Bengali ancestry, Zoe appears now to be in the perfect place to express this musically.

Listening to her albums chronologically is a fascinating process, and one can hear how Zoe is moving her music forward, not always with monumental leaps but with a steady and logical progression. So how did Zoe begin her musical journey?

"My parents were always listening to music

and my siblings all played instruments when we were growing up" recalls Zoe. "I was 4 when I first started going for piano lessons, after my parents bought an old upright piano for £10 for us - they thought it would be more of a toy than an instrument, but they soon realised that we were interested in music!"

Music very quickly did become important to Zoe and along with classical piano lessons the young musician carried on her education by listening to the diverse music played around the Rahman family home. Along with her brother Idris she became aware of jazz. "I remember going to a jazz gig when I was a teenager and being fascinated by what I was hearing. Seeing musicians improvise live was an eye-opener for me, it drew me in to the music and I wanted to learn how to do what they were doing!" says Zoe.

Taking time to reflect on her musical beginnings she says, "I've had many influences throughout my career as a musician. My primary school teacher, Mrs Hawkins, was an inspiration, she taught me recorders, guitar and was always giving us opportunities to perform in school. As a jazz composer and pianist, I take inspiration from people like Joanne Brackeen, Duke Ellington, Abdullah Ibrahim, Thelonius Monk and many more! Female jazz musicians and composers are a particular inspiration to



me - people like Mary Lou Williams, Alice Coltrane, Geri Allen, Lil Hardin, Patrice Rushen, Jessica Williams, Nikki Yeoh.... too many to mention here!”

When listening to Zoe’s music there is always a strong sense of identity of who she is, and how she draws inspiration and influences from her British and Bengali heritage. So, I ask Zoe if this is a conscious decision or does she find that her music naturally incorporates elements of these different musical cultures?

“I listen to all kinds of music, and I am always influenced by what I hear so the music I write and how I play is a reflection of those different musical interests” explains Zoe. “I did make a conscious decision a few years ago to explore Bengali music as a way of connecting to my heritage, but that’s just one part of my musical DNA!”

One of the attributes of Zoe’s albums is that she has the courage to include many of her own original compositions rather than standards. So, is composing an important part of her musical persona and something that comes naturally? Pausing for a moment with her response, Zoe replies

“I enjoy composing, although I don’t get to do it as much as I’d like! For me, jazz is a forward-thinking artform - it allows space for improvisation and group interaction, which is a really important part of the joy of this particular artform. Through my compositions I want to say something fresh and relevant to my own life. I was awarded an Ivor Novello Impact Award for my composing in 2021, around the time when I was planning to record Colour of Sound, so I felt like it was the right time to focus particularly on my own compositions - something I hadn’t done since my very first album.”

ZOE RAHMAN the cynic



The Cynic (2001)

Zoe (piano);
Winston Clifford (drums);
Jeremy Brown (bass)

Your first album from 2001, and a trio record that sounds anything but a straight ahead jazz album. The compositions are very original and melodic, swing mightily while the music never appears to be tied down by the history of the piano trio. Was this a conscious decision to look to push the music in a new direction?

“To be honest, I just wrote whatever music came out of me! I wasn’t trying to do anything other than be myself, it’s a reflection of all the music that I’d absorbed and enjoyed listening to.”

With an album that sounds remarkably fresh and exciting more than twenty years later, I ask Zoe when looking back, what are her thoughts about the music now, and are there any of the compositions that stand out as favourites? “The first jazz piece I ever wrote was ‘Apple Pie’ - the piece starts off in 11/8 time, although I didn’t know that when I wrote it, I only worked that out afterwards!” laughs Zoe. “It reminds me of when I was starting out - I played it for

Julian Joseph and he immediately recommended that I go and listen to Joanne Brackeen’s album *Special Identity* as he heard in my music a similarity of style and sound. I ended up learning piano with Joanne at Berklee College in Boston a few years later and my piece ‘Apple Pie’ was one of the tracks I played and recorded on a demo with the drummer Bob Moses while I was at Berklee, so it has a lot of memories for me.”



Melting Pot (2006)

Zoe (piano); Gene Calderazzo (drums); Oli Hayhurst (bass); Pat Illingworth (drums); Jeremy Brown (bass); Idris Rahman (clarinet); Adriano Adewale Itaúna (udu)

The follow up album to *The Cynic* seemed to be a long time coming, so I asked why she waited five years before recording *Melting Pot*?

“When you're releasing albums on your own label and financing everything yourself, you have to wait for the right time - you have to have enough money! Also, musically, I always wait until I feel that I have something meaningful to say before I put an album out. It takes time to write the music’.

Once again most of the tracks featured a trio. Is this a format that you were feeling most at home in?

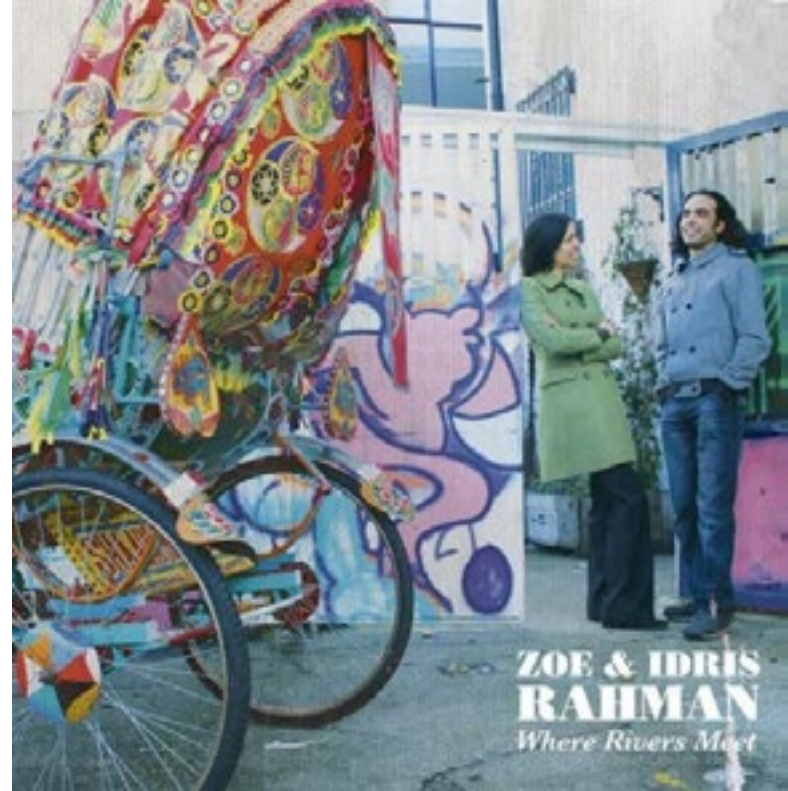
“I was gigging a lot with the trio, and larger line-ups weren't really that practical as there wasn't enough money around and so it made sense to record with trio or quartet.”

Feeling very different in concept from her debut album, I ask Zoe if she feels that her playing and composing had evolved between the two recordings? “The hope is that with each album, my playing and composing evolves - recordings are a snapshot of where my music is at that moment in time.”

When listening to the album, I suggest that one piece in particular, ‘Shiraz’, seems to be at the heart of the album and is the longest track too. “I remember writing it on a fairly out-of-tune upright piano in Manchester!” recalls Zoe “It's one of those pieces that just kind of came out of nowhere. Track titles quite often come after I've written the tunes so in this case, ‘Shiraz’ seemed to fit the nature of the piece.

Where Rivers Meet (2008)

Zoe (piano); Idris Rahman (clarinet); Kuljit Bhamra (tabla); Gene Calderazzo (drums); Oli Hayhurst (bass); Samy Bishai (violin); Arnob, Gaurob, Joseph Aquilina, Mizan Rahman (vocals)



The next album, *Where Rivers Meet*, was a complete departure for Zoe and takes a look at the music of Bengal as the focus for the recording.

“Idris and I started by working on the songs my Dad liked to listen to. He was ill in hospital and the cassettes he'd been listening to for several decades had started to wear thin, so I transferred them onto CD for him” explains Zoe. “In that process, I got to hear some of his favourite music. Up until then, I'd only really heard him humming the tunes to himself, he never really played the music to us in the house. He listened more to Nat King Cole and other things on LP, but the Bengali songs were something he listened to on headphones or on his own in the car. I wanted to make an album of Bengali music to connect to him and my family in Bengal (Dhaka). I can't understand or speak much of the language, but we could understand the emotion behind the songs. We added some tunes that our cousins taught us and also music that various people introduced us to during the process of making the album - we recorded in Dhaka as well as in London and worked with some great musicians: the singers Arnob and Gaurob from Bangladesh as well as the tabla player/percussionist Kuljit Bhamra, Samy Bishai on violin as well as Gene Calderazzo on drums and Oli Hayhurst on

on bass. My Dad recites some of the lyrics on one of the tracks and sings some backing vocals on another, and singer Joseph Aquilina also contributed some vocals.”

From Zoe’s comments it is apparent that this recording was very important to her. Looking back at this particular album I asked Zoe how she felt that it had influenced her going forward? “I don’t really listen to my own albums but of all my albums, I think I like this one the best” she replies modestly, “as it connects me to my family in Bangladesh. I recorded the sound of rickshaws in the street from one of my Auntie’s balconies and used that as the intro to the last track. The music’s very nostalgic for me. Through making and touring the album I’ve met so many people of Bengali heritage, most of whom I would never have met had I not made *Where Rivers Meet*. Growing up in Chichester (West Sussex) I didn’t really know many Bengali people or people from a mixed Bengali and English background, but I know so many now! It’s been an amazing journey for me. Musically and culturally, there’s a lot more to learn...”

Zoe Rahman Trio (Live) (2009)

Zoe (piano); Gene Calderazzo (drums); Oli Hayhurst (bass); Idris Rahman (clarinet)

For her next album, Zoe returned to the piano trio and also made the decision to record a live album. Taking up the story, Zoe explains

“This album was recorded quite soon after I’d been nominated for the Mercury Music Prize. My band were gigging a lot at the time, and I really wanted to capture the energy of our live gigs as it’s often quite different to how we play in the studio. I only decided on the night, just before the gig started, to ask the sound engineer to record the performance. We were playing at the Pizza Express in Soho for two nights and I thought I’d just take a chance and see if we got any material that was worth putting out!”.



The resulting music was completely different to the earlier trio albums, and I asked Zoe if again this was deliberate on her part to drive the music forward and look for new avenues of expression? Pausing to gather her thoughts, Zoe says

“For me, jazz is a forward-thinking art-form. I love playing jazz as opposed to other styles of music because it allows me to explore new areas of my playing - it allows me to express myself in a way that I can't do in any other way!”

Some of the tracks released on the live album feature your brother Idris as a guest, and when you play together the music appears to change again. There is a real chemistry between you that seems to take the music to another place. Again, is this something that you are aware of?

“I have a musical connection with my brother that I don't have with any other musician” enthuses Zoe, “it's really special. I love working with him, his playing is very soulful and he's an incredible musician in many ways. He not only plays many instruments, but he also has a recording studio and has helped record/produce/mix many of my albums.”

Kindred Spirits (2012)

Zoe (piano, harmonium); Gene Calderazzo (drums); Oli Hayhurst (bass); Idris Rahman (clarinet); Courtney Pine (alto flute)

Listening to Kindred Spirits, this feels like a big step forward. There is a confidence and assurance in the compositions and performances, and the music is simply breathtaking in its beauty and vitality.

Intrigued by the music I ask Zoe about her concept for the album when writing the material. Again, gathering her thoughts Zoe says

“I did a tour of Ireland with my band in 2011 and this album was recorded straight after that. Idris and I were both struck by the prevalence of music in Ireland, and it reminded us of being in Bangladesh where music is a big part of life - family gatherings involve someone playing a harmonium and singing songs by Tagore and other famous Bengali musicians. The sessions we saw in the pubs in Ireland reminded us of that. Through my maternal Grandmother I have some Irish heritage and I wanted to connect to those roots as well as joining the dots between my Bengali, Irish and English make-up through the work of Rabindranath Tagore. There's a track on the album that was originally an Irish tune called 'Go Where Glory Waits Thee' - it's the tune that Tagore's 'Mana Na Manili' is based on. We also go from Tagore's tune 'My Heart Dances, Like a Peacock, It Dances' into an Irish tune 'Butlers of



Glen Avenue' to connect those different musical worlds.”

If Zoe's individual style of writing and playing with a piano trio had continued to evolve, on this album more than any other, the writing for other instruments including the alto flute and Idris's clarinet takes on a whole new depth and feeling. Once again, I wondered if this was something that Zoe had been working on within her composing?

“I'd been gigging in Courtney Pine's band for a while, and I asked him if he'd play a track on the album” explains Zoe, “to my surprise he said yes! I'd heard him play alto flute on tour (the first time I'd worked with anyone playing that instrument) and I loved the sound, so I arranged the tune 'Conversation with Nellie' for Courtney to play. The tune was dedicated to my maternal grandmother, Nellie Grogan. Musically, I wanted to expand on the trio format.”



Dreamland (2016)

After concentrating on writing predominantly for her trio it was inevitable that Zoe would make a solo piano recording at some point, and the resulting album seemed to show quite a different side to her as a pianist. All the distinctive touches that we heard from the trio albums are present, but there seems to be a power in the music that is not so much overwhelming as joyous and uplifting. Interested to find out more, I asked Zoe why she chose that moment in time to record a solo album, and also about the process that she brought to bear on the music?

“I'd been asked to record and tour a duo album with Courtney Pine (Song: The Ballad Book) a couple of years before making this album, and my playing in that context had developed to a point where I wanted to explore the possibilities of doing a solo piano album. Also, the album was made after I'd had my son and just before I had my daughter, so there was limited time and energy to get any kind of larger ensemble together, it just wasn't going to happen!”

Interestingly, another aspect of the solo is that Zoe chose to play some standards, and also revisit a couple of her own composi-

tions in ‘J’Berg’ and ‘The Calling’. So what, I asked, influenced the decision to include these pieces? The answer to part of the question it appears was simply logistics and time, as Zoe explains.

“With a toddler and a baby on the way, finding time to write new music was very difficult. I also wanted the album to have a variety of styles, especially as it was a solo album. I spent a lot of time listening to solo piano albums by all kinds of people for inspiration. With ‘J’Berg’ and ‘The Calling’ I wanted to find a new perspective on those pieces. Solo piano allows you to open up certain areas of a composition that you might not be able to in an ensemble context.”

Colour of Sound (2023)

Zoe (piano); Alec Dankworth (double bass); Gene Calderazzo (drums); Idris Rahman (tenor saxophone, alto saxophone, clarinet); Rowland Sutherland (flute, alto flute); Alex Ridout (trumpet, flugelhorn); Byron Wallen (trumpet); Rosie Turton (trombone)



Listening to Colour of Sound I suggest to Zoe that this is the album that she was destined to make. A work that has culminated out of everything that she has done previously, and again looks to move ever forward. The music has that joyous element that permeates all of her music, but the compositions and arrangements grow ever stronger. Once again there has been quite a long time between recordings. So why release a new album now, I ask?

“I made my Dreamland album in between when my son was born and just before my daughter came into the world so after Dreamland, I was a bit busy! Various other life events, including the pandemic, prevented me from making the album sooner - I'd planned to make it in 2020”, explains Zoe pragmatically.

The music also tells of a new chapter in Zoe's writing and arranging with music for a larger ensemble throughout.

“I've always wanted to make an album with more musicians but again, it's down to time and finances, says Zoe. “My Where Rivers Meet album, did have a larger line-up (piano, bass, drums, tabla, clarinet, violin and different vocalists) but this latest album is more concentrated around my own compositions and the arrangements for larger ensemble. The tour we're doing has more of the music arranged for octet - on the album some tracks are for trio, quartet or quintet.”

With a new set of compositions for a new group, I ask Zoe how she chose the musicians for the album, and if she had written specifically with these musicians in mind?

“I arranged some of these tunes for a quintet gig at Cheltenham Jazz festival in 2022. It was written for Byron Wallen, Rowland Sutherland specifically and the excellent musicians Cheryl Alleyne was on drums with Flo Moore on bass, both of whom I've worked with in other contexts.”

Elaborating, Zoe continues “On the album, I used my regular trio with Gene Calderazzo

on drums and bassist Alec Dankworth, as well as expanding the horn section to include my brother, Idris, on tenor sax/alto sax/clarinet, Rosie Turton on trombone, Alex Ridout on trumpet/flugel. I've wanted to work with Rosie and Alex for a while so this was the perfect opportunity. The ensemble writing is just an extension of my piano playing - I think orchestrally anyway as many piano players do - Ellington for instance...” As an aside she adds, “I've always wanted to do a big band album of my music and have it in mind - if someone out there wants to magic up some money to make that happen, let me know!!”

[Click here to purchase
Colour of Sound](#)

[Click here to visit
Zoe Rahman website](#)

CHARLOTTA KERBS



All photos provided by Darrell Craig
Harris



CHARLOTTA KERBS AND THE STRAYS

Charlotta Kerbs and The Strays is a new band kicking up a storm, co-founded by Finnish singer/songwriter Charlotta Kerbs and bassist/songwriter Darrell Craig Harris. Born out of an online collaboration, the duo have developed some incredible work in a relatively short amount of time with some fantastic gigs and radio play across the globe. Their recently released 'Muscle Shoals Session' EP was recorded in the historic Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in Alabama, linked to artists such as Aretha Franklin, Cher, Etta James and many more. Shining a light on this new duo and their experience at Muscle Shoals, I chatted to both Charlotta and Darrell about their partnership and new EP.

Darrell you are based mainly in Las Vegas, but are always travelling around the world and Charlotta you are in Finland - how did you both first connect?

DCH: Charlotta is such an amazing talent. That's what struck me and how we kind of first met. There is a friend of mine, Niklas Rosström, a TV producer in Finland who works with Hemma Live, a TV show on YLE which is like their version of the BBC. He produced a show where they would go into artist homes and interview them and then have them perform. I was watching one of these episodes and after watching a few, I saw Charlotta's episode and she was speaking in Finnish and then all of a sudden she started to sing and I was like wow! Singing in perfect English and very soulful...almost kind of Aretha vibe and I was wow, who is that?! So, I contacted Niklas and he got us connected and we did various things online, trading tracks back

writing and then we finally met in person. I've been going to Finland since around 1989, so I have a background with a lot of friends there.

CK: I was very, very happy when Darrell first contacted me on Facebook after watching my episode. I immediately felt very inspired by Darrell's way of visualising things, dreaming big and this feeling that everything is possible - we can do anything and just dream it to achieve it! I really felt that from a very early stage and was very inspired by that. We were trading messages and after a little while we also started trading song ideas and tracks and that developed into three singles that we have now released - and the new EP!

Darrell, I know that you have an extensive catalogue of work as a session bassist including working with Cirque Du Soleil, Billy Preston, and the QUEEN Rock Symphony but Charlotta, how did you begin your musical journey?

CK: I've been singing for as long as I can remember! None of my parents are musicians but I have some folk musician relatives and I have always listened to a lot of music in my home. I started taking singing lessons when I was around 12/13 years old and a few years later I started my first band, a garage band - progressive rock music and some experimental stuff which led me onto jazz improvisation. Later on, and after high school I decided to study music and studied here in Finland and became a musician and a singing teacher from there. Since I graduated, so 10 years or so, I've been working as



a freelance musician, songwriter and composer.

One of the many wonderful elements of Charlotta's voice and her music is the diverse range of influences you can hear. You can find her singing traditional Finnish folk music and then the next minute some Aretha inspired female empowered soul.

CK: I'm definitely like a music researcher. That's the big meaning of music and life for me and that has always been my thing to explore different styles - exploring and bringing different spices from here and there and bringing them to my own kind of palette. I mentioned that I started out diving into progressive rock and this is a music where you combine a lot of different musical styles and that set the foundation for my thinking. I always wanted to be free to expand limits and always explore and develop.

Having worked together online, creating some remote recordings, the two finally met.

DCH: I went over to Finland and Charlotta has a lovely farm, and we went there with the idea of let's just get together in person. We've been running online projects and there's a video I put up of us sitting outside on her front lawn and we were just talking and actually that video is the first time we really played together. It wasn't rehearsed, it was just spontaneous, and it was funny because we were playing, I think we both felt like wow something's happening here... it's fun because we're a really good team. We both have very similar energy and we're very much aligned - let's just try this, let's try that, let's try this gig, add new things. So, we have a similar vibe and we really get along well, hanging out and working. Working on the Muscle Shoals album, we had a great time exploring the city and it's nice

to have that connection beyond just music because it helps the music and brings something fresh into what you're doing creatively. So yeah, it's been a fun ride so far.

Your 'Muscle Shoals Sessions' EP must have been so exciting! Recording in a studio so embedded with legends. How did that all come about?

CK: I think it was one of the times Darrell was visiting me in Finland and we were having one of our sessions and talking about further plans and recording. Darrell asked if I'd ever heard about the FAME studio in Alabama and I told him I'd seen the documentary, twice, and cried. Darrell told me that he'd been there doing sessions and we just threw it out there as an idea and a few months later I found myself on a plane down to Nashville.

That must have been so incredible, just walking into a place where so many legends have played. Did you feel any pressure?

CK: Yes, a very proud moment indeed and sort of like a very spiritual journey and it felt like coming back to the roots, even if my roots aren't from there but still it felt like coming back to the place where so many of my musical heroes and so many of those who inspired me to be the one I am today, started out. I was just soaking it all in...the inspiration and the energy. It's something very special to be there and feel that energy.

DCH: It's very spiritual down there and a special place. I think we all feel, as recording artists that you have got to deliver, especially when you're having to put together the finances and all of that stuff but a big part of that, which we talked about a lot, is really building your team and the team there is really stellar, it's world class.

And deliver, they did! Here is the video for the first single from the EP Come What May

Can we explore the EP and the writing process a little? How did this work?

CK: Well we have six songs on the album and one of the songs we wrote together and the rest of the songs are my compositions but we arranged them together. So, it's collaborative which is what we both like. I thought a lot about what kind of message do I want to bring the world and what kind of message do I need to hear and the world needs to hear. I felt that I needed to bring a positive vibe... uplifting. So a lot of the songs are about light, love and gratitude.

DCH: Charlotta and I have talked about the writing process a lot and you'll hear a lot of musicians, famous songwriters talking about 'I woke up and had this idea and I wrote it in 5 minutes or 10 minutes' or 'we were at the end of the session and we decided to just try this jam but that ended up being the biggest hit we ever had'... that's the universe giving you gifts. Allowing the universe to give you gifts.

CK: One of the reasons that we went to Muscle Shoal was because of the sound and the light in the studio. We wanted to make the most out of that sound and I had that also in my mind when I wrote these songs. Many of the songs I wrote for myself just as much as for others and that was a new way of thinking for me and taught me many new things. Very therapeutic. Many of the songs are like reminders to myself to always have the light within ourselves.

It was wonderful to talk to Darrell and Charlotta and explore their new music and I hope you enjoy exploring their work too!

[Click here to listen to Muscle Shoals Sessions](#)

[Click here to find out more about Charlotta Kerbs and The Strays](#)



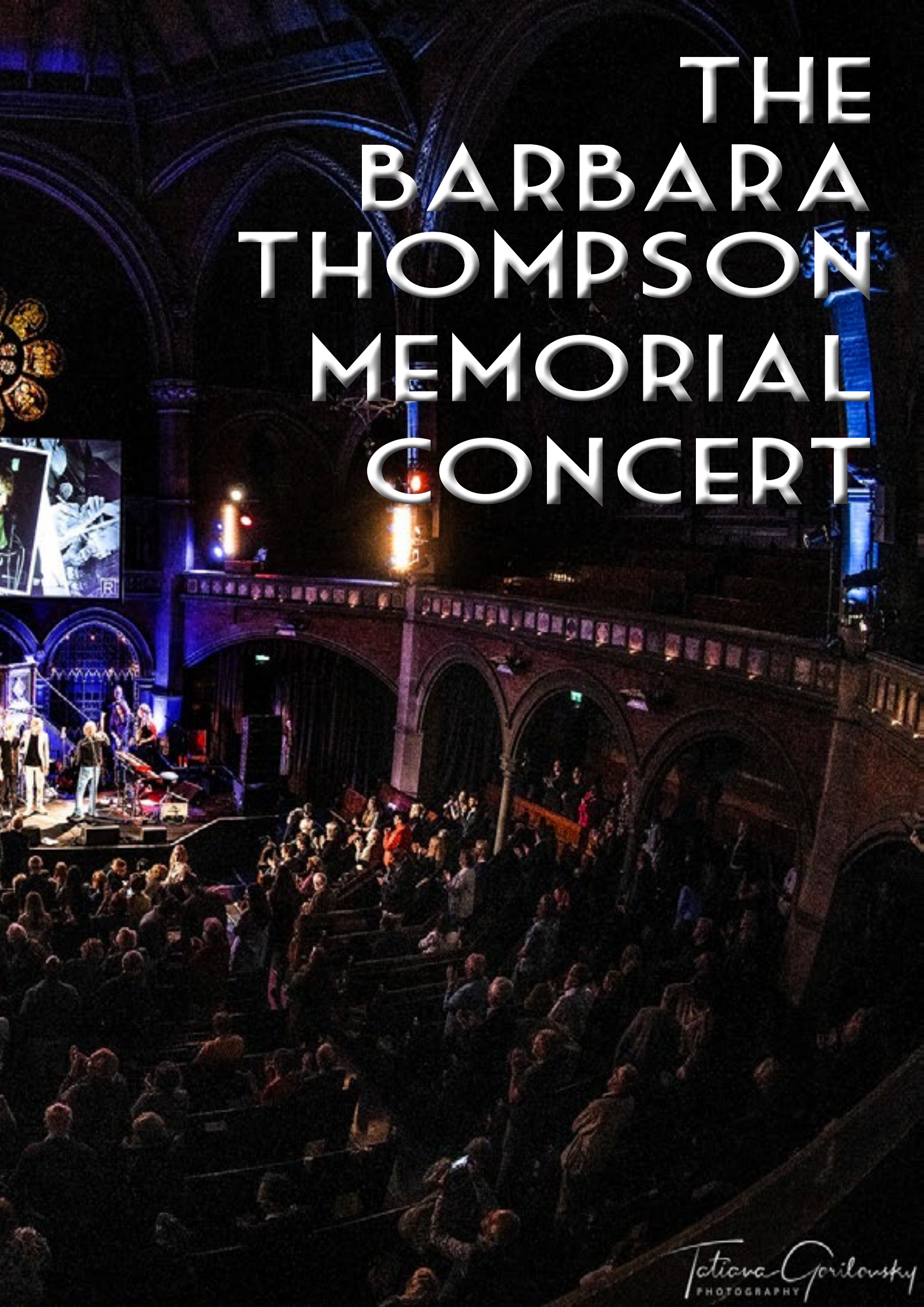




Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky



THE BARBARA THOMPSON MEMORIAL CONCERT



CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND MUSICAL LEGACY OF VIRTUOSO SAXOPHONIST, COMPOSER AND BANDLEADER

BARBARA THOMPSON MBE

I was fortunate enough to interview Barbara Thompson a few years ago and I opened my article with 'Barbara Thompson writes and performs for the saxophone like no other. With love and unwavering respect, she cherishes the instrument when needed, challenges and pushes it beyond boundaries and shows us that in the right hands, the saxophone really is truly magnificent'. Kim Cypher, also interviewed Barbara only a short time ago and opened her article with

If you ask me to name a woman who has inspired me, there will be many incredible women who have positively influenced my life, including my Mum, family, friends, fellow musicians...I could go on. But, top of my list musically has to be a lady who sparked excitement in me back in the 80's, igniting a passion and realisation that I could follow and achieve my musical dreams, ultimately shaping the way I lived my life. I am referring to the legendary multi-instrumentalist, composer and band leader Barbara Thompson MBE.

Jess Gillam MBE says Barbara is '*one of the most inspirational women and saxophonists I know*'. Trish Clowes tells us '*Barbara is an inspiration to everyone she meets. Her passion for and dedication to music is formidable*'. Alyn Shipton states '*I have met few truly brave people in my life, but Barbara was far and away one of the bravest*'. The Jazz Journal said '*She was actually one of the best jazz musicians and composers in the world*'.

Barbara Thompson has impacted countless lives. I could write a whole book on how

Barbara Thompson has inspired people around the world. June 23rd 2023, at Union Chapel, London was a night full of people who have been inspired by Barbara. A night that will forever be in many people's hearts, minds and souls. An evening to celebrate and love the virtuoso saxophonist, composer and bandleader - legend - Barbara Thompson MBE.

The venue was perfect. Union Chapel in London, is a stunning Victorian Gothic style Church built in the late 19th century, known for its incredible live music events and inspired Margins Project, supporting the homeless community and a venue that was not far from where Barbara grew up.

Everyone knew that this night was going to be something special, but it exceeded all expectations. Organised by Barbara's daughter Ana Gracey, the line-up, was inspired. The opening performances were with Paraphernalia with Peter Lemer, Dave Ball, Billy Thompson, with guest saxophonists Snake Davis, Emma Rawicz and Andy Scott and incredibly Jon Hiseman and Barbara Thompson were there too via a huge video screen, playing along. This was a deeply moving opening, not only was Barbara already in our hearts and minds, but we could hear her, we could see her and it felt like we could almost touch her.

The second performance quickly reminded us of Barbara's extensive, diverse and inspirational compositional catalogue. The chamber music trio Trifarious with Tim Redpath, Rachel



The chamber music trio Trifarious with Tim Redpath, Rachel Calaminus and Alex Wilson brought us two of Barbara's compositions, The Flying Dutchman and Spin. Beautiful.

Ana Gracey came onto the stage to perform for the first time her original song 'Fairweather', featuring her mother and recorded by her father, legendary drummer Jon Hiseman. The stems remained in the archives for almost 15 years and the song was finally produced and made public after her parent's deaths. The performance of this song was incredible. The strength Ana found to perform this song was inspiring. More than inspiring, it was ethereal, otherworldly - beautiful.

The penultimate performance of the first half was the exciting Rascher Saxophone Quartet, performing Barbara's Saxophone

They remind us of not only Barbara's incredible virtuosic technical compositional skills, but her sense of humour. So many moments of joy.

The first half closed with the Big Sky Choir. Over 50 vocalists singing from above us all, 'Meditation' and 'The Sky is Full of Light', from Barbara's 'Journey To A Destiny Unknown', which is also the title of her brilliant book. We open the second half with the brilliant Jess Gillam and her interpretations of 'The Unseen Way and 'Tribute to Sidney Bechet'. Her incredible energy was exactly what we needed to bring it back after the interval. You can't help but feel Barbara would be absolutely loving this. Next we have more guest saxophonists (and no, you can't have too many), Tom Ridout and Snake Davis, joining Stars of Colosseum for a magnificent seventies blast before we move in another direction with an



ensemble created specifically for this night, The Weill String Quartet with Trish Clowes performing two Kurt Weill songs that had been arranged by Barbara. With each new set, you are reminded of but also completely astounded by the range of her work. We are astounded again with the next set, The Marici Saxophone Quartet performing Saxophone Quartet No.3 demonstrating so very clearly Barbara's genius and moments of humour. This set was a real challenge for the performers, expertly tackled and the connection and chemistry of the performers was incredible.

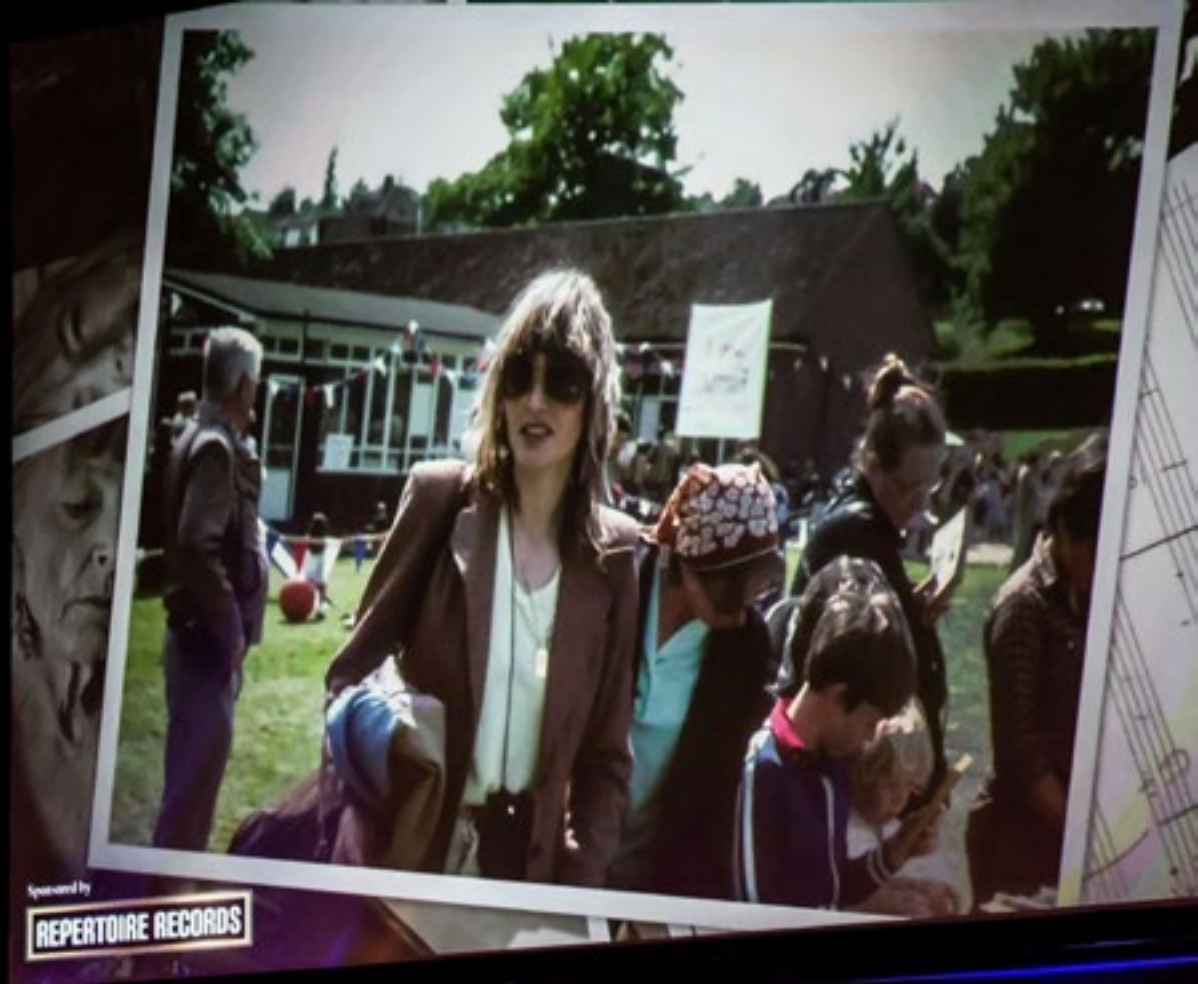
Paraphernalia's return to the stage was a truly incredible special guest – with Isabelle Hiseman, Barbara's granddaughter. You will find Kim Cypher's article about Isabelle after this one, so I won't say much here other than to say, seeing Barbara's 12 year old granddaughter walk onto the stage and play the saxophone was something very, very special. The audience fell silent and magic was truly made.

The Big Sky Choir returned with the final part of Barbara's 'Journey To A Destiny Unknown', 'End Of My Journey' with Ana Gracey's stunning vocals singing from high. This was emotional. The end of the evening was a performance of 'Unity Hymn' written by Barbara for her band Paraphernalia and choir, with special guest Kim Cypher. The perfect ending to an incredible night.

When I interviewed Barbara, the last thing she said to me was: *'I like it when people thank me for my music, that's so very nice. And people, they play my music at funerals and weddings and that's the nicest thing. To have people say they love your music. That means a lot'*.

Thank you, Barbara. We love your music. Thank you for your music and for all the gifts you have given us all. You will forever be in our hearts.

Text by Fiona Ross





Photos by Tatiana Gorilovsky



‘There aren’t really the words to express how I feel. It was a truly magnificent, EPIC, overwhelming celebration and tribute to Barbara Thompson and I will be forever grateful to have been a small part of it. The whole evening was so carefully planned and beautifully put together by daughter Ana Gracey and to have Barbara and drummer husband Jon Hiseman there onscreen performing alongside Paraphernalia on stage was truly special. I also got to meet and perform alongside some magnificent musicians and everyone was so welcoming and supportive, like one big family united in love and respect and with one mission - to do Barbara proud and pay tribute to her for all her music and inspiration. share the stage with Peter Lemer (keys), Clem Clempson (guitar), Billy Thompson (violin), Phil Mulford (bass), Steve Roberts (drums) and Big Sky Choir for the first ever ‘live’ performance of ‘Unity Hymn’ composed by Barbara Thompson.

Huge thanks to Barbara’s daughter Ana Gracey for organising the event which raised money for Cure Parkinson’s.

Thank you, Barbara Thompson, for the music and inspiration. May your music live on forever’

Kim Cypher

INTRODUCING SAXOPHONIST ISABELLE HISEMAN



KEEPING THE FAMILY MUSICAL FLAME BURNING BY KIM CYPHER

To continue coverage of the stunning Barbara Thompson Memorial Concert on 2nd June 2023 at Union Chapel, London, I would like to introduce the youngest performer of the evening, the granddaughter of Barbara Thompson, twelve year old Isabelle Hiseman.

Having been asked to perform for this event myself, I felt the greatest honour to be able to pay tribute to and celebrate the life and music of the late saxophonist, composer and band leader Barbara Thompson MBE. The concert was put together by Barbara's daughter, singer/songwriter Ana Gracey, who also performed throughout the evening. There is a wonderful connection between Ana and both her musical parents (drummer Jon Hiseman being her late father). Ana produced the concert in such a way that both her parents were included as part of the evening, with members of Barbara's band Paraphernalia performing on stage together with a hugely emotional video performance of the band with Barbara and Jon. Ana also unveiled her stunning new track and video 'Fairweather' which features her mum on soprano saxophone. So, the family musicality clearly continues. I was looking forward to meeting the rest of the family and to hearing Isabelle's performance.

I arrived at the stunning Union Chapel early afternoon as sound checks were taking place. As I walked in, I was immediately captivated by the beautiful, haunting sound of an alto saxophone echoing around the chapel. It was quite a moment! My eyes

fell upon a young girl on stage performing beautifully, from the heart. I was quite taken aback by this young performer creating such an accomplished sound.

Later in the evening, Isabelle performed one of her grandmother's compositions 'The Fanaid Grove' alongside Paraphernalia band members Peter Lemer on keys and Billy Thompson on violin. The performance was faultless and beautifully heartfelt. The audience was captivated as this young performer appeared to take everything in her stride.

I was blown away by Isabelle's confidence on stage and for me, it was a very special, emotional highlight of the evening.

Being part of such a star-studded lineup of musicians, everyone wanting to perform their very best to do Barbara justice, instilled a natural feeling of responsibility within the performers. I can only imagine how daunting this must have been for a saxophonist of such a young age, having never performed for this kind and size of event before and all in honour of her grandmother. A pretty big deal for anyone.

Having chatted briefly with Isabelle (Izzy) after the concert and also with her lovely parents Marcus and Beatrice, I wanted to find out more about Izzy, her music, her family, what inspires her and whether she was as calm as she appeared!

Kim - Tell me about your grandmother, your memories of her and anything special you did together

Izzy - "My dad's side of the family would always have Christmas dinners at the Ridgeway, where my grandparents used to live. I remember one Christmas finding my gran in her study composing some music. I recall her sitting with her saxophone and letting me have a puff! Try as I might, I could not make a sound. It was a tender, loving moment between us and I will never forget it."

Kim - What age did you start playing the saxophone and why did you choose that as your instrument?

Izzy - "I started playing the saxophone at the age of eight. I remember hearing about my gran, Barbara. Being inspired by her I jumped at the opportunity of saxophone lessons at my primary school."

Kim - Do you play any other instruments?

Izzy - "I play the piano, take singing lessons and group drumming lessons at school."

Kim - Did your grandmother ever hear you play? Did you ever play together?

Izzy - "Sadly, we never played the saxophone together, but I remember playing my recorder in front of her one Christmas dinner! Unfortunately, I never saw her live in concert, but I often listen to her band Paraphernalia on Apple Music and watch her performances on YouTube."

Kim - What do you like about the saxophone and how do you feel when you play?

Izzy - "I like many things about the saxophone. The range of notes and pitches the instrument can produce is incredible, and I like making use of that quality when playing. I enjoy playing because it gives me a chance to wind down after what can be a long day, allowing me to express my emotions through sound."

Kim - Do you have any favourite pieces of music that you especially enjoy listening to or like to play?

Izzy - "My favourite piece is 'Fanaid Grove'. It is such a beautiful piece to play, and I love how Gran makes it such a stand-out piece. However, I enjoy that you can play it in any way you like, instead of there being a set format and dynamics! For the Memorial concert I played my own interpretation of it."

Kim - When I heard you playing at the Memorial Concert, I was taken aback by your beautiful performance. You looked very confident on stage. How were you feeling?

Izzy - "I was very nervous before the concert, as this was my first solo performance in front of such a big crowd of people. Despite this, I really wanted to express how much I loved my Gran and felt inspired by her music career. During my performance I felt very happy and didn't even notice the crowd!"

Kim - Tell me about any other performances / events you have been part of.

Izzy - "I have been part of three soirées at my new school as part of a wind band. I am also part of a drumming group and a junior choir! At my primary school I performed in multiple saxophone duets and trios. However, the Memorial Concert was my first proper concert in front of the public!"

Kim - What word (or words) best describe your experience being part of such a special night paying tribute to your grandmother?

Izzy - "It was so INSPIRING to meet so many musicians that admired her. They worked so well on stage together, but of course missed my grandma on the sax. Many of the musicians feel like family and I was very happy to see them again. It was a MAGICAL night full of passion and dedication to my gran."



Kim - What are your ambitions for the future and do you think music will always be part of your life?

Izzy - "I am not sure what I want to be in the future and haven't fully decided but I do know music will be a huge part of my life. The saxophone will be with me forever, and I will never stop playing."

Kim - What other hobbies do you enjoy?

Izzy - "I enjoy playing tennis, running, reading, acting and playing the piano."

Kim - If you could meet one famous person from the past or present, who would it be and why?

Izzy - "There are so many inspiring, clever people out there, who never stop fighting for what they believe in, and have achieved brilliant things. I would like to meet Malala Yousafzai. She fought for women's rights and education and has survived and persevered through many obstacles!"

It was such a pleasure to meet Izzy, to chat with her, to hear her play and to share a wonderful evening with her together with her family and the united 'family' of musicians. It feels even more special now knowing how important the performance was to Izzy, and how incredibly proud her family must be. It seems fitting to leave the final words to Izzy, to sum up the incredible inspiration of Barbara Thompson and to celebrate how the family musical flame continues to burn very brightly indeed:

"My gran was an amazing woman, who I hope will continue to inspire young girls like me to play the saxophone. She made her own way despite many obstacles and was never afraid to be proud of her ability. I would love people to follow the brilliant legacy she left in the world of music."



Isabelle with her grandmother Barbara
Thompson - Photo by Marcus Hiseman



THE PHOTOGRAPHERS: ENID FARBER



**“Most Marvelous Ms. Melissa Aldana”
Freihoffer’s Saratoga Jazz Festival,
Saratoga Springs, NJ 6-25-23**

Lifetime Achievement Awardee, bassist Joelle Leandre, Vision Festival at Roulette in Brooklyn, NY, 6-13-23





Val Jeanty, the drummer behind the dancer and festival co-founder, Patricia Nicolson Parker, Vision Festival, Roulette, Brooklyn, NY 6-16-23



Pianist Myra Melford, celebrating Lifetime Achievement Awardee, Joelle Leandre, in a trio with Leandre and Nicole Mitchell, Vision Festival at Roulette in Brooklyn, NY, 6-13-23





STEINWAY

SONS

Multi-instrumentalist and vocalist, Jen Shyu, performing in the Reggie Workman Celebration Band, Vision Festival at Roulette in Brooklyn, NY, 6-18-23







Flautist Nicole Mitchell celebrating Lifetime Achievement Awardee, Joelle Leandre, in a trio with Leandre and Myra Melford, Vision Festival at Roulette in Brooklyn, NY, 6-13-23



Cellist Nioka Workman, packing up her instrument post performance and before her father, Reggie Workman's "Celebration Band", closes the 2023 Vision Festival at Roulette in Brooklyn, NY, 6-18-23

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MAD



DALENA GHEZZI





Germana Stella La Sorsa by Tatiana Gorilovsky

**GERMANA
STELLA LA SORSA
IN CONVERSATION
WITH...
MADDALENA GHEZZI**

When I first met London-based singer, composer and improviser Maddalena Ghezzi, I was fascinated about the many eclectic interests that inspire her and that converge in her art. I immediately felt a deep connection between us; a common way of wanting to explore the world through our voices and sounds, manipulating them for the pleasure of discovering new artistic universes.

Maddalena has an amazing preparation and background. She has performed at Milan Jazz Festival and the Southbank Centre, The Migration Museum London, Vortex Jazz Club and Hundred Years Gallery and many other places. Additionally, she gravitates towards organizations that champion women in music, working toward supporting art and beauty, crossing gender/race boundaries and every sort of limit.

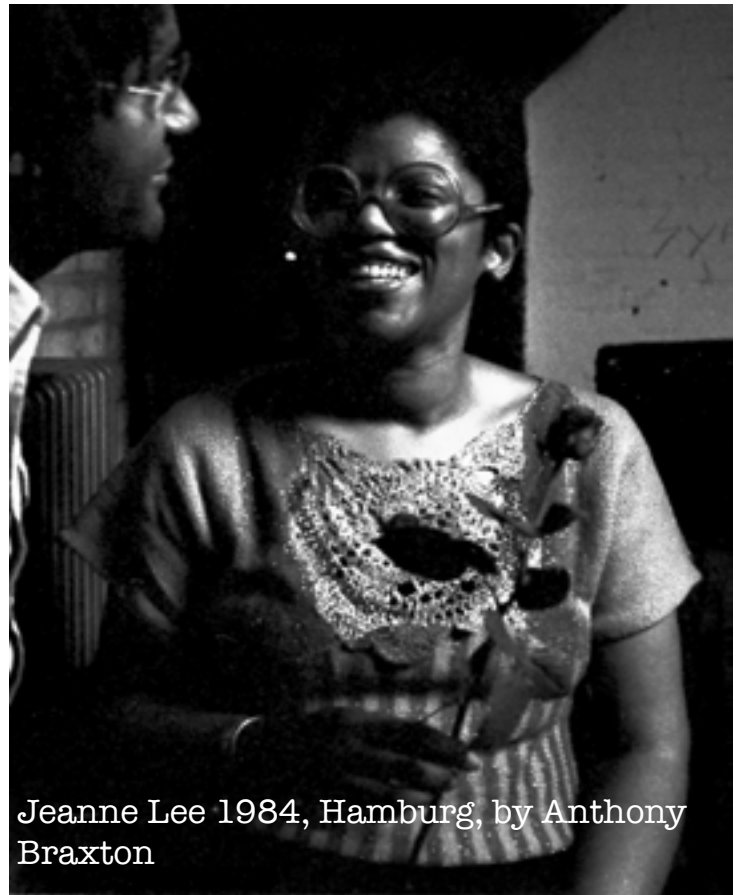
She was featured on online platform “Women Of Music Business” and her work with her trio “Stanza Da Tre” has been covered by the The Islington Gazette. She has released lots of beautiful music that has been picked up by international radio, as well as the major UK stations - including BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 6, Radio Popolare and RAI Radio 3 (Italy), Pure Jazz Radio and Jazz Is NYC (US).

Her latest release “Emerald” - in collaboration with another splendid talent, Maria Chiara Argirò, and supported by Help Musicians - is a pure summa of her musical expression and is part of her series of collaborations with musicians called “Minerals”.

Maddalena has strong and intriguing opinions about everything: from being a woman in the music industry to being an immigrant artist whose role is always questioned by society’s standards and expectations and I wanted to share with you all the many thoughts of this beautiful, artistic mind.

Let’s talk about your musical influences and our common love for Jeanne Lee (this was one of the first things we talked about!). Jeanne Lee was an artist that used her voice and vocal improv in a very different way from

the usual jazz scat language that we are used to listening to in jazz.



Jeanne Lee 1984, Hamburg, by Anthony Braxton

First of all, thank you for having me Germana!

I supposed I never kind of thought of myself as the, you know, particularly ‘jazz’ singer so when I found Jeanne Lee, I thought “you can be a jazz singer in this way!”.

I think what was powerful for me when I discovered her was her storytelling, as I always found it a little bit difficult to connect to some of the American songbook or jazz standards and I thought that she was really speaking to me...I felt the text as well as the music and her tone.

I still remember when I first listened to her interpretation of “Goodbye Pork Pie Hat” (on her album with Mal Waldron): she just immediately grabbed the attention of the audience with the first two notes and I thought “Wow!”. The tune has been sung so many times but the way she interprets it is very unique!

Particularly with her, every time I listen to her voice, it is the storytelling that comes to mind.

She improvises in such an interesting way, a bit more exploratory compared to others and even her scat to me is still a storytelling kind of scat.

There is another singer in the jazz sphere that I love – Sathima Bea Benjamin. Obviously, she and Jeanne Lee approach the music in different ways but the storytelling is so present that I feel captivated by their world - whether they are using lyrics or not - so I just want to know more.

Talking about storytelling, your stories start from sounds and music but also from nature, literature, visual art (I loved your idea of the 'Concertina Errata...beautiful creation!) But also, socio-political issues. So, tell us about your creative process and how you manage to express a lot of ideas in a few minutes of music.

Well, I try! To me, everything is storytelling. We have a story about everything. Stories are sort of the salt of what we are doing in our lives...almost the salt of the earth. You can tell a story in so many different ways so I'm intrigued about stories that can change our perspective. It could be a story from the point of view of somebody else, somebody that is not you, or the wind, or the water but also stories that give a different narrative.

Recently I was talking to a friend of mine that is absolutely not in the music business but is in the aquaponic business; he is trying to save the world from catastrophes so we were talking about how the storytelling of something to do with climate change, for example, can completely change the approach of people: it can give you an idea of "we're doomed, that's it, we're done" or it can kind of promote wanting to do something and having energy to tackle certain things. Because I'm very aware of this, the way I approach my music is finding the stories that I want to tell; for example, the new music that will come out next year is about the Dolomites, the mountains, and what they meant to me..my latest EP with Maria Chiara (Argiró) was all about reclaiming our spaces as women artists but also having that joy of "I'm gonna dance to it". I don't always

have to be political and every story can then give the sense of how the music will develop.

Are you always the main character of your stories or do you sometimes become water, fire and other characters?

Recently, as I feel very connected to nature, I'm writing from the point of view of nature's objects, but it's quite hard. I try to imagine – for example - what mother fox would say to her little fox... would she say: "look at these weird humans...they definitely talk about oxygen"? You know, I'm intrigued by these relationships that we'll never really understand. I also started to write a little bit for solo and sampling electronics and those pieces were inspired by books: one is about trees (which are definitely a love of mine!) and the other one is inspired by painting, which is something that I always find extremely intriguing.

Thanks to family connections as well as having friends that are in the world of painting, street art and typography, I have a big connection with these worlds and these kinds of things are really inspiring.

Painter Edward Hopper, for example, really inspires me and sometimes I find there are no other ways in my mind to tell stories than having an image and trying to make music around that image.

I was very fascinated by your latest solo performance and watching you work with visual scores. Tell us a little about how you approach a solo performance.

You actually saw my first – and so far only - solo performance! I'm not sure if I'm in love with playing solo: it's great to have full control over your electronics and your voice but also it feels like losing the beautiful connection that is created with other instrumentalists, which is something that I love. I wouldn't say solo performance would then replace the ensemble performance but it's definitely a different experience.



Photo by Curtis Lloyd

Photo by Andrea Caldarelli



Also, I think London is a difficult city to find concerts in ensembles, particularly for what concerns fees and ticket selling, so you can't always play with as many people as you would love to.

The idea of a solo performance came out of an offer that I received for a good gig that, however, wouldn't have been paid enough.

I'm always very conscious of asking other professional musicians to play underpaid gigs and I knew that I wanted to get a sampler and have some pieces that can be performed as a solo so I thought to set myself a challenge that would have inspired me artistically, while I was getting rid of a problem.

In the end I was thankful because this experience helped me to know my instrument better as a voice but it also pushed me into using a sampler. I feel more courageous now with regards to not only pushing my musical boundaries but also to explore more "unexpected" venues.

Talking about the London and UK music scene, what do you think are the main issues for musicians at the moment and in particular for women in the music business?

I think there are certain things that I believe to be sort of organic and endemic of big cities such as high level of competition, a music scene saturated with a lot of people where there is no right or wrong: everyone has got their ideas and everyone wants the same thing.

What I personally find difficult as an independent musician is that I tend to put forward projects myself and it's very hard to build a relationship with the venues. Sometimes you have a relationship with a promoter and then 6 months after this person decides to leave the business because they can't make it anymore; so you've built a good relationship with the venue and then 6 months later you have to start again with another person who is now in charge and that not necessarily either likes your music or likes you, so you have to rebuild from scratch.

This can be very tiring because on top of producing your album, being in the studio, doing some teaching you also have to maintain these relationships and I think not everyone has got the strength to do this.

Selling tickets at paid gigs in big venues is another struggle for me.

As we know, we didn't see a lot of the sun this year in London (of course!) so it's enough that it's a sunny day and people don't turn up to the gig, it's enough that it has been raining for three days and people don't turn up to the gig or it's enough that there is like a tube strike and then people don't turn up to a gig. There is no certainty and - because of this uncertainty - a lot of people don't book tickets in advance.

Another issue is that sometimes, when you play a gig in specific venues, you have to wait a certain amount of time to play in other venues in London. It's another limitation.

There is another crucial aspect of gigging that I find is related to mental health: not having enough or regular gigs can sometimes bring musicians down. You know, I recently had another person saying "oh, but does it mean that you are a real musician if you don't tour X many years, X many days?". There are different musicians, as we know, in the system...there are musicians that tour a lot during the summer and then they are quiet during the winter. I always say: if a musician is quiet, don't worry, they are doing something! They are often doing applications, they are often recording a new album... there are seasons! They are practicing or they are changing instruments...or, like anyone in the world, they might have a family and these things are also important!

Sometimes you have dates in the calendar but then maybe that specific promoter doesn't get back to you or doesn't reply so these are frustrations too.

And then there is the added difficulty of being a woman... You know, I'm not a mother but I want to be an advocate in a sense for all women in our business. For example, I was talking to a woman who is a mother who was telling me about the struggle of staying at the end of a gig to mingle and make new connections, which is so important to us. This is an issue but no one is doing anything about it.

I came across a beautiful reel on an Instagram account called 'Mothers in Jazz' and it gives you an insight of how the situation is complicated for women in the business; it says: "we want women to be pretty, be marketable, be mothers and also do albums, all from 25 to 45 and then that's it! Because then you are a little rosy or ugly"...so I do think that can be done more, even from institutions within - in this case - the jazz scene or any scene really. A few years ago, the Southbank Centre did something very interesting during the jazz festival. I don't know who organised it but there was a sort of "speed dating" with the venues, so you can go in one afternoon and present your project to multiple venues - with a few talks to do with being a woman in the business or an independent artist in the business.

I do think that if we had more regular things like that we could build an even healthier, more thriving underground and independent scene.

Quoting someone that I like, "artists will always find the way to be artists" like the idea that we will find the cracks and sprout somewhere else. I would dream of an institution or lots of London institutions putting their strengths together to provide these things for independent musicians, like a healthy environment. And I think that a lot of things can be done: surely, if we are creative - this is where I would like to go back to storytelling - we can create a story that has not yet been written; we can create environments that have not yet been imagined because we are humans so we can do these things, we can create stories. So I have hope but a lot needs to be done.

That was great! Going back to your music, talking about your release Opal - which is the third of your series 'Minerals'. Tell us more about the series, why the theme of minerals in particular?

"Minerals" is because I was searching for an umbrella term as I embarked on this idea of doing X amount of collaborations; a term that would allow me to say "this is a series and it's also clear for my audience". A series of events that are all part of me experimenting within the world of music.

I've been in bands a lot of times and I enjoy being in a band but I also wanted to find out a little bit more about how I wanted to write, so I wondered, if I was to write from scratch only what I wanted to write, which way would I go? When I was a child, with my father, I had a collection of minerals that we used to buy from the newsagent. We would just go to the newsagent and then home to read about the minerals - I still have the whole collection! It was a regular occurrence and this regularity that I had with a person I love meant a lot to me. More than the minerals in itself, I enjoyed the process and I think that has taught me a lot. I spent a lot of time with a person that I love that since then unfortunately passed and I think the fact that we started this process together and we finished it together, for me was very important: it taught me to start and finish things.

I had and have all these collaborations in me, I have these people in mind and I really wanted to see how my music can develop by collaborating with these people; so I embarked on this idea of opening the process, as a mega work in progress - that every collaboration can become a step for me to experiment with a specific instrument, with a specific person, within a specific world of music.

With Thodoris Ziarkas, we literally improvised some ideas, we kind of had a rough shape in mind but that was it.

With Ed Blunt we played songs and then with Francesca Naibo we composed a song each and then we did two improvisations on specific themes that we gave ourselves.

Maria Chiara Argiró was more like “I send a line to you and you send a line to me” because we worked during the various lockdowns. I think of the idea of minerals as something that can endure time, so there's more of a wish that my research and my music can be longer than my life!

With Maria Chiara Argiro, you've released Emerald (which is your latest release and has been supported by Help Musicians) and you've described it as a 'sci-fi feminist EP' so we need to know more about this definition!

(Ghezzi laughs) So, I love sci-fi movies, books and graphic novels and I follow a lot of women in the world of sci-fi. I really like people like Ursula Le Guin and Octavia Butler (but also men like Brian K Vaughan) and I'm intrigued by everything to do with sci-fi and those stories. Brit Marlings' movies to me are very important!

“A sci-fi feminist EP” because when we wrote these tunes, to me they're a bit sci-fi..I don't really know how to explain this but they are a little bit like “parallel universe” things.

The title of the EP with Maria Chiara is “Land briefly on the outside of the flower”; the phrase is not by me but by Ross Gay, a writer whose books I really love. He's a fantastic writer and very positive, he's got a lot of hope in nature, he's a gardener – which is something that I enjoy – and “Land briefly on the outside of the flower”, gave me the idea of somebody sitting on the outside of a ginormous flower, in a flower forest, during the night.

Maria Chiara uses a lot of like bendy and kind of detuned synthesisers and that brings to life the idea of the petals going up and down in the breeze.

For the second song, ‘On the Outside’, I collaborated with artists' collective Libri Finti Clandestini and Tanguy Bombonera.

Photo by Curtis Lloyd



I don't like the narrative that sometimes feminists are boring and that for them it's all about problems; they can't have a party or a laugh and "On the Outside" for me was a sort of 'eye from space', looking into our world: a world in which there was no patriarchy or limitations for women, in which you can have short hair and you wouldn't be told that you are not in contact with femininity - which has happened to me. In that world, you would be who you want to be, embrace the gender that you want to and no one would have a problem with that; like, there wouldn't even be a conversation about it. It's almost the world that we are sort of building but these things are already there: it'd be the world that we are living in right now but without that veil that sometimes it feels like it is blocking some people.

That, in a sense, is me imagining this and it goes back to storytelling: I wanted to tell a story in which this veil had been taken off already.

Particularly these women in sci-fi; to me they are very inspirational because they create books that are going really deep into things to do with gender and equality as well as par-

One last question. As part of the Women in Jazz Media wellbeing team and since you mentioned mental health...in an era in which musicians have to deal, as you said, with more and more tasks and not only writing music and performing but also self-promotion on social media, creating engaging content, taking care of PR etc...how do you take care of yourself? Do you ever take breaks from social media? What would you recommend to balance life outside work and being an artist?

I honestly find it very difficult. I think ours is a difficult world! I limit my apps and I have a timer.

On "Google Keep", I sometimes write things that are important to me, like phrases that remind me of the value of myself as a person and I make them appear at irregular intervals, or things that make me laugh. Some

times I don't need them but sometimes they appear at the right time and they make me go: "yeah man, why are you going into this world, into this whirlpool of negativity?"

Sport is something that helps me as well as yoga and meditation. I definitely find being in nature helpful, if possible.

I think that increasingly finding a network helps me too: having musicians and friends with whom we can just vent or share problems. There's definitely more and more need to make it clear that this work as musicians is difficult and that is a world that can cause a lot of mental health fatigue: sometimes just to stay afloat with money, sometimes to make sure that you feel the value of what you are doing or sometimes it's constant rejection. Sometimes I felt a little bit scared before a gig, for example, but you'd never share about feeling nervous or bad...you just pretend to always feel grand and confident with your music.

I think that if we give a name to these things and we create a community, the community is the way forward, building a relationship with each other, without being scared of saying how we really feel.

Discover more about Maddalena and her work at the following links:

[Bandcamp](#)

[Spotify](#)

[Website](#)

NICKY SCHRIRE



Photo by Matt Griffiths



10 QUESTIONS FOR NICKY SCHRIRE

In partnership with Kind of Jazz



Vocalist and composer Nicky Schrire has recently released her brilliant new album *Nowhere Girl*, which has been shaped from her travels around the world including South Africa, London, Paris and Canada. The impact of those travels created a path to reflecting on the influences on her musical identity and creating an inspired range of songs with a stellar line up of Canadian musicians, including a stunning duet with Laila Bilal. It was a pleasure to find out more as part of our partnership with Kind of Jazz and their 10 questions with series.

1. Your new album *Nowhere Girl* arrives ten years after your last release *Space and Time* and you have described the songs as 'lean but vibrant vessels'. When did the journey for this new album start for you?

Many of these songs were written about a decade ago. They've been performed over the past ten years and edited during the process in terms of arrangements and the odd lyric. But I'd basically been "sitting" on this repertoire, hoping there would be an opportunity to document these songs in a way that meant they were fully realised and the musical delivery matched the care

that went into the songwriting. I moved to Toronto, Canada in 2020 and was fortunate to be able to tap into the grant system here, which allowed me to fund this album (thank you Canada Council for the Arts!) and record with wonderful Canadian musicians.

2. You were born in London, grew up in South Africa, moved to New York and are now living in Canada. Your travels are a key influence on this new album and I wonder if the process of writing this album was a way of reflecting on and then defining who you are as an artist?

That's a lovely notion, and it would be true had I sat down to write these songs in the past three or so years. But because many of these tunes date back to 2009, 2010, etc. the process of gathering these songs wasn't quite so poetic. Travel, moving and the way in which that can upend identity and progress certainly influenced these songs individually. It's only once I'd gathered them together that I saw there was an obvious theme and, clearly, a "search for musical identity" is something that's plagued me for many years! Reflecting on the music, the process and the album, now that it's complete, does leave me feeling a

Photo by Matt Griffiths





much clearer sense of the kind of musician I am and the kind of music I want to make. I'm also older, though. So who knows if I could've reached this point without pouring my thoughts and experiences into these specific tunes?

3. I'd like to explore some of those influences in your songs. "A Morning" and "Father" clearly have a nod to the UK. Can you talk us through how your influences were realised in those songs?

"A Morning" and "Father" are led by melody, as many great folk songs are. I think it's the folkiness that makes you connect this influence with my being British, and I think you're right. My father was a folkie and self-taught guitarist who played London folk clubs in the 60s and 70s and busked in Paris alongside the Seine. He introduced me to folk singers, classic and contemporary - James Taylor, June Tabor, John Martyn - and also British classical music that permeates a lot of my harmonic

writing (Vaughan Williams, Thomas Tallis).

I once received a live performance review from Matthew Wright after a double bill gig with the divine Anita Wardell at the (now no longer) Forge in Camden. Matthew wrote that I didn't have an affinity for swing. He said it in passing and the review was ultimately favourable. There was also likely a stark contrast on display given I was singing alongside Anita who swings like a demon! He had also made mention of my own music in the set that was folk-influenced. I sat with his words for a while, coming to the conclusion that I agreed with him and if my natural inclinations were folkier, maybe I should be leaning into that without feeling like I SHOULD be swinging or being more traditional in my tastes and offerings. I love traditional jazz, but my ear has always been drawn to more contemporary vocalists, specific female singers and those who explore repertoire that isn't swung, who have "lighter" voices - Norma Winstone, Kate McGarry, Tierney Sutton, Maria Pia de Vito.

The ranges of the melodies of “A Morning” and “Father”, allow me to sing out in my natural soprano, where melismas and belting-qualities are unnecessary and inappropriate. The focus is on the melody and the words. I feel incredibly at home singing both of those songs. I feel unapologetic. I feel like me.

4. There are only two songs on the new album that you didn't write in their entirety, one of which is “Closer To The Source” with music by the late South African pianist Bheki Mseleku. What led you to choose that song and what was your process for creating lyrics to his music?

Bheki Mseleku is my favourite South African jazz musician. His writing balances traditional South African jazz traits (emphasis on singable melodies, certain grooves and rhythms) with a sophistication that the greatest jazz musicians (Parker, Trane, Tyner) possessed. This balance is incredibly challenging to achieve and not many South African jazz composers get it as right as he did repeatedly, album after album. When I was teaching in the jazz department at the University of Cape Town, the vocalists were required to sing a certain amount of South African jazz repertoire during the course of their degree. The traditional SA jazz vocal repertoire isn't always meaty. Miriam Makeba's music was lovely but nowhere near as intricate as the music being written for instrumentalists by instrumentalists.

Bheki has a song called “Through The Years” that Abbey Lincoln recorded with him and she wrote lyrics to it. All the vocalists sing this song because it allows them to sing Bheki's music. So I chose a selection of Bheki's tunes and wrote new lyrics to them so that the vocalists had more options and ways to immerse themselves in his music. “Closer To The Source” is one of my favourite Bheki compositions so

naturally, it received lyrics and is now being tackled more often by vocalists (Marcus Wyatt did a wonderful big band arrangement of the tune that vocalist Mihi Matshingana sang). Whenever I'm writing lyrics for music that wasn't written by me, I try to have the original title inspire the narrative. That is true for “Closer To The Source”. My lyrics are about a flower in a desert, searching for water and seeing a mirage but also, possibly, finding actual water and getting, literally, closer to the source. I also used “the source” as a metaphor for home so that those of us who are not actual flowers can apply the narrative to our own, human, lives!

5. “In Paris” was inspired by your brief time in Paris ‘successfully sampling croissants instead of attending French language classes’. Can you tell us about this?

I was living in London at the time and had decided to move back to South Africa. As a final hurrah, I went to Paris for a month to attend language school, hoping to improve upon my 10th grade French language skills. After our teachers changed, I started playing hooky and spent my days walking around the city, practising French in cafes, and writing songs. Paris is one of the few places that is as romantic as you'd imagine, as film and literature make it seem. It's pretty magical. The song “In Paris” chronicles all the things we romanticise about the place and has a lyric tip of the hat to Joni's “Free Man In Paris.”

6. You work with some incredible musicians in your live performances and your albums. Can you tell us how the musical relationships began for your creative team with this new album?

I didn't know a lot of people, never mind musicians, when I moved to Toronto three years ago. One of the upsides to the pandemic was that I didn't have to force myself to go to jam sessions. I don't enjoy them and I don't think they're the ideal context for finding kindred musical spirits and establishing a rapport.

As a result, I could do research online and reach out to specific people about playing and collaborating. This MO is how I connected with pianist Chris Donnelly. I was looking for a pianist to be the John to my Norma (how lofty!), and Ernesto recommended I try Chris. It was a great match. We're different in a lot of ways but we hold many of the same things dear. We enjoy repetition and rehearsal, and Chris never plays with ego-he's the first person to say the song is done as opposed to someone who improvises chorus after chorus when it's just not necessary. I knew Ernesto Cervini through his sister, the vocalist Amy Cervini who is a good friend of mine. Ernesto and I both attended the Manhattan School of Music for grad school but we didn't overlap. I heard saxophonist Tara Davidson playing with trumpeter Dave Douglas at York University and adored her playing immediately. Bassist Dan Fortin is one of my favourite people ever. Incredibly funny and another player who doesn't offer up what I call "sheets of sound". He plays sparingly. Every note in its right place. I've known my producer Oded Lev-Ari for over a decade. I met him (and his wife Amy) when I was still in graduate school and they became like older siblings to me. Oded's work as an arranger (Anat Cohen Tentet) and producer (Duchess) is fantastic because he's such a great musician himself and also so savvy about a great many things relating to the business and jazz ecosystem.

7. "Heart Like A Wheel" is a stunning duet with the mighty Laila Biali and I believe you have known each other for many years. What was it like to work on this track with her?

Laila and I met, briefly, when we both lived in New York. We were not close friends but I reached out to her when I moved to Toronto because she was someone I vaguely knew. There was an immediate ease, honesty, musical kinship. And the same has been true of singing with her on "Heart Like A Wheel." It's a joy and privilege to make music with someone quite so musical and generous.

8. How does this new album translate to a live performance? What do you hope a live audience will feel after one of your performances of this new material?

This album translates really well to a live performance because most of these songs have been workshopped through live gigs over the past decade. That said, not all of the album repertoire works for all contexts. For example, when we play at Pizza Express Soho, which is a seated, indoor venue, we can play the full album and then some. When I celebrate the album in Toronto, it will be on an outdoor stage in the middle of the city so we'll steer clear of the ballads on the album and include some more up-tempo covers from previous albums I've recorded (The Beatle's "Blackbird" and "Here Comes The Sun", for example.) I hope that audiences enjoy the music and want to buy the album so that they can play these tunes on repeat in the comfort of their own homes!

9. And what are your gig plans? Where can we see you live?

I'll be launching the album in Toronto on Monday 26 June at 4:30pm at the Toronto International Jazz Festival.

The UK launch is at Pizza Express Soho on Tuesday 1 August with an incredible band-guitarist Rob Luft, pianist Tom Cawley, bassist Conor Chaplin and drummer Chris Higginbottom.

10. And finally, any words of wisdom for staying sane in the jazz industry?

I'd love to make a joke but I can't think of one, which tells you everything you need to know about the likelihood of "staying sane" in the jazz industry! Being a musician is really tricky. There's a lot of luck involved in progressing with your career the way you'd like to. It could take months, it could take years, or it may never happen depending on your goals. My advice is to find day job work that you can enjoy. If you want to be in the arts,

can you get into an arts administration role so that you don't worry about food and lodging. Or, some people prefer for their day job work to be unrelated to the arts-waitressing or other. Whatever it is, may it free you up to be creative in a way that you can enjoy. Because that will allow you to keep the act of making music, writing music, collaborating with musicians a little bit sacred. And if it's going to take a decade plus to chip away at having a career as a working musician, and you can still enjoy making music, then that's a wonderful thing.

[Click here to purchase Nowhere Girl](#)

[To find out more about Nicky Schrire, visit her website here](#)

[Do visit the Kind of Jazz website for lots of great views and interviews!](#)

[Click on the logo!](#)



SUSAN BRINK





Photo by Enid Farber



Susan Brink by Enid Farber

SUSAN BRINK AND THE JAZZ JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION

The Jazz Journalists Association is a well renowned non-profit organisation created to support the jazz industry. With nearly 200 members from across the world within a range of disciplines in jazz media (writers, photographers, broadcasters, videographers) we wanted to shine a light on the work that they do.

New York-based writer, editor, author, and producer, Howard Mandel as President of the Jazz Journalists Association (JJA) works with an inspired board of Directors to:

‘support the creation and dissemination of accurate, balanced, ethical and informative journalism on all of jazz’s genres and encourages the creative use of media to spur the growth, development and education of the audience for jazz.’

The preservation of legacy is key to their work but also exploring and supporting the evolution of jazz and ensuring visibility and accessibility to all. Community and building networks is a vital element and we have several women in our team that are members of the JJA and really value the support available.

Susan Brink has been supporting and motivating the jazz industry for many years. A producer, a writer, radio show host and more, her passion and energy for supporting the community is something to behold and truly inspirational. She is quite the legend! As a long-standing director of the JJA, we were thrilled to find out more about her work with the JJA.

You are a radio host, producer and so much more – we would love to know about your background and how you came to be involved in the Jazz Journalist Association?

My dear friend, the journalist Elzy Kolb, asked me if I wanted a free camera. She said the JJA was doing a webinar series called eyeJAZZ, which trained journalists how to tell a story using inexpensive video cameras. The sessions would teach us how to film and edit video and to use online and social media to distribute and promote our work. I was living in the Adirondacks, which is rural, and suddenly I was in a world-wide community of jazz people. We were learning new skills and creating with instruction from journalists Howard Mandel, JoAnn Kowell, filmmaker Floyd Webb and the Jazz Video Guy, Bret Primack. The program was funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation and I’ll always be grateful to them.

I could see, as the weeks went on, that the organizers were getting very stressed, so I asked them if there was something I could do to help. They were working on the JJA Awards to be held at a club in NYC, but also six satellite parties around the country, to be held at the same time with a livestream. I smiled because I love producing events. Some people find it very depleting, but I thrive on it. I offered to help organize the parties and work with the sponsors, taking it off their plate. They appreciated my work

and asked me to stay on. Back in the day, I was a producer for LaDiDa, an arts group in NJ that had weekly events, but also larger gatherings where we'd take a space, like the Hoboken waterfront, clean it up, build six stages (music, fine arts, film, spoken word, etc.) and let 'er rip. For eight years I worked closely with Paul Pines, producing the Lake George Jazz Festival. Lots of moving parts and I was in my happy place.

Could you tell us about the history of the JJA and how it started?

The seeds for the JJA were sown at a 1986 workshop at a jazz media conference in Chicago hosted by Willard Jenkins, who was just honored as an NEA Jazz Master. Our mission: to promote high standards and respect for jazz writers' works, to create a professional network and to increase general interest in jazz. The membership originally comprised print journalism, but swiftly added jazz broadcasters, photographers, filmmakers, and graphic artists. The JJA is the first international organization of jazz media makers. We incorporated in New York as a non-profit in 2004.

You are on the board of Directors and take the lead of many inspirational projects. Could you tell us about the Jazz Heroes initiative?

The Award started as the A Team award for "Activists, advocates, altruists, aiders and abettors of jazz who have had significant impact in their local communities." Because we gave awards to the musicians, journalists, record labels, etc. but there were people who were just as important to success in our industry that didn't fit into those categories. After a while, we realized that jazz isn't just in NY or LA, it's everywhere and that we could shine a national spotlight to stimulate local media to cover their jazz communities by honoring those who have gone over and above their job description to keep their local jazz scene vibrant. We call them Jazz Heroes and every year I'm so inspired by them.

The JJA publish a brilliant podcast series 'The Buzz' which explores many fascinating areas of the jazz industry and you have hosted several brilliant episodes. How did this start and perhaps you could tell us some of your favorite episodes and why they are your favorites?

One of our board members was keen to have us do a podcast, so we formed a committee to explore it. I researched how to go about setting one up, the committee went with my recommendations and et voila, the Buzz was born. We don't have a set host, we're open to members hosting episodes, but the topic must be of interest to journalists. Some hosts like to have a panel, I really like to do one on one interviews. Richard Conde, Richard Lopez, Aidan Levy, Reuben Jackson, Ashley Khan & Wayne Winborne,.. I enjoyed your panel from our Book Bash, Fiona. To be honest, I can't single one out. Archives, author interviews, the changes at JazzTIMES, Free Jazz on Film, jazz radio, jazz criticism, the topics interest me and the episodes run about 20 minutes,

Click on the image below to take you to the podcasts



The JJA is not just for journalists but is a community for many working in jazz media in a range of roles. The JJA has been running inspiring jazz photography masterclass sessions and there are several award-winning photographers as members. Photographers are often left out of the limelight, so how important is it for you and the JJA to provide a platform and shine a line on photographers?

It's extremely important to me. There are photographers in my family, I grew up with it and I photograph too. Photographs are not just an adornment for words, it's another way to tell the story. And the story is paramount. The JJA is committed to showcasing our media makers, in whatever medium they're working in. The media landscape has changed so much - it used to be radio & print, film, then tv and now with the internet - we have to adapt to the changing formats. The blog, the newsletter, the podcast, the substack, the video. But the basics of good journalism has not changed and can

not change. The story is the story and the JJA is here to help those that tell it.

The JJA's photography series has included

Lauren Deutsch's experimental, fine art and journalist photography

Seeing Jazz with Award-winning portrait photographer, designer and producer Carol Friedman

Seeing Jazz with Tatiana Gorilovsky

And Enid Farber, veteran New York City-based photographer of music and more, presenting a thorough overview of her work and practices, moderated by Howard Mandel, which can watch below:



Susan Brink with Randy Weston by Enid Farber

Jazz journalism has a history of being male dominated, but the JJA has a really rich and diverse membership with many women. What are your thoughts on the current jazz journalism landscape in terms of diversity?

Bring it. We're richer when we have many voices represented. It's important that the story is told through the prism of the human experience. All colors, all genders should be welcomed and though it's coming slowly, the change is happening.

We have several members of our team that have recently joined the JJA and have found the JJA community so very welcoming and encouraging. What would say the benefits are to anyone considering joining?

We have great programming, our master-classes, webinars, awards and we have an online virtual reality space, that makes our online gatherings so much fun. And

because it's online you can join in from anywhere. But most importantly, the benefit is in the support our members gain from each other through networking and community. The jazz media world is rather small. Our professional membership is diverse, from students to emeritus, working in many mediums but focused on jazz. We also have many associate members, who are not working in media, but want to support our work.

Huge thank you to Susan Brink for not only answering our questions but for being such an inspiration! Thank you for all you do.

Please click here to visit the Jazz Journalists Association website to find out more!



Jamieo Brown, Kris Sholer, Jaleel Shaw and Susan Brink
at Sanctuary for Independent Media by Albert Brooks



Carolyn McClair and
Susan at the 2018
JJA Awards at the
New School.

*'She's a long time JJA
board member and the
principle of Carolyn
McClair Public
Relations, CMPR.
She's beloved in the
industry - worked for
George Wein for
decades
and my dear friend'*

Susan and Ron Carter at Hot House Magazine Awards
by Fran Kaufman



Susan and Amiri Baraka.

‘Tony Graves snapped this when I presented Amiri with the JJA Lifetime Achievement Award. It’s a sweet memory of a lovely day.’



2016 JJA
Awards
at Blue Note
NYC
with Ashley
Khan, David
Murray,
Susan,
Bonnie
Johnson,
Herlin Riley
and Jana
Herzen.

Photo by
Michael
Jackson.



JAZZ JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION



KIM CYPHER AND A BRIGHTER TOMORROW



KIM CYPHER'S BRIGHTER TOMORROW PROJECT

ONE YEAR ON

Women in Jazz Media team member, saxophonist, vocalist and composer Kim Cypher launched her 'Brighter Tomorrow' project back in July 2022. One year on, Kim tells us how the project has grown, who's involved, what's been happening and her exciting plans for the project moving forward...

This project has been an absolute labour of love, evolving from a determined commitment to pay tribute to and celebrate The Arts.

It all started as the world picked up the pieces following the pandemic. Feeling somewhat downtrodden as a musician, I felt a duty of care to express huge pride and respect for all those working in The Arts who are part of an incredible, dedicated, passionate and caring creative community. A flame had been ignited!

Having composed a selection of **NEW MUSIC** compositions expressing a wide range of emotions and feelings, I decided to embark on a 'creative mission'...and so my 'Brighter Tomorrow' project was born.

I released the first of my new original tracks in July 2022 - 'Gonna Be Alright, Gonna Be OK' and 'Tomorrow's Song'. This was followed by the launch of the project at London's 'Crazy Coq's'.

The launch event introduced a 'Brighter

Tomorrow' **SOCIAL CAMPAIGN** created to shine a spotlight on The Arts and celebrate the work of all those contributing to a brighter tomorrow for The Arts. Fellow creatives were invited to share their projects, new music, videos, productions, photographs, venues etc using the hashtag #brightertomorrowforthearts

Please do check out all the wonderful things people are sharing.

From this, a selection of these social posts were included in a vast 'Brighter Tomorrow' **WEBZINE** which was published on 1st November:



A series of 'Brighter Tomorrow' 'live' **TOUR DATES** then followed to share the new music and further spread the word. These included sellout shows at jazz clubs and venues around the South West, Oxfordshire and Midlands. More tour dates to follow!

All of this, ultimately leading to 'Brighter Tomorrow' - **THE ALBUM** - A soundtrack to the project.

For this, I envisaged featuring a selection of **SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMERS** to record my original tracks with me and I was absolutely thrilled when the first of my special guests joined the project - one of my all-time jazz heroes, the wonderful piano/vocalist Liane Carroll.

We headed to London's 606 Club to record a live version of 'Tomorrow's Song' (with my newly added lyrics). It was a very special moment for me and perfectly captures the heart and soul of this project:





Antonio Forcione, photo by Anna Kunst

A studio recording session then followed with guitarist Antonio Forcione who features on three of my original tracks, one of which is a really stunning acoustic ballad called 'Where Time Goes'.

A conversation with trombonist, vocalist, composer and producer Ashley Slater then led me to the next exciting stage of the project. I have admired Ashley's music and performance for many years. I love his individuality, his unique musical style and the wide range of music he creates. I reached out to him to ask if he would join my 'Brighter Tomorrow' project and the conversation that followed inspired one of the tracks written for the album. It was a conversation about the music industry and, in particular the challenge of being so diverse that your music cannot be categorized into one specific genre - a challenge we have both faced. Ashley agreed to join the project and within an hour of the conversation I had composed one of the two tracks he features on. It is a fantastically lively Latin track bursting at the seams

with Ashley's vibrancy and energy. I literally cannot wait to unveil it!

Some finishing touches were then recorded remotely by hugely respected percussionist Karl Vanden Bossche. I have worked with Karl before when he recorded on my second album 'Love Kim x' and so I was over the moon when he agreed to be part of this project. He has worked his magic once again.

With nine tracks now in the bag, I just have a couple more tracks to complete the album. It fills me with great pride and joy to [ANNOUNCE MY FINAL SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMER](#) Ray Gelato.

I have hugely admired and respected Ray as a performer for many years. His musical talent, showmanship and dedication really inspire me. I was lucky enough to perform with Ray in 2020 for the last live gig I played before the pandemic kicked in, a charity event 'For Mum' in honour of

my late mum and raising money for The Brain Tumour Charity. The gig at Pizza Express Soho was a sellout and raised almost £3000.

I will be recording with Ray in the Autumn as the final part of my forthcoming 'Brighter Tomorrow' album, continuing the theme of celebrating wonderful fellow musicians, with original tracks expressing a range of feelings and emotions and spanning across many genres including Jazz, Latin and Swing. An album that marks an era and celebrates a Brighter Tomorrow for The Arts.

With two highly-acclaimed albums already under my belt, my third album comes at a time when I have completely settled in to who I am as an artist. Quite simply, I am uniquely ME. It will be my most confident album yet, embracing the uniqueness of each and every individual performer and celebrating who we all are.

['Brighter Tomorrow' – THE ALBUM is due for release later this year.](#)

Throughout 2023 my 'Brighter Tomorrow' project has continued to 'evolve' with huge interest and support from many respected jazz platforms including Women in Jazz Media, Jazz in Europe, Jazz Views, London Jazz News, The Jazz Mann, Raestar Promotions as well as national and worldwide radio play including BBC Radio 3, Jazz London Live and Jazz Bites Radio.

The most recent feature for one of the Women in Jazz Media partners, Kind of Jazz was a 4-part series of interviews I carried out with fellow jazz musicians Tori Freestone, Alcyona Mick, Migdalia van der Hoven, Terence Collie, Alex Steele, Edison Herbert, Zoe Gilby and Natasha Seale.

The series of heart-warming and enlightening interviews about life as a jazz musician was published over two weeks from 30th June.

[You can read all four interviews here](#)

A whole year of celebrating and paying tribute to the many amazing people who dedicate their lives to The Arts, working tirelessly to make the world a more vibrant, enriching, happier and better place. It is not without challenges, but there is no doubt that the strength, determination, resilience and passion of all who work in The Arts will always find a way through to continue the work we SO love to do...and soon, there will be a soundtrack for a BRIGHTER TOMORROW FOR THE ARTS.

[#brightertomorrowforthearts](#)

[To follow and support Kim Cypher click here](#)



Liane Carroll and Kim Cypher by Tatiana Gorilovsky





SOMETHING NEW



WITH
MIGDALIA VAN
DER HOVEN



Photo by Stuart Leeds

SOMETHING NEW

WITH MIGDALIA VAN DER HOVEN AND CECILIA SANCHIETTI

Our series 'Something New' on Jazz in Europe explores new albums and books through conversation directly with the artist to share a little insight into their work. For this interview we invited team member Migdalia Van Der Hoven to explore the work of Cecilia Sanchietti

Award-winning drummer and composer, teacher and art director Cecilia Sanchietti is a versatile and highly experienced performer, with an impressive portfolio. She is also the founder of the brilliant Jazz Mine Network, an Italian organisation whose 'main purpose is to promote the equal opportunities in Arts to fight the existing imbalances, through educational, advocacy and awareness-raising actions'. Cecilia has recently released two singles from her upcoming album *Colours* along with a book *Leading behind the kit: Composer drummers in contemporary jazz*.

Tell us a bit about the recent single 'Pink' from your upcoming album *Colours*.

Pink is the last single part of the upcoming Album, "Colours" which will be out in September 2023. It has a new sound, thanks to working with Lutte Berg, a great Swedish/Italian guitar player, very well known in Italy, since he has been living in Rome for many years. The sound is electric, jazz/world music, close to lounge rock mood. Really new for my music! The pink colour for me is the picture of flamingos, angry and powerful flamingos! So that's the tune cover, I really love it. Composing this tune was so much fun and

I have created and alternated pink and blue atmospheres. So, Pink and Blue should be the correct name!

As a composer and drummer - what are some of the challenges you face in the writing and performing process when it comes to composing and arranging when your instrument isn't melodic?

*It's a long discussion and I think that every drummer has faced difficulties in approaching composition. But these obstacles are easily overcome because of the passion, will and love that lots of drummers have for composing and for music in general. To try to support this, I've published a book *Leading Behind the Kit*, in which I've interviewed some of the best drummer composers, to study their way of learning and give some examples.*

Like everyone in the book says and me too, yes, it's not easy, but it's possible, first of all because most of the drummer composers play piano and have studied theory and composition. Secondly because it's not necessary to start from theoretical knowledge or apply harmonies rules, usually the drummers compose in an instinctive way, starting from the melodies, cantabile melodies, finding them on the piano and, after that, building a song structure. So, what is false is that drummers are not melodic or they don't think in a melodic way. It's exactly the contrary, me and many others, love melodies and this is a first important



step for creation. Also, we have other tools that other musicians miss - rhythm techniques, time knowledge, capacity of inventing groove and comp jazz ways. It's really hard to figure out a drums comp in jazz for a not drummer musician. So, yes, I've sometimes had difficulties in composing, but I try to use alternative solutions and invent new ways, without taking care (not always) in respecting musical rules. I focus on music, which for me, is the main important thing. About writing music and arrangements abilities I'm really used to doing it and I love it, I don't face many obstacles in creating music for ensembles.

What other instruments do you play and what are some tips for current drummers that would like to start writing their own music, especially jazz?

I play a bit of piano but I'm not a piano player. I can play what is necessary for composing. I've started to play bass, but I've stopped

for now, I love it, but I don't have the time for practicing.

About the suggestions to the drummers that would like to start composing, I can say: feel your soul, your heart and desires, music is not an issue of formal competences and rules, when you write listen to yourself and the rest will be easy. Tell a story (how Philly Jo Jones said). If you have a story you want to tell, a sentiment, a message, start from that, find your notes, your own notes and nobody can say anything! Music is not something correct or not, it's yours. So, yes, it will sometimes be hard and you need to study too, but you can do it. Mainly you have to try, more times, write lots of songs, make mistakes, compose some songs you will not like (not every song is the best one!), but it's a process. Don't stop it or don't avoid starting because you think it's impossible or it's not "drummers stuff".

CECILIA SANCHIETTI

LEADING BEHIND THE KIT

I batteristi compositori nel jazz contemporaneo



INTERVISTE A:

TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON,
EDU RIBEIRO, MAGNUS
OSTROM, ISRAEL VARELA,
PETER DANEMO, ETTORE
FIORAVANTI, LISBETH DIERS



Tell us a bit more about your book?

Leading behind the kit. The drummers composers in contemporary jazz, is a publication with interviews with some of the best drummer composers, from Terri Lyne Carrington, Edu Ribeiro, Magnus Ostrom, Israel Varela, Elisabeth Diers and more. Through their responses, I designed a typical picture of a drummer composer, from a personal and professional point of view. This was because speaking with them, I discovered some common aspects, starting from the reasons and way of composing, to the songs characteristics and writing strategies. I decided to produce it, to give testimony that drummers can be excellent writers, too and also create a didactic tool for students and musicians.

What is the jazz scene like in Italy and Sweden? Especially for female composers and drummers?

In my opinion, the jazz scene in Italy is going through a very difficult time, especially for important festivals. The artistic directions mainly involve international artists or the big Italian names or so-called young talents, who have already disappeared in the following season. So many good musicians remain in an intermediate level, which it is really very difficult to get out. The same for the type of jazz, now experimental, electronic jazz is very much in fashion and there are not many opportunities for other types of jazz.

In Sweden it is slightly different, there are definitely more opportunities, more stages, more clubs and festivals that do jazz. This increases the possibilities. Jazz is also transversal, with a variety of offerings, although traditional, mainstream jazz is very much in fashion.

As for the situation with female musicians, it is very different, in Italy we are still very backward, few stages and



Cecilia Sanchietti by Roberto Scorta

opportunities and bands that are still not mixed. Women still have to prove that they know how to play, there are still many prejudices, even if not explicit, but silent, veiled and therefore more dangerous. In Sweden they have overcome this and now women musicians have obtained more rights. They are present and representative, the organisers are obliged to produce egalitarian programming, just as magazines must and will give balanced space. Here too there are obviously difficulties, but much less frequent.

Who are your influences both as a drummer and a composer? I can see a few players listed in your book from a composing/drumming point of view...but what about performing in terms of style, genre and feel?

My main references for the drums, are certainly some of the drummers in Northern Europe who marked an important transition in understanding the drums not only as a rhythmic instrument. I am talking especially about John Christensen and Magnus Ostrom himself. But also drummers who came from other musical genres and distinguished themselves by their sound, Jo Jo Mayer, Christian Meyer, Gavin Harrison, Larnell Lewis and Stewart Copeland.

You can buy *Leading behind the kit*. The drummers composers in contemporary jazz, by clicking on the image on the left.

[Follow Cecilia's work through her website here](#)

[Follow Migdalia's work through her website here](#)

Our podcast series cover a wide range of topics, all created to platform, inform, discuss and celebrate women working in the jazz industry. You can find our podcasts at Number 12 in the top 60 Best Jazz Podcasts in FeedSpot!

We were thrilled to have our 'In Conversation With...' series nominated by the Women's International Podcast awards in the 'Changing the World one moment at a time' category.

Available on Spotify, Apple, Google and Anchor.



THE WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA PODCAST SERIES



IN CONVERSATION
WITH...

WITH HOST
HANNAH HORTON



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

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WITH
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Daisy Chute
Liv Monaghan



Daisy Chute



Liv Monaghan

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Exploring the world of female authors, this podcast series highlights and promotes books and their authors from around the world. Fascinating conversations with inspirational women with host Fiona Ross.

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Shining a light on diversity from around the world with host

Tammy Kernodle
Tish Oney
Jordannah Elizabeth
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SHE'S AT THE CONTROLS

Helen Reddington

SOMETHING NEW

WITH
SANDRA
BOOKER





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SOMETHING NEW

WITH SANDRA BOOKER AND EVIE ASIO

Our series 'Something New' on Jazz in Europe explores new albums and books through conversation directly with the artist to share a little insight into their work. For this interview we invited team member Sandra Booker to explore the work of [Evie Asio](#).

For singers charting a course of authenticity and originality, offering a new narrative in their work can be a daunting task. Nevertheless, many are accepting the challenge to do just that, and not only rising to the occasion, but charting new territory. The discovery of singer, songwriter, producer, and educator Evie Asio (born Evangeline Asio-Okwalinga) is a prime example of this new crop of visionary vocalists changing the conversation and direction of contemporary jazz in the modern era. I spoke with her to discuss her creative inspiration, career, and where she envisions herself in music.

SB: Where are you born? What university did you attend?

EA: *I was born and bred in London. I attended the University of Southampton from 2011 to 2014 as a voice major.*

SB: Do you feel like music is your calling?

EA: *Yes, I would definitely say that.*

SB: I discovered your music on YouTube and became an instant fan. Your writing is powerful, and the narrative of your songs is poignant, imaginative, and provocative. You worked as the vocal music manager at Triborough Music Hub and the youth music office at the London College of Creative Media (LCCM). Tell me about your work with these organizations.

EA: *So, I worked at the London College of Creative Media up until March of 2022 and then transferred over to my new job at Triborough Music Hub, working with quite a few schools in the West London area.*

SB: You are a singer, songwriter, pianist and educator. Do you play other instruments?

EA: *Yes, so my main instrument is the piano. I'm a vocalist. That's the main thing that I am, and I play piano. I play a bit of guitar. That's my third instrument, just basic guitar. Piano, vocals, and that's where I feel most comfortable and at home. I'm a producer. I produced my last album. I call myself a singer, songwriter and producer. I have knowledge of quite a few different instruments, not in playing ability but in composing ability. I love working out with other instruments. I love the bass. I love the drums and all these instruments and how they work, so I know them from a mental perspective, but my fingers aren't that fast.*

SB: Your current release, which came out in November 2022, *Contending and Contention*, is a moving spectral of sounds and stories. It touches on so many aspects of the human experience set against contemporary jazz and R&B grooves that give it a freshness and a hipness while conveying so much raw emotion. There has to be a fascinating story behind it. How much of it resulted from the pandemic, and can you share your motivation and inspiration for this project?



Evie Asio by Nelson Ekaragha



EA: Well, the story is as most kinds of young 20-somethings are...you get to your mid-20s, and it's crazy. For me, there were a lot of things going on in terms of me and my understanding of myself, my identity, relationships around me: friendships, family issues, career things – all sorts of things. I feel like my life was in some upheaval where everything was thrown up in the air, and I didn't know what to do. I didn't know who I was. I didn't trust myself; believe believed in myself.

It was a lot - and I had to sort of carve my path and figure out who I was but also through these different relationships because I'm quite a relational person, and I think sometimes how you interact with others tells you a lot about yourself. So, it wasn't like I said, "I'm going to write this series of songs." I just started to write songs based on what was happening around me, kind of an outpouring of my feelings. As these songs began to come together and I knew I wanted to create

a body of work. I realized these songs were connected, but they were connected through me in a way that I am dealing with my relationships and myself and seeing these patterns in how I deal with things. And so, that's how I decided I was going to create the album, and Contending and Contention is this idea...well, the “contending” side is the war side – so I felt like I was very much fighting for myself, fighting for my identity, fighting to have faith in who I was. "Contention" is the side of being stuck, so it's like being at war but also being stuck and trying to navigate through that, so the whole album process of me navigating through these personal challenges.

SB: As a self-produced album, why was taking the lead as producer important?

EA: I went into a variety of studios. Well, when I started the project, I didn't know I was going to end up self-producing. So, I looked for a producer and started the project working with a longtime friend, and then Covid hit, but before the shutdown, I

felt like I needed to thoroughly give myself to the process. So, "Pendulum" was previously released. There are two versions, and I re-released it for this album, so I re-tuned it in terms of production because I first released it, and it was good, and I was so proud of it. It was my first proper release, but I hadn't given this everything and couldn't figure out why. Then Covid hit, and it gave me a lot of time to think, and I came out of that a new person musically.

SB: Most of your album was recorded during the pandemic. How did having so much time contribute to the making of this project?

EA: Actually, it was like a rebirth and it was a very painful one. I started the process of recording at my then-church building because we had a recording studio. So, I started there but couldn't go there anymore because of the pandemic. I couldn't go anywhere, and I didn't have the ability to record at home, so I really felt stuck. It was like all the stuff I was writing about, I had to live it in this album, and it was a painful time because I wanted to express myself so badly, but all I could do was sit and sit on the production and think about it so by the time it came out I knew that for me at this stage to execute the album I wanted to I had to take the reins of it and sort of make it happen and make it happen the way I know I can.

It was a beautiful process, and that's why all of the songs have a soft place in my heart for a different reason, but "Available" is the first song I would say I officially produced. It was for me that moment of "yes, this is like the restart of 'Contending and Contention' and what this album is going to be. From then on, it was just working with various people, going from studio to studio; some were done at LCCM, and some were done at connections at ICMP. I worked with Dave Holmes, who mixed a lot of the songs on my album at Lightship 95: that place is amazing. I did some things from home. I don't have a studio at my flat, as it were, but I used my MacBook and headphones and tried to get close to the sound as I wanted.

SB: The narrative of your songs is impressive, addressing many social issues as well. How many tracks are on the album and what was your primary inspiration?

EA: There are nine tracks on the album, including two instrumentals and seven complete songs, making up nine tracks. The track order is the chronology of my experiences, and it's a crescendo to my development in the recording process to create a musical arc if you will.

SB: When did you discover music was going to be your future?

EA: Great question! So, music has always been a part of my life. I could never let the music go. I can't remember a time music wasn't such a significant part of my life. I grew up obsessed with my parents' albums, singing in choir in schools, and making lots of music videos, and I was always in love with music. And a really big shifting point came at school. I didn't just want to listen to music and enjoy or sing it; I wanted to study it. I did GCSB and A-level, which are classes taken in the upper level of high school, and coming from a traditional African background, that was a big part of my creative influences.

My parents were very supportive, but then there are always people who go, "Oh, you're going to do music at university, but what if it doesn't work out?" I was like, "I'm going! That's what I'm doing." So, I made music at university and that area of knowing I didn't want to let music go. I knew I wanted to do this in and with my life. The further I went in studying and all these other things that I liked by 17 or 18 years old, I knew this was what I wanted to do and in whatever capacity I could. Making that decision and not worrying about if it doesn't work out or all of those things and making that choice has been the right path for me.

SB: You say failure wasn't an option and that music would be your career and not default occupation. What gave you the impetus to make that decision at such an early age?

EA: *Well, I didn't feel like I had another option. I was quite good in school, and I did do lots of different things. I considered myself smart and got good grades, but when I thought about all the other things I could do, I didn't feel I had the same drive for other career choices that I had for music. I wanted to wake up feeling excited to do whatever it did. I'm fortunate in the way that I do my music. I also have a "day job" in music as well. And my other big passion is music education, and that's where I have worked for the past number of years because I'm so passionate about making music accessible to as many young people as possible and anyone who wants to have music in their lives. So, I'm fortunate in that sense. I knew that music was something that I just couldn't let go of.*

SB: Your writing style evokes wisdom that some might say extends beyond your years as a woman in her late 20s. Who are some of your musical heroes, influences, and inspirations?

EA: *I have so many. Female singers/songwriters have been a huge part of my musical journey. I have a lot that I look to for inspiration, especially writers. Two writers that inspire me so much are a New Zealand artist, Brooke Fraser, who writes such beautifully poignant songs, and I'm a great admirer of Corinne Bailey Rae. I love all her albums, particularly her second album, "The Sea," which came out around 2010 and really impacted me at university. I would sit and listen to that album over and over and over again. These are people who I say, "I want to write like that." I was inspired by these extraordinary and poignant writers/singers.*

SB Do you write in other mediums such as novels, essays, poetry, etc., or is it streamlined with the focus being primarily music?

EA: *I streamline it where music is concerned. That's where my passion lies, so that's where I put my full attention. When I was 13, I wrote poetry and stories and music, but the music was the one that took me. It was the easiest way for me to express myself because I like to use words to write through chords and sounds and things like that, so it's part of the writing for me. Music is the art form to express my feelings.*

SB: You made mention of your traditional African background. How does that influence your creativity and your music?

EA: *I was born in London, but my family is from Uganda. My parents came from Uganda to the UK just before I was born, maybe six months before, so I consider myself a British-born Ugandan. I love so much of my Ugandan heritage, and it's been a big part of my life growing up through food, music, culture, and family, and it's something that means a lot to me.*

SB: Your father is human rights activist, humanitarian at Global Goodwill Ambassadors, and author Charles Okwalinga. As the daughter of such a prominent figure on the world stage advocating for a free, creative, and autonomous Africa, does that familial activism and humanitarianism extend to your music as well?

EA: *Yes, Charles Okwalinga, he's my dad and indeed it does. The challenge that I have is to remain a person that is always looking outward and being aware of what is going on around me. I'm very conscious that we live in a society that constantly tells us to focus on ourselves, and to a certain extent, we do. I'm not going to sit here and say that I'm selfless. In this world, we do like to indulge in self, and our world revolves around us, as it were, but I never feel quite comfortable just being okay with that. My song "Available" is a*

bit about that struggle written through a different lens, a sort of third-party perspective. I wrote it inspired by my struggle to figure that part of me out. The part that wants to do good but is also somehow focused on me. Again, it's that idea of war and struggle between those two parts of me. I think the most anyone can do is try. And I try to do the best that I can to look outward. I don't know if I succeed every day, but it's essential to my heart and something I will always try to improve: being aware and concerned with the human condition around me.

SB: What makes it a scary time from an artistic perspective for you?

EA: What makes it scary is that I took a break from music before starting the album. I did some gigs in London, then the pressures of my job at the time when I was teaching in a school meant that I couldn't make music like singing and writing, some starting to make music again was the album, and that's

what I've done for four years so not having such a massive project to work towards can be a bit scary. It can be a bit like the unknown. It's not about strict deadlines. The scary bit is about the openness of it and not knowing what the next project will be or if there will be a next project at all. I love albums, so I'm glad I have one, but I might just do another series of songs first or a number of collaborations. So this period is about not having expectations of something I have to do.

SB: Are there any artists, whether independent or on major labels, that you want to collaborate with, and who are they?

EA: Yeah! There are a few people who are friends and independent artists who I rub shoulders with, love dearly, and I love their music. One of my friends is Alyx Bell. We're in a period where we hang out and support each other, but I'm open to doing anything with her. She's amazing! Regarding more prominent artists, and depending on how crazy you want to go, people like Lianne La Habas and Jacob Collier would be at the top of my wish list.



Evie Asio by Nelson Ekaragha

SB: How would you describe the genre or style of your music?

EA: *The title I use is alternative soul. It's underpinned by jazz and soul. I say alternative because I love to add different musical elements of electronic music, folk, R&B, or pop. I'm inspired by so much, and that's where the alternative part comes from and with a twist.*

SB: Where will your music take you in the next year or five years?

EA: *That is a great question as well. Thank you! I'm not sure at the moment. I worked on the album for about four years, and when you do something so heavy and arduous, it's a great reward, but it also leaves you in a state of openness. The thing that I want to do is I want to perform more. I want to collaborate more, and those are the things that I'm putting my heart and energy towards. I'm also in a space where I'm trying not to put pressure on myself to force myself in a certain direction but also keep my heart open and mind open to see where I can go. It's a very exciting time, and it's also a very scary time, so I'm trying to reflect and go at an easy pace.*

Evie Asio's album *Contending and Contention* is available on Spotify, Apple Music and other streaming services.

SOME UPCOMING EVENTS!



October 6th:

Paying tribute to the legendary king of jazz, Dexter Gordon. An American jazz tenor saxophonist, composer, bandleader, and actor who left an untouchable legacy.

With award winning sax star Hannah Horton, vocalist Lily Dior, and award winning J Steps. In association with Women In Jazz Media and the Dexter Gordon Centennial Project.

[Click here for info](#)



Esta Rae, Paul Kissaun and the Soho Vibe are joining forces with The Flame & Fire restaurant in Hammersmith and starting a monthly Jazz Club!

The first very special guest was the amazing vocalist Esther Bennett.

[Click here for info](#)



Sarah Jane Morris is a singer-songwriter with a back catalogue of 15 solo albums since establishing herself as a lead vocalist in the 1980s with bands such as The Republic, Happy End and The Communards.

The Sisterhood is her latest project. It is about ten female singer-songwriters having influenced and impressed the most and to whom Sarah Jane owes debts.

Sarah Jane has written a song to tell each singer's story, using words and musical form reflecting the writing style and musical idiom associated with each woman-artist-hero. In conception and execution, Sarah Jane's project is extremely ambitious, demanding a degree of musical literacy and versatility which make The Sisterhood rich in musical history and stylistic range.

Be part of this timeless voyage. Be part of 'The Sisterhood'. [Click here for info](#)

WHAT DOES JAZZ MEAN TO YOU?

BY PAULETTE
JACKSON

When you listen or think about Jazz, how does it make you feel? What does Jazz mean to you?

The definition of Jazz is: a music genre that originated in the African-American communities of New Orleans, LA, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with its roots in blues and ragtime.

Okay, so, we know about the history, or do we? But, my question I guess would be what is your interpretation of jazz? When you sit down and listen to your favorite jazz artists, how does their music and delivery of a song make you feel in that moment?

Jazz is a very important and vital piece of music history. It is the foundation, in my opinion, to all the rest. But, let's get back to my original question. For me, jazz has become a part of me, it brings a certain spirit to me that other genres of music can't. Now, that is not to say that Rhythm & Blues, Soul, Pop don't all have some type of effect on me because they do, but, it really depends on the delivery and production. It all boils down to the spirit and soul of the artist. I can tell if an artist puts their whole selves in a project, you can feel it from the first few notes and lyrics.

For me, jazz is a movement. It takes my mind in to another atmosphere, I can escape through jazz music and it has become more and more important to incorporate it into my daily life. Music as a whole brings people together from all walks of life, music is that common denominator we all share, it makes us feel and express things that maybe we could not on our own, at least that is what I believe and have stated in one of my books. Music is universal, jazz music is timeless.

Jazz is not just notes on a piece of staff paper or lyrics jotted down in a notebook, it is a spirit that cannot be explained all at once, and it is an experience like no other. That is what jazz means to me. What about you?

Note: The National Museum of American History has an interesting article on jazz. If you would like to check it out, [please visit their website here](#)



Judi Jackson at Ronnie Scott's, London 2023, by Monika S Jakubowska

MEET MS. MADZ: IN A JAZZ CLASS ALL HER OWN

BY PAULETTE JACKSON

Now, I can sit here all day and do research on the internet, read this artist bio and jot down all sorts of amazing things, like she has toured the globe sharing her music along with her amazing band, has written and produced music in the genre of jazz and has recorded numerous singles and albums. Or, I can tell you she is a Filipina-American singer, songwriter and arranger, whose passion is bringing the art of Soul Jazz Funk to her native land: the Philippines. Yes, I sure could but, what I have learned from her personally and by following her career is much greater than what I can write based off of a bio.

You may be asking yourself right about now who I am referring to. Well, her name is Madz (full name Madz Johnson). She is all I mentioned above and much more. Madz is passionate about the music she puts out. She does not rush through it just to get something out there, she takes her time with each single, each album that she writes, arranges and produces on, while making sure her band is on point as well. It all has to gel together and the result is the fantastic music you get to experience.

Madz's style is all her own and I must admit,

when we first connected in the social media world and I really started to get to know her and her music, I was quite surprised. The first time I heard her music, I was stunned at the rich, deep tones of her voice, and I was expecting something quite different and got something even better from my listening experience at that point.

Madz takes care of each phrase and delivers it from her soul. As I mentioned before, it's not rushed.

As I sit here writing, I am listening to Madz's 2021 release, "Versatility" and the track, "Feel the Funk" is just that, FUNKY with just the right groove to make you get up off your feet. The production on this entire album is really quite something. I appreciate the use of instrumentation on this project and it definitely gives it a whole vibe on a level all its own. Let's talk about the track "Love is What We Need." As I listen in, there is a moment in the song where there is a rap part that comes in, that I was not expecting, but works for this particular song. It was overpowering, just enough to draw you in even more.



Now, there are two more tracks on this album that may just be a tie for my favorite and those are “Sunset Love” which places me on a warm beach just when, as the song says, the sun is setting. The other, “Sunny Day” is an upbeat gem that will be sure to have your head swaying.

However, I really like the instrumentation on “Breakout”, it’s a really good mix on this one. I could go on and on with the great music Madz has shared with our world and as fellow lovers of music, I urge you all to do your homework on Ms. Madz and add her music to your library.

As I write this, Madz is putting out yet another album this week entitled, “Madz Jazz” (April 25, 2023) so make sure to follow her on social media and go to her website to check out all of her music and also for tour dates. Personally, she has become a good friend and supporter and that is one of the things I truly treasure about her is how supportive she is of other creatives. Outside of all the wonderful music, she has a warm spirit about her and continues to shine.

We as creatives in this industry know it is not an easy business and Madz I am sure has stories to share around that, but her love for what she does and her desire to share that gift with all of us, is what drives her. She is the real deal.

[To visit MADZ website
click here](#)

[To find out more about
Paulette Jackson, click here](#)

ON THE Women in Jazz Media PLAYLIST





Isobella Burnham by Monika S Jakubowska

BRAD STONE

We are thrilled to welcome the award-winning Brad Stone back as our guest curator for our Women in Jazz Media Playlist for this edition.

Brad has been a radio programmer and music director for the past 40+ years and is the host of the brilliant 'The Creative Source' on www.soulandjazz.com which always features a beautifully diverse mix of progressive jazz and fusion, new jazz releases, current artists and original compositions. He is also the 2-time winner of the Bobby Jackson Award for Internet/Non-terrestrial jazz programming, 7-time winner of Jazz Programmer of the Year with Gavin and JazzWeek and winner of the Duke DuBois Humanitarian Award at JazzWeek for lifetime contributions to the jazz music and jazz radio community.

To listen to Brad's 'The Creative Source' show on Soul and Jazz, click [here](#)

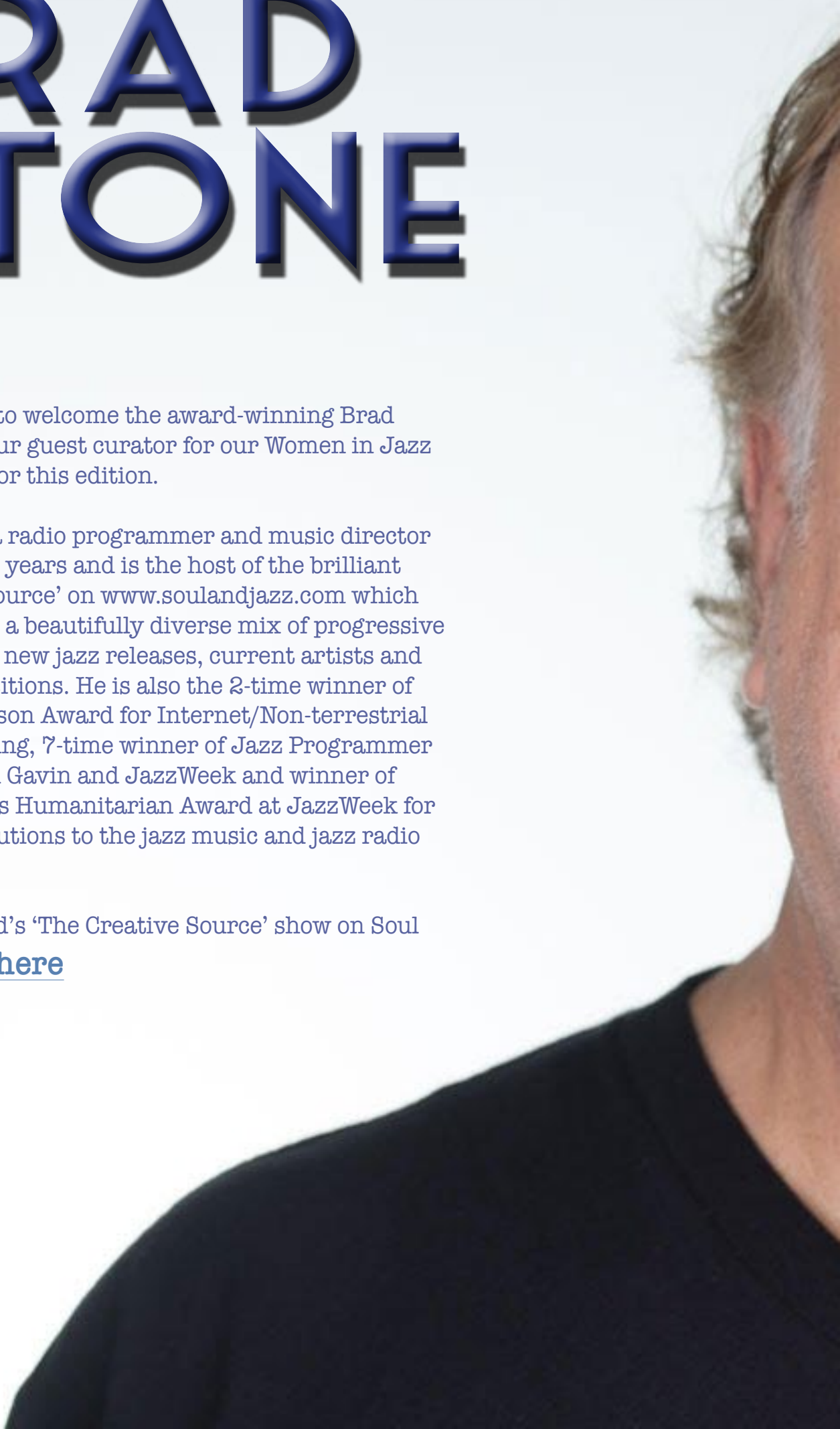




Photo courtesy of Jazz Connect



Photo by Matt Baker



HAILEY BRINNEL



**Hailey Brinnel
Beautiful Tomorrow
Outside In Music**

Trombonist Hailey Brinnel has released her “Beautiful Tomorrow” on trombonist Nick Finzer’s wonderful Outside In Music label. A nice mix of compositions by Brinnel and by others. Her excellent band is joined by guest artists Terell Stafford, Andrew Carson and Chris Oatts on some tracks.

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[Click here to find out more](#)



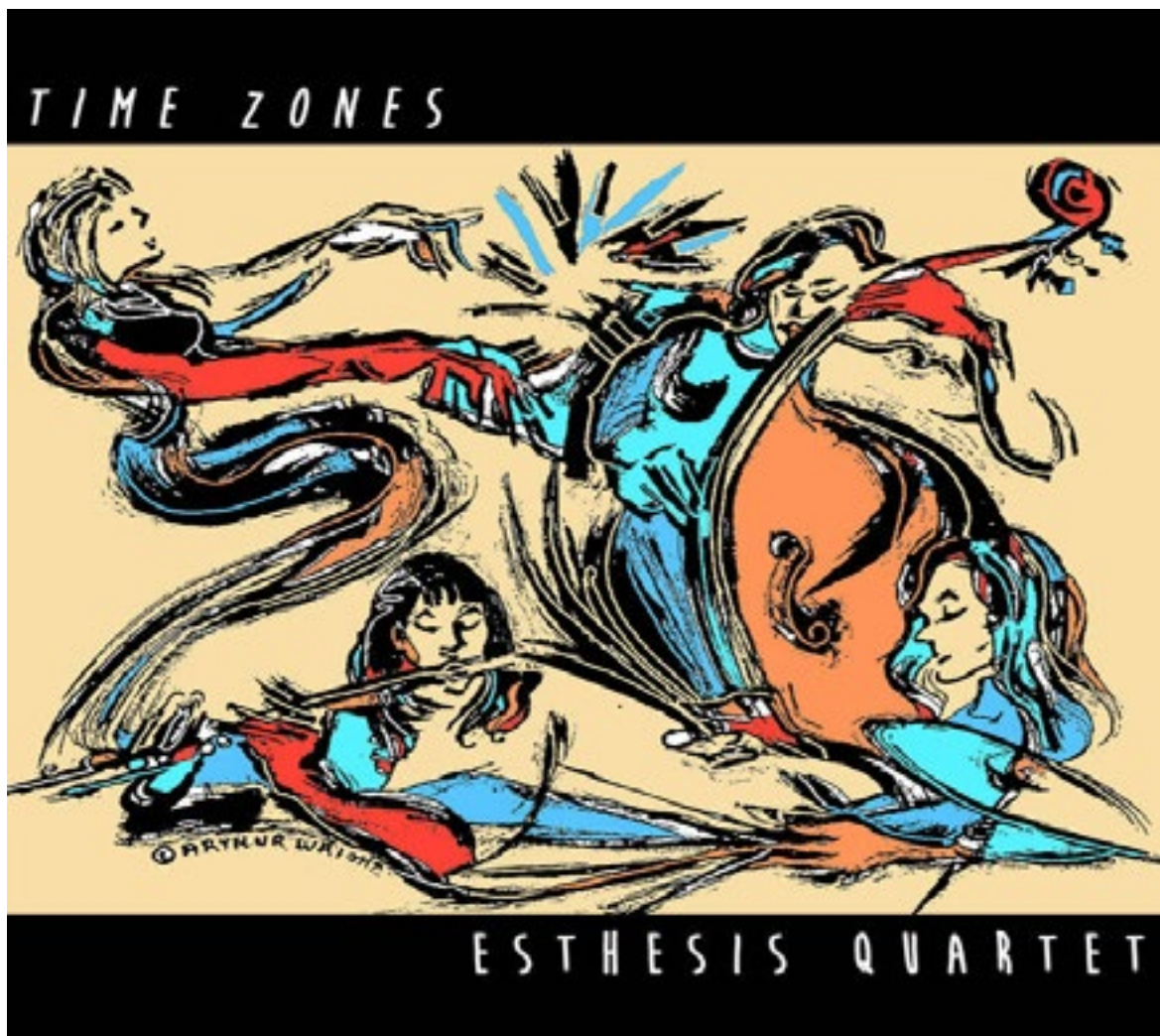
Photo by Matt Baker

ESTHESIS QUARTET





Photo by Steve Korn



Esthesis Quartet
Time Bones
Eyes and Ears Records

Yes, the flute can be a powerful lead line instrument, as the Esthesis Quartet prove. A powerhouse all woman quartet, their new CD garnered significant jazz radio airplay in the U.S. (justifiably so!) earlier this year. All tracks are original compositions by three of the members of the group: Dawn Clement (p), Elsa Nilsson (fl) and Tina Raymond (dr), while bassist Emma Dayhuff holds down the bottom end quite capably and confidently.

Highly recommended!

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Photo by Steve Korn

ARTEMIS



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky



The sophomore release from supergroup Artemis has been much anticipated in jazz circles – and it does not fail to meet the high expectations! Their first album, eponymously titled and released in 2020, was a well-received debut at jazz radio. “In Real Time” finds leader Renee Rosnes and her cohorts picking up where they left off, and having gelled and matured cohesively as a unit since their debut. Mostly originals by group members Alexa Tarantino, Allison Miller, Noriko Ueda and Rosnes – along with two compositions by Lyle Mays and Wayne Shorter – all superbly arranged and performed.

One of my favorite releases of 2023!



Artemis
In Real Time
Blue Note

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Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky



ARTEMIS

IN REAL TIME



ALEXA TARANTINO NICOLE GLOVER RUNEL BOWEN INGRID JENSEN NORIKO UEDA ALLISON MILLER

MELISSA PIPE



Photo by Eva Maude



Melissa Pipe Sextet Of What Remains Odd Sound

On one of the most sonically interesting albums of 2023, leader Melissa Pipe plays bassoon and baritone saxophone, and Philippe Côté adds tenor sax and bass clarinet. The instrumentation used by rest of the Sextet consists of trumpet, piano, bass and drums. This provides the composer (Pipe) a rich palette of timbres with which to paint. However, this album is not just about the aural landscape she paints, but also about the rich harmonic interplay that Pipe provides in her charts.

Beautiful recording.
Montreal representing!

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PATRICIA JULIEN PROJECT



Sky Pointing

[Click here to find out more](#)

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Photo courtesy of Lindsay Raymond Jack



Patricia Julien Project Sky Painting Planet Arts

Another release with a flautist as a leader (I didn't plan it that way!), "Sky Painting" is a lovely album by this great sounding quintet. The album features all originals by the group, with the exception of the lead track, Frank Foster's "Simone", whom Julien acknowledges as an early influence. Expertly recorded, mixed and mastered by noted engineer Scott Petito, and released on Thomas Bellino's wonderful Planet Arts label.

A very lyrical and pleasant album!



Marina Pacowski Inner Urge Summit

[Click here to buy](#)

Despite her very Polish name and heritage, Marina hails from the south of France, in the Basque region near Biarritz. Her new album on Summit Records finds Marina tackling compositions, some very familiar and some not so, from a very wide variety of writers. Expertly arranged by Marina (she is also an accomplished pianist) and produced by master trombonist Scott Whitfield, the album features a host of first-rate musicians, notably Josh Nelson (p), John Clayton (b), Larry Koonse (g), Peter Erskine (dr) and several others. Guest appearances by Joel Frahm on tenor sax, Brent Fischer on vibes, Jon Mayer on piano, Nolan Shaheed on flugelhorn, and the late, great Carl Saunders with undoubtedly one of his last recorded performances on trumpet. Expertly recorded, mixed and mastered – the CD sounds great!

Check it out!!

[Click here to find out more](#)



Photo by Craig Allyn Photography



Ellie Martin
Verdant
Ellie Martin

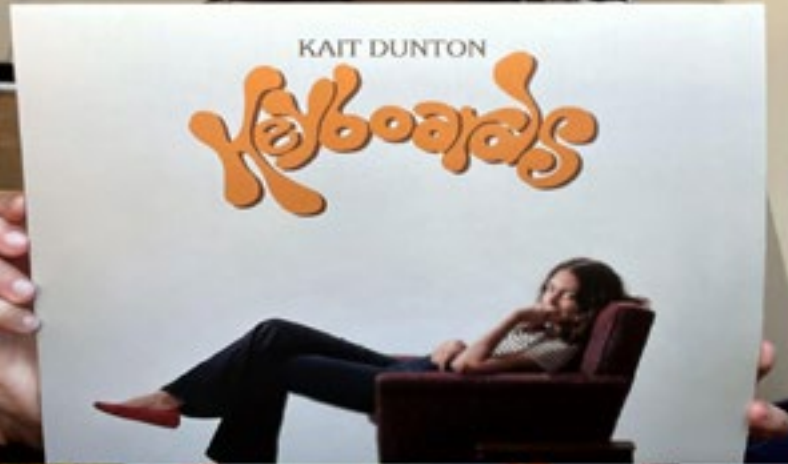
This record seemed to come out of nowhere for me. As a radio programmer, I was completely unaware of Ellie Martin. But of course she does come from somewhere – in fact Toledo, Ohio (a very nice small city in the Great Lakes region of the U.S.). Upon first listening, I realized that this was an extraordinary find for me. Entirely composed by Ms. Martin, this genre-defying album (jazz, yes, but with singer-songwriter elements and strong Latin influences) was a real eye-opener for me, and hopefully its inclusion here will lead to more eyes (and ears) being opened. When you do listen, be sure to dig into the album, as it gets even stronger as one gets into the later, deeper tracks.

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Photo by Jeff Dunn





Kait Dunton Keyboards R&I

Kait Dunton is a keyboard nut. Not just a keyboardist with extraordinary facility and impressive chops, but a keyboard nut. As a 'former' keyboardist, keyboard collector and enthusiast, I get it. Therefore, I was extremely excited to receive Kait's new album, "Keyboards". Already a huge fan of hers (going back to her involvement in the early days of Snarky Puppy, and her own trio albums), I was in eager anticipation of what her new album would bring, with such a title. It does not fail to deliver! I have to list some of the keyboards used on this album: Fender Rhodes, Hammond B-3, Oberheim OB-6, Mellotron, Wurlitzer electronic piano, etc. Beyond Kait's impressive technique, perhaps her greatest gift is a penchant for writing melodic hooks (remember those?!) There are several tracks on this album that have the potential to be instrumental hit singles (remember those?!). Longtime musical partner (and husband) Jake Reed is on the drums, and Sean Hurley on bass. Sublime.

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**Erica Seguine/Shon Baker Orchestra –
The New Day Bends Light
Erica Seguine and Shon Baker**

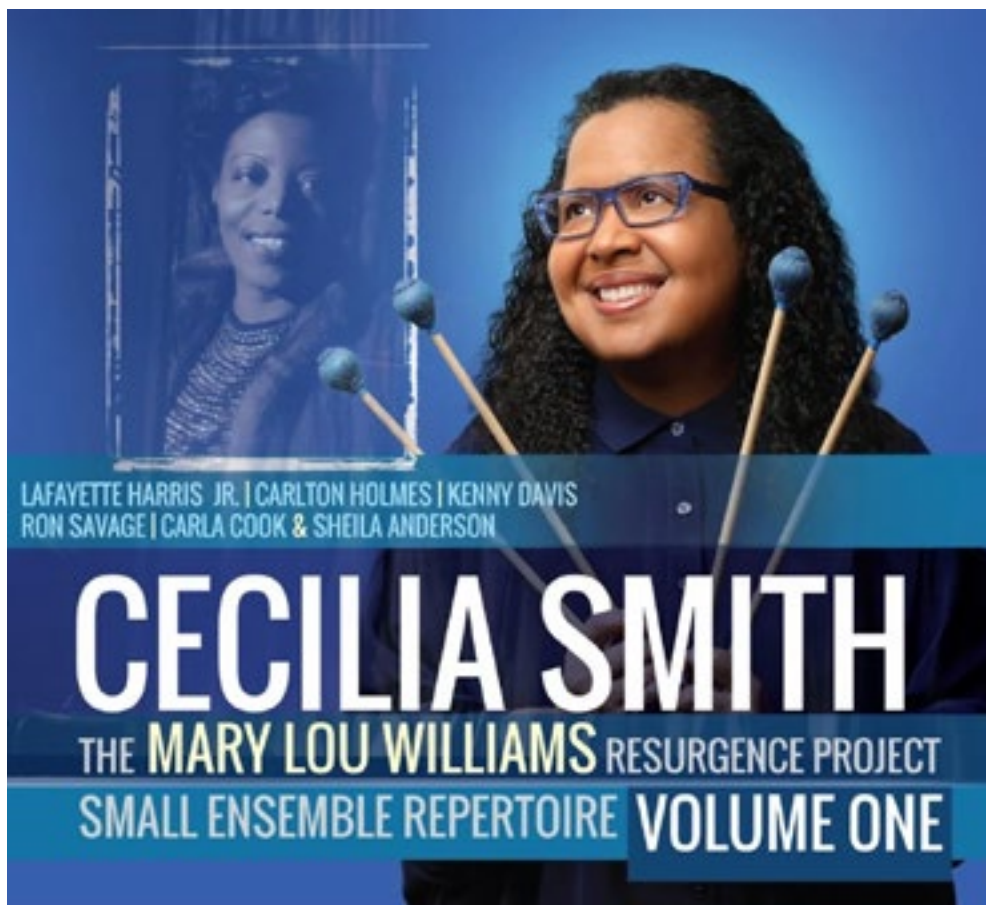
One of the most played albums on my radio program thus far in 2023; “The New Day Bends Light” is an awesome large ensemble project, led by two young composers: Erica Seguine (conductor) and Shon Baker (alto and soprano sax). The compositions are melodic and harmonically rich – with a literal who’s who performing in the orchestra. The composers draw upon disparate sources, such as Hebrew text, Celtic music and Argentinian tango for influences. The project was supported by the Composers Guild of New Jersey and produced by Darcy James Argue. Beautifully performed and recorded.

[Click here to buy](#)

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Photo by Jacob Hiss

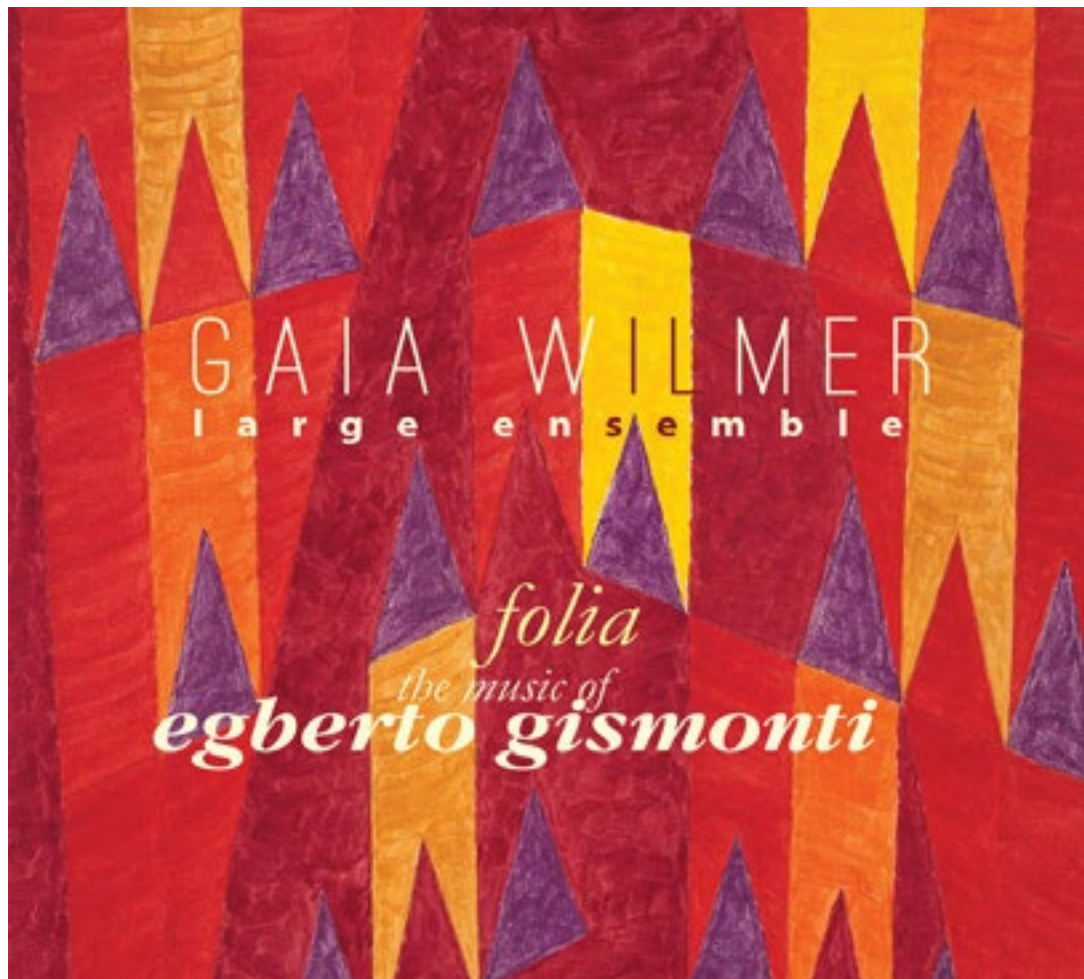


Cecilia Smith
The Mary Lou Williams Resurgence
Project, Small Ensemble Repertoire
Vol. 1
Innova Recordings

Given the recent revival of interest in the career, compositions and influence of Mary Lou Williams, this album is appropriately titled. Vibraphonist Smith does the memory of Ms. Williams justice here, including some of Mary Lou's compositions as well as those by others that Mary Lou would have interpreted. A couple of compositions by Cecilia are also included to round out the project. Should Mary Lou Williams have had a greater recognition in the history of this great music? I think this project answers that for us with a resounding 'yes'. Co-produced with Ms. Smith by Lafayette Harris, Jr. (who also provides piano and organ and Cecil Bridgewater.

[Click here to buy](#)

[Click here to find out more](#)



Gaia Wilmer Large Ensemble Folia: The Music of Egberto Gismonti Sunnyside

It would seem that the future of big band/jazz orchestra/large ensemble music, which has been making a notable comeback in recent years, is in good hands with an entire crop of young composers, conductors and arrangers. Ms. Gaia Wilmer from Brazil is to be counted amongst those, with her stunning arrangements and “recompositions” of her hero and mentor Egberto Gismonti’s music, and her conducting of a fabulous array of Brazilian musicians to realize her works. Released on François Zalacain’s Sunnyside Records, well known for releasing stellar projects from around the world, brings us Ms. Wilmer’s stunning double CD – certainly a candidate for “record of the year” in my book.

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**“Do I Move You?”
Tammy McCann
10 Canto Music**

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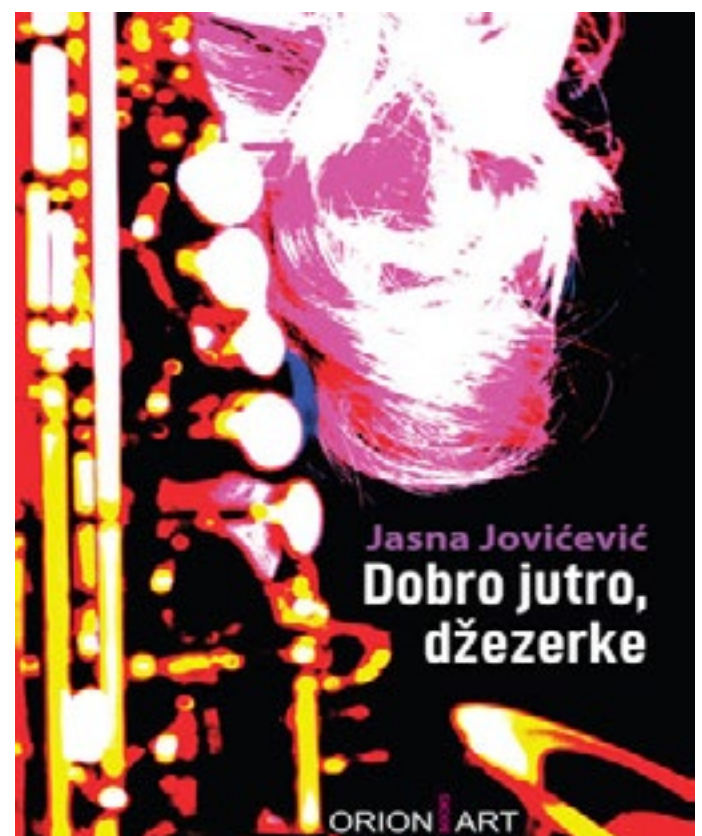
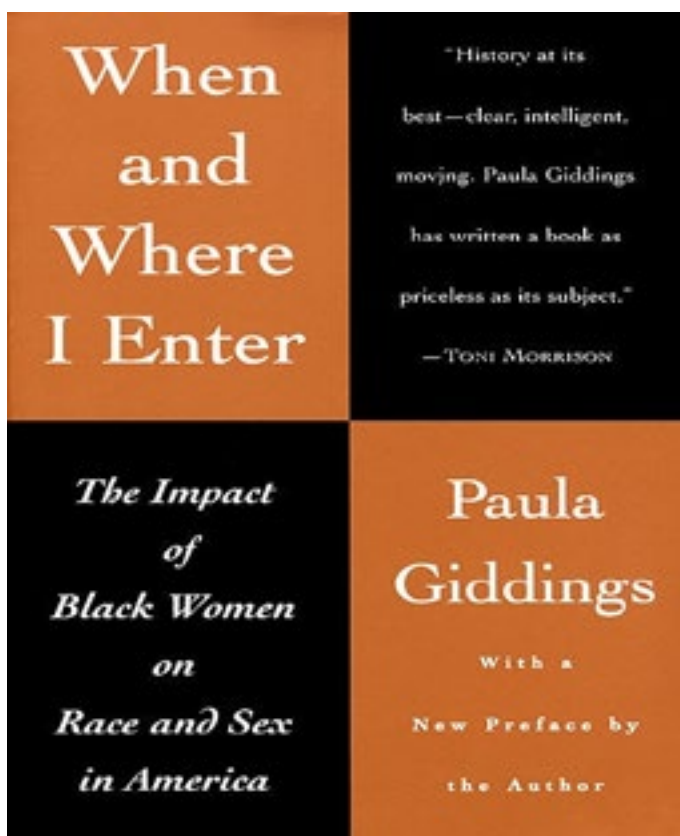
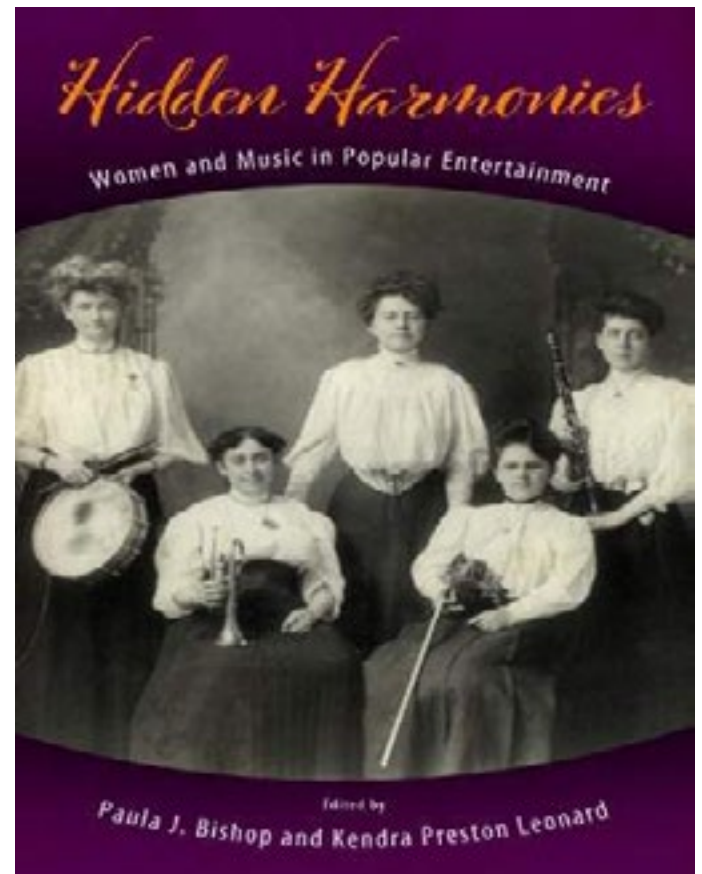
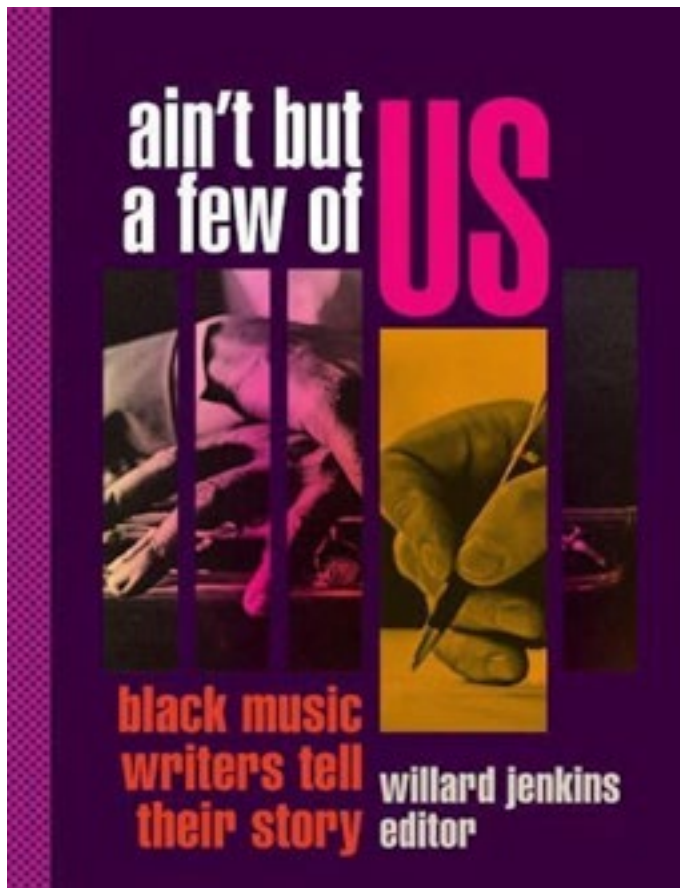
Having been born and raised in Chicago, there is a certain sound to artists that play Chicago-style blues, or perform the Gospel music that originated there. It is hard to define or describe, exactly, but those of us from there can recognize an artist from there immediately – it is ‘in the blood’. Ms. Tammy McCann has that sound – I can feel the Chicago in her! A nice mix of songs by Duke, Mahalia, Nina, Withers, Strayhorn, and even a Lennon and McCartney number. Co-produced by Chicago guitar maestro Fareed Haque, whom she collaborates with on this album, as well as the great John Clayton (whom it seems is everywhere these days!). Pure Windy City.

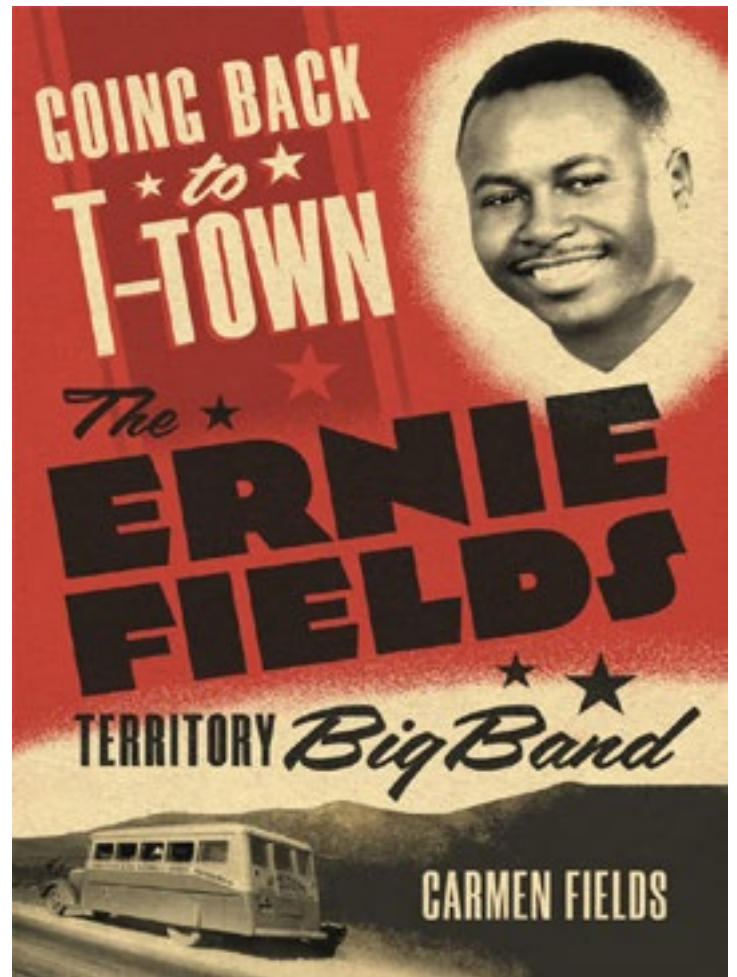
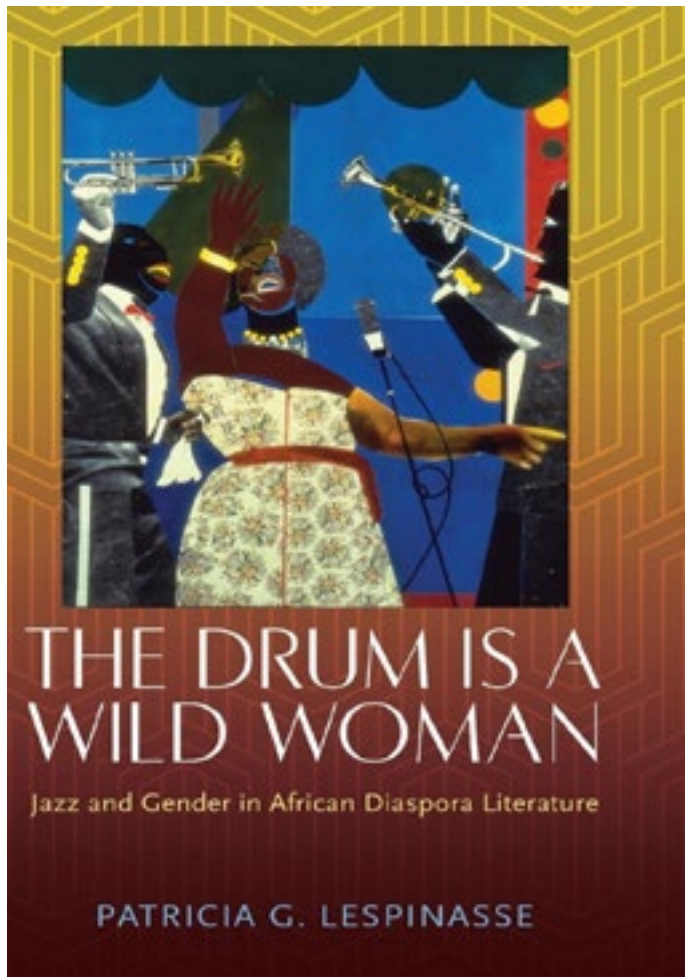


Photo courtesy of Tammy McCann

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Tulani Bridgewater-Kowalski

Sarah Jane Morris and The Sisterhood

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Women in Jazz Media and J Steps celebrate the legacy of Dexter Gordon in partnership with the Dexter Gordon Society #DEX100

The Kicking Down The Door Creator Fund Showcases

Three Queens in Paris: In Paris with Maxine Gordon, Dee Dee Bridgewater and Denise King

And so much more...

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Specifically aimed at increasing the number of black jazz journalists across the world and supported by Black Lives in Music, who work to dismantle structural racism in the industry and work to take action to create a level playing field for everyone to have an equal chance to succeed, along with award winning legend Maxine Gordon, the mentoring scheme has significant support, not least of which is the through the inspirational mentors who are involved.

More Than A Few of Us is open for applicants!

[To apply, please follow this link](#)

#knockingdownthedoors

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Photo of Camilla George by Monika S Jakubowska.

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